



Government of
Saskatchewan

From Dependence to Independence

**Actions and Investments for
Saskatchewan's Most Vulnerable People**

Fall 2010

Table of Contents

Message from the Minister	2
Our Government's Goal	4
Taking Action on Poverty	4
Sustaining a Strong Economy	5
Ensuring Citizens Have More Disposable Income	7
Removing Barriers to Independence	9
Providing Support to Our Most Vulnerable Citizens	20
Measuring Our Success	22
Moving Forward	29
Support Services for Low-Income Individuals and Families	30

Message from the Minister

In Saskatchewan, history has taught us that, with the right tools and constructive assistance, anyone can realize their full potential. Starting with the earliest inhabitants and settlers, a spirit of helpfulness, co-operation and hard work has prevailed in our province. This spirit is built on a belief that everyone deserves the chance to improve their quality of life, but that all of us require opportunities and a little assistance from time to time to do so.

Our government uses this same philosophy to guide our actions on reducing poverty in the province. Our role is to provide the climate for success and to give our citizens a helping hand when needed. We believe that, with more job opportunities, people can find the employment they need to support themselves and their families. With more money at their disposal, they can secure a home and put food on their table. With access to skills training, they can advance in their careers and put their family on a more stable financial footing. And, when they find themselves unable to make ends meet, we believe that the right thing to do is to provide financial support until they can transition back to a more independent life.

Our government understands that individuals and families may find themselves in a situation of poverty for many different reasons. Some citizens are faced with barriers such as addictions, mental illness, physical and intellectual disabilities, debilitating diseases or lack of education. Due to the diversity and complexity of these barriers, it is impossible to introduce one simple program or policy that will address all of the challenges that people may be facing. That is why our government has taken a broad holistic approach to addressing poverty rather than focusing exclusively on last-resort programs such as income assistance.

Recognizing the complexities of the conditions that create poverty, the four pillars of our government's approach to reducing poverty are:

- 1. Sustaining a strong economy:**
By facilitating an environment that will encourage and sustain a strong economy, all of our citizens can gain an opportunity for financial independence and success.
- 2. Ensuring citizens have a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion:**
By ensuring that citizens have a higher level of disposable income we can help individuals and families to be better able to pay their rent or their mortgage, put food on the table and invest in their future.
- 3. Removing the barriers to independence:**
By offering programs and supports such as skills training and affordable housing, we can assist individuals and families in disadvantaged circumstances to remove the barriers that inhibit them in their transition from dependence to independence.

4. Providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens:

By providing financial support such as income assistance, rental supplements, and child care subsidies, we can ensure that low-to-no income individuals and families have the assistance they need to persevere through tough times.

Using these four pillars as our guide, our government is moving forward with the investments and initiatives necessary to help alleviate the conditions that contribute to poverty. Our goal is to empower all Saskatchewan citizens to improve their quality of life by creating economic opportunities and by assisting those in need to remove the barriers that hold them back from building a better future.



June Draude
Minister of Social Services

Our Government's Goal

To empower all Saskatchewan citizens to improve their quality of life by creating economic opportunities and by assisting in the removal of common barriers that prevent people in disadvantaged circumstances from building a better future.

Taking Action on Poverty

Saskatchewan has a long history of looking after those less fortunate. Over and over, our citizenry has demonstrated its commitment to each other and to the collective values that make our province the best place in the world to live. Our volunteer associations, community groups and charitable organizations have always displayed unparalleled dedication to our most vulnerable people, bolstering the family ideals that make our province strong. Previous governments in this province should be acknowledged for their work on different aspects of poverty, but no previous administration approached the challenge with holistic, across government solutions. That is where things have changed.

Since being elected in November 2007, our government has worked diligently to identify ways to empower our citizens to improve their quality of life. We have made decisions and taken action to assist our province's most vulnerable citizens. Using the four pillars of poverty reduction, we have built upon and strengthened existing programs and supports as well as introduced new initiatives, as described in the following pages.

1. Sustaining a Strong Economy

To reduce poverty, our economy must be strong. In many jurisdictions and countries, there is a compelling correlation between economic performance and the number of people needing to access various income assistance programs. Historically, the need for supports rises as an economy declines. Prolonged periods of poor economic performance reduce a government's resources and, more importantly, create a pattern of welfare dependency. Simply put, without sufficient employment opportunities, more people become at risk of sliding into poverty, and people suffering from poverty have a more difficult time bettering their lives.

Rectifying this problem requires a robust commitment to economic growth. Our government has pursued a multi-faceted approach to growing the province, attracting investment and creating opportunities for people of all income levels.

To help maintain a strong and growing economy our government has:

- Invested the largest ever amount in Saskatchewan history in infrastructure over a three-year timeframe. Over \$2.3 billion has been invested in this province, stimulating growth in the economy, attracting investment and creating jobs and opportunities for our citizens. Highlights include:
 - \$1.7 billion in infrastructure upgrades to the provincial transportation system.
 - \$227 million combined federal/provincial funding for municipal infrastructure upgrades through the Building Canada Fund - Communities Component.
 - \$100 million in provincial funding to municipalities to create jobs by upgrading infrastructure through the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program.
 - Over \$94 million in provincial funding to create jobs through new development and the renovation and retrofitting of housing across Saskatchewan through provincial and federal-provincial cost-share initiatives.
 - \$91 million over six years in federal/provincial funding for infrastructure upgrades through the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund.
 - \$44 million of combined federal/provincial funding for municipal water, wastewater and local roadway projects through the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund.
 - \$15 million in provincial funding for community recreational facilities through the Recreational Infrastructure Canada Program. The federal government is also providing \$16 million for these facilities.

- Over \$77 million in combined federal/provincial funding for water, wastewater, local road, green energy, solid waste, sport and culture projects in municipalities through the Provincial Territorial Base Fund.
 - \$23 million in provincial funding for three infrastructure projects in the City of Saskatoon through the Building Canada Fund - Major Infrastructure Component. The federal government is also providing \$23 million for these projects.
 - \$23 million in interest subsidies through the Saskatchewan Infrastructure Growth Initiative to sustain economic growth by developing new residential, commercial and industrial lots and upgrading associated off-site infrastructure.
 - Various investments of capital funding for the construction and renovation of hospitals, nursing homes, schools, post-secondary facilities, and child care facilities.
- Increased revenue sharing with municipal governments so they can strengthen their infrastructure, maintain their taxes at the lowest possible level and provide additional services at the local level.
 - Increased revenue sharing by 43 per cent, from \$117 million in 2007-08 to over \$167 million in 2010-11.
 - Worked towards creating a competitive tax regime that is comparable to or better than other jurisdictions so we are better positioned to attract outside investment, which will stimulate employment opportunities.
 - Lowered the corporate income tax by 1 per cent.
 - Invested over \$10 million in capital funding in 2009-10 to develop new licensed child care spaces so that parents can actively participate in the workforce or pursue higher education and provide positive early learning environments for their children.
 - An annual investment of \$3.4 million into the Clarence Campeau Development Fund to support the creation and expansion of Métis businesses across Saskatchewan.
 - An annual investment of \$1.4 million into Enterprise Regions in the north to ensure northerners can continue to engage in Saskatchewan's growing economy.

2. Ensuring Citizens Have More Disposable Income

To address poverty our citizens must have the means to meet their everyday needs. Our government believes that individuals and families are in the best position to determine how to spend their money. Our responsibility is to ensure that they are able to retain adequate income to meet their living expenses.

To help citizens retain a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion, our government has:

- Increased minimum wage from \$7.95 to \$9.25 per hour. Approximately 25,000 minimum wage earners in the province have benefited from this increase. As of October 2010, Saskatchewan has the second highest minimum wage in western Canada.
- Implemented the largest single-year personal income tax cut in the province's history, which removed 80,000 additional low-income people from the provincial tax rolls.
- Doubled the Low Income Tax Credit (LITC) and significantly increased the income threshold.
 - Basic and spousal credits are currently \$223 per person and child tax credits are \$87 per child for up to two children.
 - Eligible families currently receive up to \$620 per year.
 - The income threshold where maximum tax credit begins to be reduced has been increased from \$13,935 to \$29,204, which translates into 300,000 more citizens being eligible for the credit.
- Decreased the education portion of property taxes, reducing the overall amount of tax paid by property owners by \$103 million, or 14 per cent.
- Doubled the Caregiver Tax Credit, the Infirm Dependent Tax Credit and the Supplement to the Disability Tax Credit, increasing each from \$4,095 to \$8,190 for the 2008 taxation year. Indexation of the Saskatchewan personal income tax system has further increased these amounts to \$8,445 for 2010.
- Increased the Disability Tax Credit from \$7,021 to \$8,190 for the 2008 taxation year. The amount is \$8,445 for 2010.
- Exempted the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) income from social assistance calculations.
- Introduced the Active Families Benefit Program:
 - Parents and legal guardians can claim a fully refundable tax benefit of up to \$150 per year per child for children aged six to 14 enrolled in eligible activities.
 - Families do not need a taxable income to receive the benefit.

- Introduced the Low Income Seniors Prescription Drug Plan and the Children's Prescription Drug Plan:
 - Any prescription drug listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary will not cost any more than \$15 per prescription for all children 14 years of age or under, and for some seniors, depending on their income.
- Paid out \$8.8 million to post-secondary graduates through the Graduate Retention Program for the 2008 tax year. It is expected that \$18.5 million in rebates will be redeemed to 9,500 - 10,000 graduates for the 2009 taxation year. The Graduate Retention Program is a refundable tax credit to rebate up to \$20,000 of tuition fees.

The following table provides an indication of the annual value to various family types of tax reductions and benefit improvements that have been introduced since 2008.

	Income Tax Savings ¹	Low-Income Tax Credit Savings ²	Active Families Benefit ³	Seniors Income Plan Increase ⁴	Employment Supplement Increase ⁵	Annual Total Savings
Family of 4 with \$35,000 income	\$ 718	\$448	\$300	N/A	\$1210	\$2676
Family of 4 with \$50,000 income	\$1442	\$255	\$300	N/A	N/A	\$1997
Single Person with \$25,000 income	\$ 484	\$113	\$ 0	N/A	N/A	\$ 597
Single Senior with \$15,000 income	\$ 0	\$113	\$ 0	\$1200	N/A	\$1313
Senior Couple with \$25,000 income	\$ 0	\$230	\$ 0	\$1980	N/A	\$2210
Single Parent of 2 with \$15,000 income	\$ 0	\$231	\$300	N/A	\$ 540	\$1071
Single Parent of 2 with \$35,000 income	\$1007	\$347	\$300	N/A	\$1210	\$2864

- 1 Income tax savings include the impact of the October 2008 tax reduction announcement, as well as the indexation of the tax system for the 2009 and 2010 taxation years.
- 2 LITC savings result from the impact of the October 2008 enhancement announcement, as well as indexation of the benefit amounts for the 2009-10 benefit year.
- 3 The Active Families Benefit was introduced effective January 1, 2009 for families with children between six and 14 years of age.
- 4 The Seniors Income Plan increase results from the October 2008 announcement to double benefits effective January 2009.
- 5 The Saskatchewan Employment Supplement increase results from the 2007-08 budget announcement to enhance benefits effective May 1, 2008.

3. Removing Barriers to Independence

Our government understands that individuals and families may find themselves trapped in a situation of poverty for many different reasons beyond a lack of financial resources. Challenges such as addictions, mental illness, physical and intellectual disabilities, debilitating diseases, lack of education and others pose a barrier for some citizens to manage their day-to-day life and/or to access and maintain meaningful employment that will assist them in transitioning to independence.

To assist people in removing barriers to independence, our government has focused our action in nine main areas:

- Affordable housing and emergency shelter spaces
- Education and skills training
- Early childhood development
- Community inclusion
- Child care
- Sexual assault and family violence supports
- Mental health and addictions
- Enhanced services for children and youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Enhanced services for low-income neighbourhoods and communities

Affordable Housing and Emergency Shelter Spaces

Access to safe, affordable housing is a necessity to maintain a stable family and a healthy lifestyle. It provides a foundation on which struggling individuals and families can build a life, feel the security they need and become a contributing member of a community. Presently, through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC), the government supports the portfolio of approximately 30,500 rental, home owner, and special purpose housing units, which serve low-income families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations across Saskatchewan. The government also provides financial support to emergency shelter facilities in our major cities.

To help Saskatchewan people access safe, affordable housing, our government has:

- Increased spending on affordable and social housing:
 - Since assuming government, we have completed over 800 low to moderate-income rental housing units and assisted over 350 low to moderate-income individuals and families in purchasing a home through SHC.
 - \$2 million has been provided to Habitat for Humanity in our last two budgets for a total of 40 homeownership units across the province.
 - Currently, there are over 700 additional rental units in construction, over 420 rental units in the development/planning stage, and approximately 50 homes are in construction or planning for home ownership.
 - \$161 million has been dedicated over two years for further rental unit development and renovations of existing affordable housing stock.

- Announced and are now developing the *Headstart on a Home* initiative to support approximately 1,000 moderate income households wishing to transition from the rental market into home ownership.
- Assisted over 1,500 low and moderate-income households since November 2007 to improve the energy efficiency of their home through the Saskatchewan Home Energy Improvement Program (SHEIP). Take-up of SHEIP was very successful, resulting in full commitment as of December 31, 2009.
- Since November 2007, made it possible for over 1,400 households to live in healthier and safer homes through repair and renovation programming.
- Increased the income threshold for seniors to qualify for social housing.
- Amended *The Residential Tenancies Act* to double the notice period for rent increases from three months to six months.
- Increased the rates paid to emergency shelters to ensure their financial viability. For single individuals, the increases ranged from \$5.45 to \$20.45 per day. Family rates increased by \$18.60 per day.
- Increased emergency shelter spaces in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.
- Invested \$1 million in capital funding for the construction of an emergency shelter that will serve up to 15 high-risk youth between the ages of 15 and 18.
- Increased capacity to provide crisis support in 2009 for people with intellectual disabilities through the provision of an additional crisis support space at South View Home.

Education and Skills Training

Education and poverty are intimately linked. Living on a low wage can often preclude people from finding the time and resources to extend their education or to access training that would increase their career options. Access to programs and skills training that help struggling men and women improve their skill-set is critical to giving them the tools they need to build a better future.

To facilitate access to education, skills training and employment for low-income people, our government has:

- Increased funding for career and employment services to Saskatchewan people who need it most. We are ensuring that programs and services are relevant, timely and available across the province.
- Invested an additional \$20 million over four years to ensure the provision of work readiness programs for those who want to participate in the economic life of our province, but lack the skills.
- Continued to produce accelerated employment outcomes for individuals on income supports who were referred to Jobs First and Employment Services for Parents initiatives.

- Partnered in Canada-Saskatchewan Rapid Response Teams to promote federal and provincial programs and services that help keep people employed or provide support for further training and career development. This has helped over 4,400 individuals return to work, including over 1,200 individuals whose lay-offs have been averted through the federal work-sharing program.
- Committed to ensuring people with disabilities can access post-secondary education, skills training and services that lead to employment. Approximately \$10 million will be invested in 2010-11 for a variety of supports and interventions that will assist individuals with disabilities to acquire and maintain employment.
- Offered Adult Basic Education programs to approximately 6,750 people in 2009-10 alone. Of these, approximately 65 per cent of learners self-identify as First Nations or Métis.
- In 2010-11, provided \$1.7 million to post-secondary institutions to deliver 19 Adult Basic Education - Essential Skills for the Workplace projects. These projects increase the province's capacity to delivery literacy and essential skills focusing on Literacy Levels One and Two, targeting unemployed and First Nations/Métis peoples for successful transition to employment.
- Invested \$21.5 million in skills training to support the development of the unemployed and under-employed to meet the needs of our strong economy, including funding to:
 - The Workplace Essential Skills Saskatchewan Initiative to support business and industry to successfully prepare low-skilled job seekers and existing low-skilled employees in the workplace to gain the workplace essential skills needed for sustainable long-term employment or advancement. Funding for 2010-11 is \$1.7 million, which will assist up to 370 people.
 - The Regina and Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centres that serve interested young adults to transition to employment.
 - The Multi-Party Training Plan with \$3 million, providing over 100 mining-related training opportunities each year as well as support for apprentices and northern contractors, industry-sponsored scholarships, school awards, student work placements, and summer employment.
- Provided \$28.5 million in 2009-10 through the Provincial Training Allowance to assist low-income adults in accessing basic education programs in order to upgrade their education and further their independence.
- Increased the living and shelter allowances in the Provincial Training Allowance program and indexed the allowance to 70 per cent of the average market cost for each city and/or region as determined by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The rates are adjusted semi-annually.

- Provided legacy funding to the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, seven regional colleges and five community-based organizations (CBOs) to support the delivery of adult literacy programs and services in Saskatchewan.
- Increased base funding for the Adult/Family Literacy Fund and the SaskSmart Innovations Fund by nearly 10 per cent in our first two budgets to help address local literacy needs across the province.
- Increased funding in 2009-10 by \$2.2 million for enhancements to the Saskatchewan Student Loans program. Changes included:
 - The Saskatchewan Student Loan increased from \$110 per week of study to \$140 per week.
 - The maximum Saskatchewan Student Bursary amount per week of study increased from \$110 to \$140.
 - A new grant was introduced for low-income students that provides \$58 per week (about \$250/month).
 - A new grant was introduced for low-income students with dependent children that provides \$47 per week of study per child (about \$200/month/child).
 - Introduced a Repayment Assistance Plan that allows borrowers to make affordable payments towards their government student loans if they encounter challenges in the repayment process.
- Committed to increase funding in 2010-11 by \$1.34 million for further enhancements to the Saskatchewan Student Loans program. The following enhancements are being introduced:
 - Increase the Saskatchewan Student Loan limit from \$140 to \$198 per week of study for those not eligible for the low or middle income grant.
 - Reduce interest rates on repayable Saskatchewan Student Loans to prime.
 - Eliminate the use of vehicles as an asset when determining levels of financial assistance.
 - Allow students to work part-time without being financially penalized during their study period.
- Allocated \$0.5 million in additional funding for Provincial Training Allowance in 2010-11 to exempt use of vehicles and allow students to work part-time during their study period without financial penalty when determining financial assistance.
- Built and maintained a range of active partnerships with regional Aboriginal stakeholders for the provision of work readiness programs that support transitions to employment for First Nations and Métis people. Current partnership include a variety of activities such as Student Summer Works, career counselling, skills training and income support, job coaching and mentoring, employability skills development, indenturing, upgrading, safety training and access to driver training.

A key investment is the Construction Careers Centres, operated by Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) in seven locations in the province.

- Through a variety of new partnerships with the federal government, offered support to Aboriginal organizations to develop capacity and expertise in the provision of career and employment services on Saskatchewan reserves. This will enable individuals on federal social assistance or at risk of becoming reliant on social assistance to receive the support they need to become employed.
- Partnered with the federal government in March 2008 to launch Northern Career Quest. This \$33 million project is funded jointly by the Government of Canada, Government of Saskatchewan, and other stakeholders, including Aboriginal and industry partners. This four-year project provides training and skills development opportunities for 1,500 Aboriginal people in northern Saskatchewan, leading to long-term jobs in the resource sector, including mining, oil sands recovery, mineral exploration and oil and gas exploration.
- Partnered with the federal government in May 2009 to launch Bridges and Foundations. This \$6 million project, funded by the Government of Canada, Government of Saskatchewan, and other stakeholders, including Aboriginal and private sector partners, will provide approximately 400 First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan with training and work experience related to the construction of affordable housing.
- The Fort-a-la-Corne Employment Development project in partnership with Cumberland Regional College has received \$7.5 million in federal funding from Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership Program to provide training and employment of Aboriginal people to address the need for skilled labour created by the construction of a hydroelectric dam near forks of the Saskatchewan River. The provincial contribution is through the existing program funding provided to Cumberland in Adult Basic Education and skills training. This funding will provide a minimum of 600 assessments, 500 trainees, and 300 employed individuals. The training will focus mainly on providing technical programs related to skills and trades.
- The \$5.09 million In-Roads to Agriculture project was announced on September 16, 2010. Saskatchewan's Ministry of Agriculture is providing \$595,000 of the funding. The project will assist 130 participants to gain training and subsequent employment with One Earth Farms and a variety of other agri-businesses.
- Provided \$2 million over four years for nutrition in 98 community schools.

Early Childhood Development

Our government recognizes that the sooner an at-risk child receives supports, the more positive the outcome for the child as he/she progresses through school and beyond. Research has demonstrated that prevention and early intervention have short-term benefits which include improved intellectual performance, increased social skills, improved health and higher self-esteem, as well as long-term benefits which include lower rates of juvenile crime, fewer teen pregnancies and fewer failed grades and school dropouts.

To strengthen early childhood development, our government has:

- Committed \$3.7 million to fund Early Childhood Intervention Programs in the 2010-11 budget, reflecting a 1 per cent increase in funding in addition to the 10 per cent increase in the 2009-10 budget.
- Provided \$375,000 in additional funding in 2009 to child care centres for children with exceptionally high and diverse needs.
- Provided \$1.7 million in 2008-09, \$2.4 million mid-year 2008-09, \$1.2 million in 2009-10 and \$360,000 in 2010-11 for wage lifts for child care centre staff.
- Invested \$5 million in the creation of 75 new PreKindergarten programs, supporting approximately 1,200 more vulnerable three- and four-year-olds and their families – a 48 per cent increase in the number of children served.
- Implemented the Early Development Instrument provincially to measure children's readiness to benefit from their formal school education.

Community Inclusion

Poverty is often a result of disadvantages beyond an individual's control. Individuals with disabilities have often suffered this fate through no fault of their own. Addressing the challenges facing persons with disabilities requires a commitment to an inclusive community that acknowledges and invests in the unique supports these citizens require to meet their potential.

To provide supports for individuals with disabilities, our government has:

- In 2008, made the largest single investment in the history of the province, \$76.9 million over four years, to expand residential supports and day programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Introduced the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program to provide people with disabilities a new, dignified income support mechanism that does not carry the stigma of "welfare."
- Increased inheritance exemptions in SAID to \$100,000 per household in recognition of the long-term nature of income replacement required by SAID clients.

- In 2010, increased earnings exemption limits for individuals with disabilities in both SAP and SAID.
- Increased funding to CBOs that provide support services by 13.3 per cent.
- Increased assistance rates for approved private service homes by 13.3 per cent.
- Increased the food allowance for CBO group homes for individuals with disabilities from \$4.85 per person to \$9.00 per person.
- Increased funding for the Transit Assistance for People with Disabilities (TFD) Program by 10 per cent in 2009-10.

Child Care

Creating better outcomes for our children requires that we invest in the people best able to nurture and care for them. Parents need supports so they can maintain stable employment and invest in their children's future. The inability to acquire adequate, reliable and affordable child care is a very real barrier for the parents or parent of a family to remain in the work force or to seek further education or skills training.

To create child care opportunities for our parents, our government has:

- Committed funding to increase child care spaces by 2,935, representing more than a 30 per cent increase in spaces since November 2007.

Sexual Assault and Family Violence Supports

Women and children are disproportionately burdened by the trauma and stress of domestic violence. Suffering from abuse often creates feelings of isolation, low self-esteem and despair. For families living in low-income circumstances, these emotions can further impede the victims' ability to take the steps necessary to remove themselves from the violence and improve their quality of life.

To assist women and children who experience violence in their families, our government has:

- Increased funding to sexual assault agencies and transition houses by \$1.1 million annually – a 25 per cent increase.
- Nearly doubled the funding to Mobile Crisis Services in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert.
- Provided funding to Catholic Family Services in Saskatoon to expand their Children Who Witness Domestic Violence program.
- Expanded Domestic Violence Court to Regina.

Mental Health and Addictions

People with severe and persistent mental illness and other cognitive problems alone, or in conjunction with addictions, have unique challenges that can lead to poverty and homelessness. On the one hand, mental health and addiction disorders can contribute to poverty and homelessness by reducing an individual's ability to function. On the other hand, poverty and homelessness can lead to substance abuse and mental health problems. This vulnerable population faces complex issues that often require specially co-ordinated services and supports. According to the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse, more than 50 per cent of individuals seeking help for an addiction have a mental illness, and almost 20 per cent of those seeking help for mental health issues are living with an addiction. Concurrent disorders, the term used to describe the situation where individuals are affected by a mental health and addiction problem, are a major health concern and often inhibit individuals from leading normal, productive lives. Individuals suffering from concurrent disorders suffer frequent relapses, recurring crises, and are more difficult to treat.

Individuals with mental health, addictions, or concurrent disorders have limited ability to cope with everyday challenges and experience higher unemployment rates, relationship difficulties, anxiety and, in some cases, can become homeless, marginalized, or criminally involved. A better understanding of mental health, addictions and concurrent disorders is necessary for early detection and treatment. Early identification and intervention can assist these individuals to achieve higher levels of functioning, manage symptoms and reduce harms.

To expand services for citizens affected by mental health and addiction, our government has:

- Provided over \$6 million in capital funding, and \$1.125 million in annual operating funding to Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region to open a 45-bed detoxification facility in Regina.
- Provided \$4.6 million in capital funding and \$1.885 million in annual operating funding to open a new, 15-bed youth inpatient addiction treatment facility in Prince Albert. This facility, to be operated in partnership with the Prince Albert Grand Council, will offer programming to youth age 12 to 17.
- Provided over \$2.4 million in capital funding to support renovations to Calder Centre that will better accommodate 12 youth treatment and six youth stabilization beds.
- Provided over \$3.6 million in capital funding and \$1.1 million in annual operating funding to Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority for the development and operation of a 14-bed brief and social detoxification facility in Prince Albert.
- Provided over \$7.9 million in capital funding and \$1.668 in annual operating to Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority for the development of a new provincial family treatment service that will accommodate eight families, primarily women with young children.

- Provided \$2.8 million in annual operating funding for programming and support services in communities across the province. Twelve Regional Health Authorities receive annual funding to support community initiatives that improve housing options for youth and adults, improve access to community-based and home-based services and reduce barriers to individuals with substance use issues who are trying to access various opportunities in their communities.
- Established a new 11-member Addictions Advisory Committee that will guide the creation of a provincial addiction agency in Saskatchewan. The new agency will measure the results of addictions programs in the province, co-ordinate education campaigns about the dangers of drugs and alcohol and oversee Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevention initiatives.
- Allocated \$14.85 million to open the Dubé Centre for Mental Health in Saskatoon. The new facility accommodates two adult units totaling 54 beds and includes a separate 10-bed child/adolescent unit.
- Invested \$3.8 million to open a new 40-unit affordable, supportive housing project in Regina with Ehrlo Community Services. In partnership with the Phoenix Residential Society, 32 of the units serve people with serious mental illness, with the remaining eight serving people with intellectual disabilities.

Enhanced Services for Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Our government recognizes the importance of early intervention to facilitate the best outcomes possible for children with ASD. Children with ASD differ in terms of their strengths and needs, and their responses to specific intervention methods or techniques will vary. Therefore, multiple intervention treatment components must be available to meet the individualized needs of children with ASD.

To enhance services for children and youth with ASD, our government has:

- Launched the ASD Framework and Action Plan with an investment of \$3.05 million annually to provide a co-ordinated and integrated service approach for children and youth with ASD. This strategy provides access to ASD Consultants and Support Workers in every health region to screen for ASD, co-ordinate assessment, treatment and program development, and to provide direct intervention programming. Seasonal and respite programming is also available in every health region.
- Supported a three-year, \$2.5 million pilot project involving the enhancement of frontline therapy and respite services for individuals with ASD throughout Saskatchewan beginning in 2010-11.
 - The pilot project includes \$1.1 million in annualized funding allocated to the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region to provide ASD services to southern Saskatchewan. The enhanced services include supports for the adult ASD population, expanded respite programming, enhanced

autism intervention services for children and youth, and the provision of itinerant occupational therapy services to the rural areas.

- \$1.3 million in annualized funding is being allocated to the Saskatoon Health Region to provide ASD services to central and northern Saskatchewan. The enhanced services includes a mix of specialized clinical services located in Saskatoon to serve the central and northern areas of Saskatchewan, regional services to offer frontline services in rural areas, and traveling service clinics to serve the three northern health regions.
- The provincial project also involves a budget allocation of \$100,000 to support the development of a post secondary certificate program for professionals and paraprofessionals working in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders. In 2011, a pilot certification program will be delivered by the University of New Brunswick College of Extended Learning's Autism Spectrum Disorders Intervention Training Program to frontline service providers in Saskatchewan.

Enhanced Services for Low-Income Neighbourhoods and Communities

Disparities in income often correlate with the quality of our neighbourhoods and communities. These areas warrant special attention. Citizens living in these communities often have unique challenges such as high transportation cost, lack of affordable housing, and inadequate access to employment services, etc. Services targeted at the local level can address unique sets of problems and assist in improving the quality of life for those living in the community.

To help strengthen neighbourhoods, our government has:

- Introduced the Saskatoon Mobile Primary Health Centre known as "The Health Bus." The Health Bus provides primary health services to Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods and is an innovative community treatment venue for those in need of resources closer to home.
- Committed approximately \$11 million for the development of affordable housing for seniors and families in the low-income neighbourhood of Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon.
- Invested \$8.3 million for the construction of a new St. Mary's Community School, child care and wellness centre in the low-income neighbourhood of Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon.
- Invested \$2.3 million in partnership with Souls Harbour Rescue Mission in a 30-unit apartment building with emergency shelter spaces for low-income men and women with children in Regina's North Central area.
- Increased transportation subsidies:
 - In the major cities in our province, clients of Social Services can access monthly bus passes for \$15 - \$20 through the Discounted Bus Pass Program. Our government increased the funding to the participating cities to ensure the continuation of this program.

- In 2008, our government increased the mileage rates paid to low-income social assistance clients of Social Services who use private vehicle transportation for funerals, medical appointments and other approved travel.
- Invested an additional \$317,000 in 2009-10 through the Human Services Integration Forum and Regional Intersectoral Committees to lead planning and co-ordination for integrated approaches in areas such as early years, housing, substance abuse, food security and nutrition, keeping youth connected to school, and supports to immigrant and refugee families.
- Through the Community Initiatives Fund (CIF), continued to invest in programs offered by CBOs to improve the quality of life for Saskatchewan residents, especially those living in poverty. The CIF launched a new Community Vitality program in 2010 that is designed to enhance the quality, accessibility and use of facilities in communities across the province.
- The government continues to support the use of lottery funds for KidSport programs that remove financial barriers that prevent low-income children from playing organized sport. For example, Regina KidSport recently implemented a new program that has each of the 72 elementary schools in Regina receiving \$1,000 worth of new sporting equipment.
- Created a new Northern Social Development Branch within the Northern Affairs Division of the Ministry of First Nations and Métis Relations to engage northern citizens in the development of a shared and collaborative plan of action to enhance the quality of life for the people of northern Saskatchewan.

4. Providing Financial Support to Our Most Vulnerable Citizens

Poverty reduction requires action from community stakeholders and governments to prevent our vulnerable citizens from falling through the cracks and becoming mired in situations that feel economically and emotionally insurmountable. That is largely the purpose of the first three pillars of our government's approach: to act preventatively and proactively to arrest and roll back the conditions that cause poverty and to give individuals and families the tools they need to achieve and maintain their economic independence and to invest in their futures.

Despite our best efforts, some citizens will from time to time require additional supports to meet their most basic day-to-day needs.

To ensure our most vulnerable citizens are given the resources they need to meet their everyday necessities and maintain hope for the future, our government has:

- Increased and indexed the shelter allowance in social assistance.
 - In response to the rapid increase in rent costs that Saskatchewan has been experiencing, our government raised the shelter rates for social assistance clients and indexed shelter allowances for clients with disabilities or with children to 70 per cent of the average market cost. In addition, our government adjusts those rates semi-annually to alleviate the stress of multiple rent increases. Since August 2008, these rates have been adjusted five times.
- Increased and indexed the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement.
 - As with the social assistance shelter allowance, our government indexed the amount of rental assistance available to families with children to 30 per cent of the average market cost, as determined by CMHC, for groups of communities with similar rents. These rates are adjusted semi-annually. This means that families on social assistance are potentially eligible for an amount equal to 100 per cent of the average market rent for the community in which they reside.
 - Individuals with disabilities and families who have a family member who has a disability may be eligible for a rent supplement of up to 40 per cent of the average market cost.
- Implemented a new policy of paying the existing rent costs for six months if an individual or family is faced with the situation where their rent has risen above the amount available to them from social assistance to allow them additional time to find alternative accommodation.
- Increased the amount paid for electricity for Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA) clients.

- Increased the amount paid to low- to moderate-income families for the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES) and increased the threshold for those who can qualify.
- More than doubled the amount available to low-income seniors through the Seniors Income Plan (SIP). By enhancing SIP, we also nearly doubled the number of seniors eligible for benefits under the program, giving 9,000 more seniors access to eye exams, chiropractic services, reduced prescription drug costs, home care subsidies and other supplementary benefits. Prior to these program enhancements, SIP benefits had not been increased for 16 years.

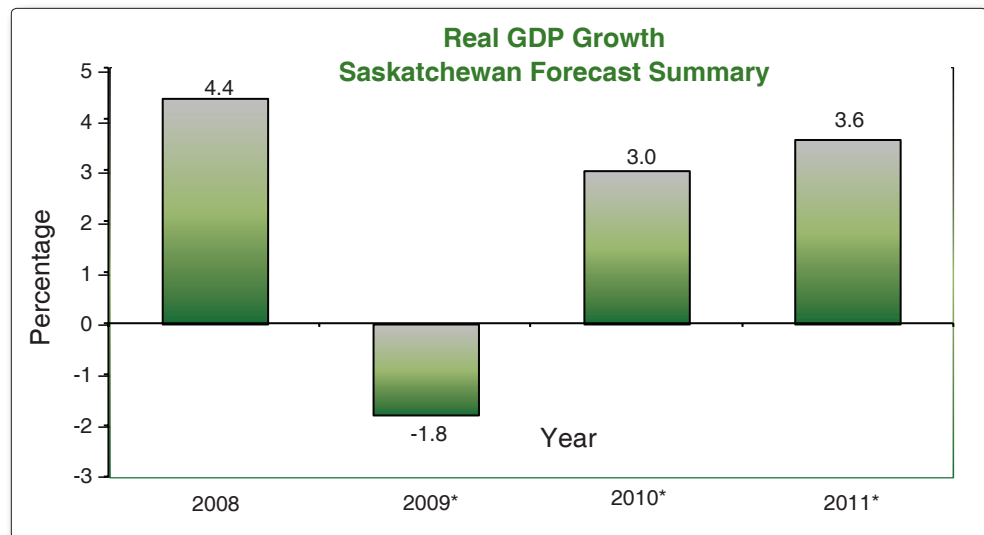
Measuring Our Success

Measures of Actions on Poverty

1. Sustaining a strong economy

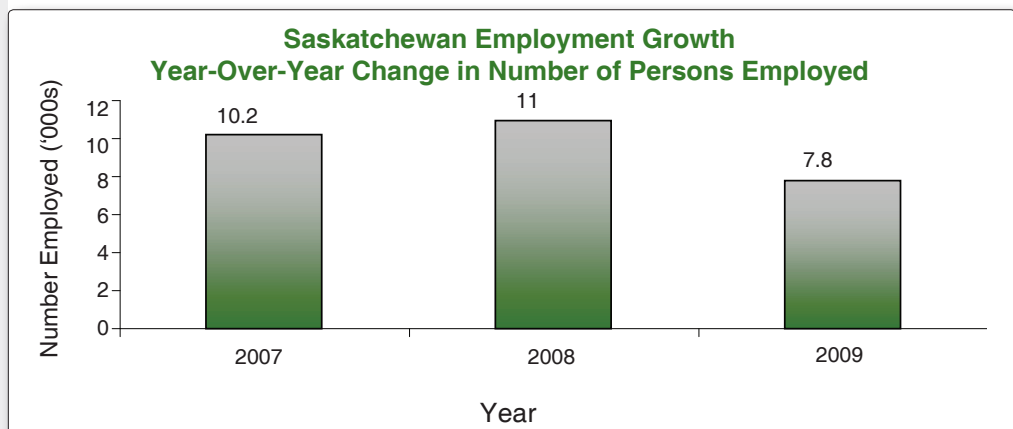
Real GDP - After record breaking growth rates in 2008, 2009 was a difficult year across most of the globe. While China, India and Brazil recorded positive growth in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and Japan all suffered decreases in real GDP. Overall, world GDP contracted by 2.2 per cent.

Saskatchewan was not immune. While the severity of the impact on the potash sector was unexpected, Saskatchewan fared much better than most other provinces.



Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance, Budget 2010-11 – Budget Summary, p7.

Employment Growth - Saskatchewan was the only province to experience significant employment growth in 2009, although slightly lower than the previous two years.

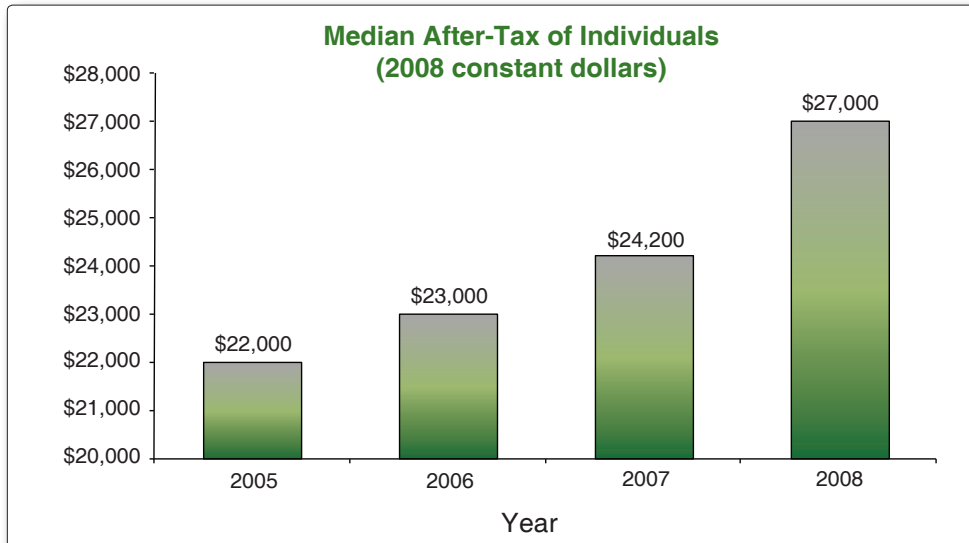


Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance, Budget 2010-11 – Budget Summary, p. 28.

2. Ensuring citizens have a higher level of disposable income to use at their discretion

Median After-Tax Income of Individuals (2008 constant dollars) –

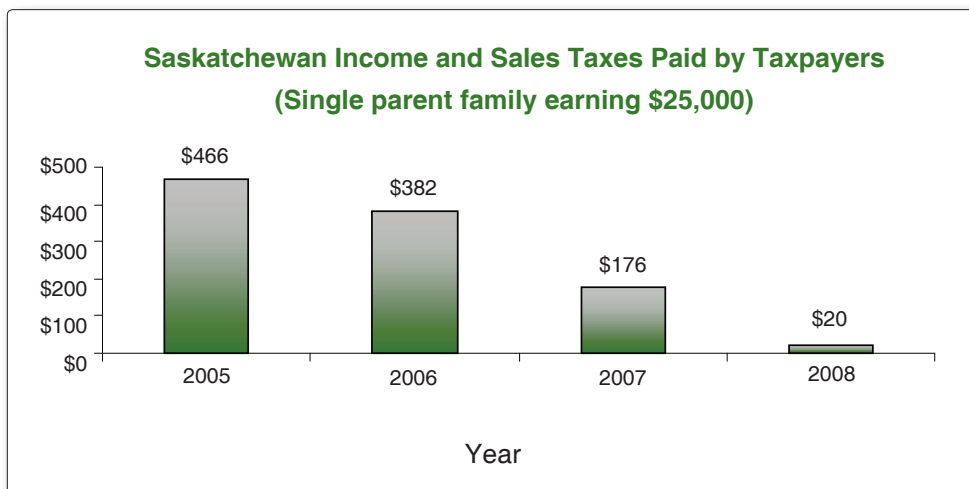
The median after-tax income is a measure of the amount of money that individuals have to meet their living expenses. From 2005 to 2008, the median after-tax income for individuals has risen from \$22,000 to \$27,000 – an increase of nearly 23%.



Source: Statistics Canada. CANSIM Table 2020602

Family Disposable Income – Saskatchewan's tax levels for representative taxpayers provide an indication of the amount of after-tax or disposable income available to residents. Declining tax levels are therefore suggestive of improvements in the relative prosperity of residents.

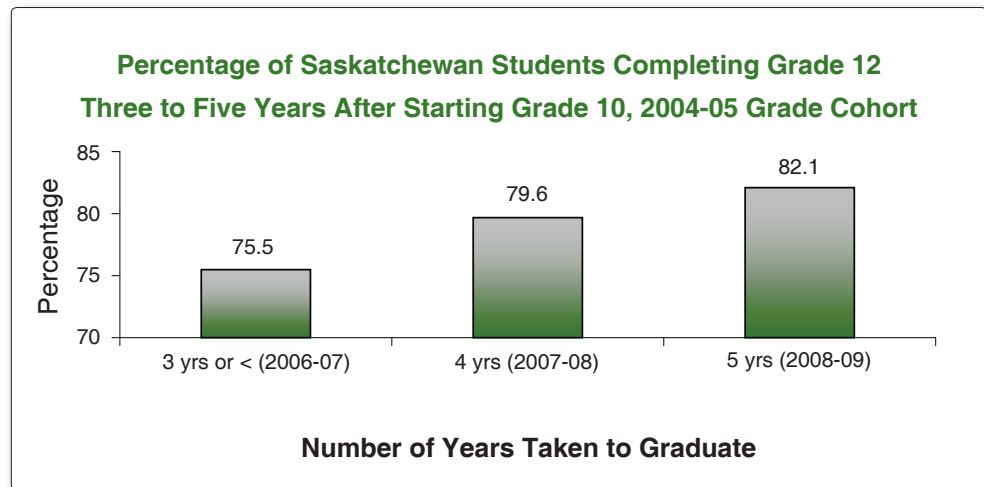
In 2008, a single parent family earning \$25,000 paid \$20 in Saskatchewan income and sales tax (net of the Saskatchewan Low Income Tax Credit) versus \$466 in 2005, as a result of the indexation of the income tax system and the personal income tax reductions by our government.



Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance Annual Report 2008-2009

3. Removing the barriers to independence

Percentage of Saskatchewan Students Completing Grade 12 Three to Five Years After Starting Grade 10 - In the interests of a strong and growing economy, it is desirable that Grade 12 graduation or equivalency be the minimal achievement by Saskatchewan youth. Although the indicator is impacted greatly not only by education sector partners, but by the students and their families, it measures the success of students in programs and services, and the sector's contributions to positive outcomes for learners.



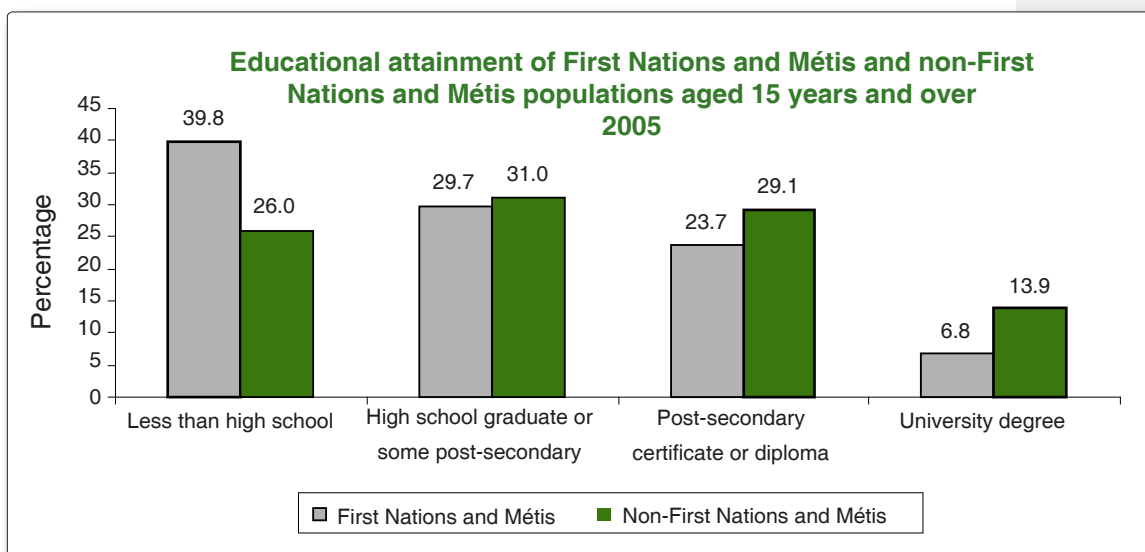
Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. (2009). Student Data System. Regina, SK

Note: Data was suppressed when the Grade 10 cohort included fewer than five students. Data includes enrolments in all schools (provincially funded, First Nations, independent), except offshore and custody and care enrolments. Data does not include students in the Functionally Integrated Adaptation Program or students who transferred to another province/country. Students in the Grade 10 cohort include those who are enrolled in Grade 10 for the first time and are registered in two or more courses. Completions are considered to be any student who graduates in a Saskatchewan school through the 24 credit, Adult Secondary or Alternative Education program.

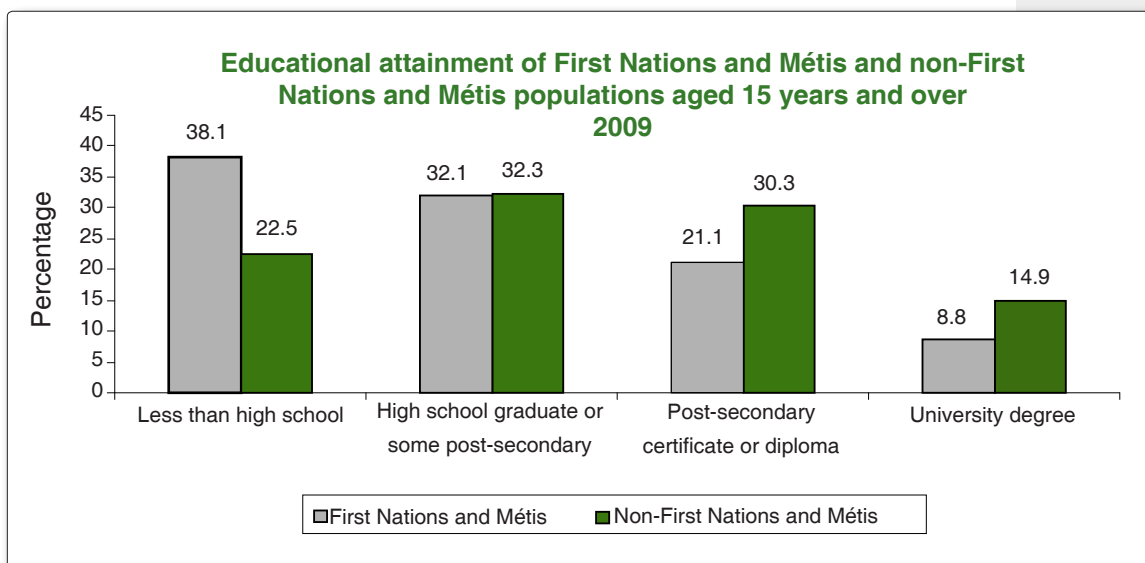
Educational attainment of First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis populations aged 15 years and over – Comparing 2005 to 2009

Higher educational attainment is an important factor in gaining and maintaining employment. Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to have higher wages, sustained employment, shorter periods of unemployment, and better health outcomes.

The charts below show that despite a slight improvement in educational attainment for both First Nations and Métis and non-First Nations and Métis populations between 2005 and 2009, persistent gaps remain between these two populations. First Nations and Métis learners are less likely to graduate from high school and to pursue a post-secondary education.

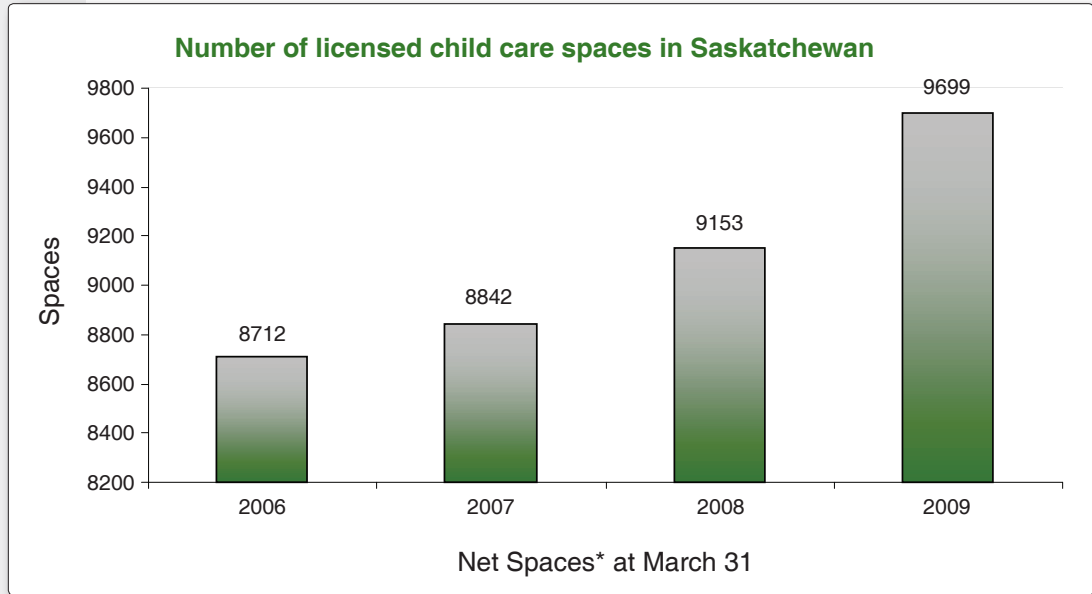


Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

Number of Operational Licensed Child Care Spaces in Saskatchewan
- High-quality child care services contribute to Saskatchewan's economy, both now and in the future, by providing support to parents who want to participate in today's labour force, or to seek post-secondary education. The number of available licensed child care spaces has increased by more than 11 per cent since April 1, 2006.

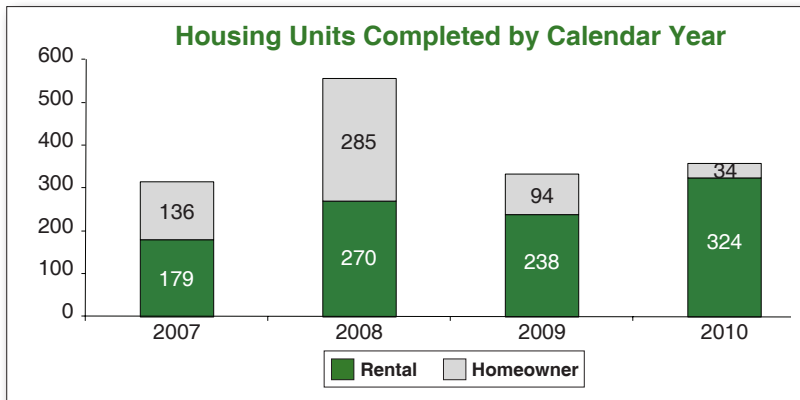


Source: Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2010-11 Plan

4. Providing financial support to our most vulnerable citizens

Housing Units Completed – Stable and affordable housing enables people to work, engage in education and skills training opportunities, and participate in their community by increasing their financial savings and security of tenure.

The Province has made a number of funding commitments to increase the supply of affordable housing. Since 2007, there has been significant progress in developing new affordable rental and homeowner units. Each new investment has a multi-year life which has the potential to serve several individuals and families.

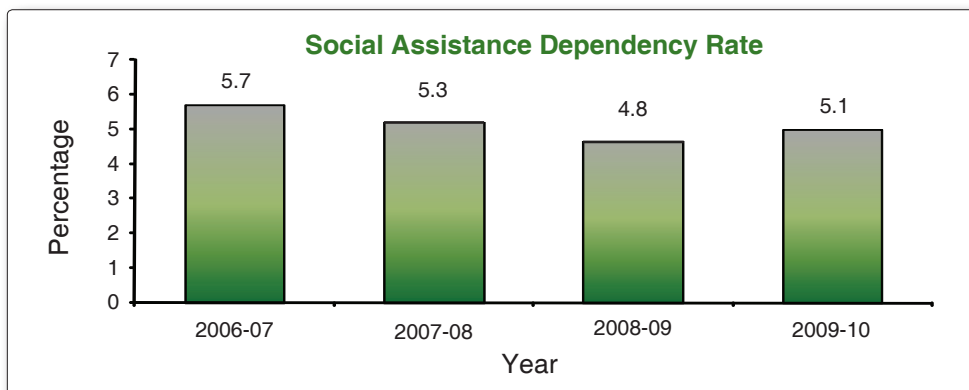


Source: SHC, Housing Program and Service Design Status Report

Social Assistance Dependency Rate - Reflects the proportion of the population (ages 0 to 64) who depend on social assistance for any or all of their income. This proportion does not include statistics for First Nations people residing on reserve.

The measure illustrates our government's efforts to ensure a secure Saskatchewan that is a safe place to live and raise a family. It also addresses our goal of providing income for basic needs to individuals without alternative means of financial support.

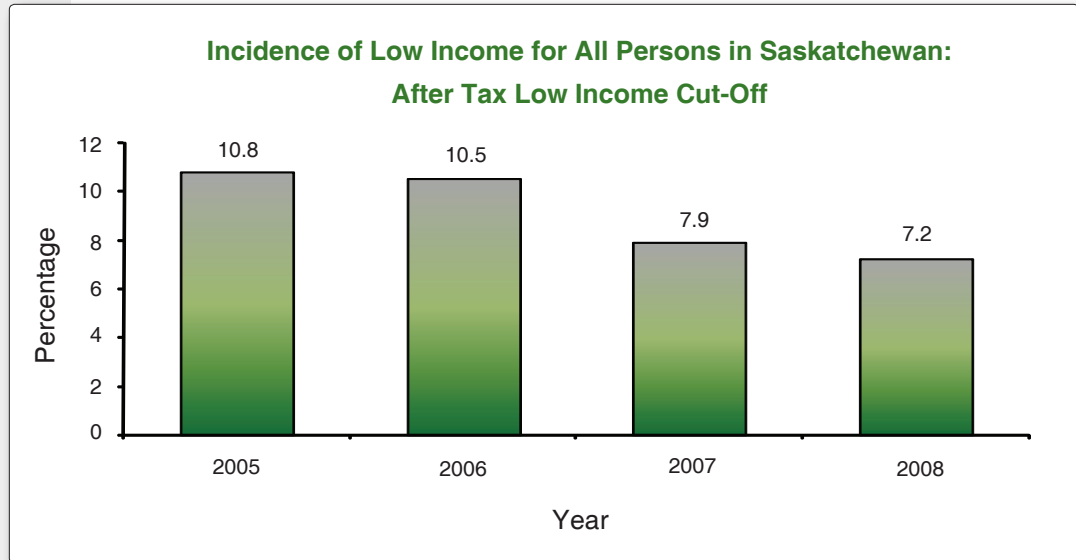
Over the last four years, the dependency rate has decreased from 5.7 per cent to 5.1 per cent. Saskatchewan dependency rates remain consistent with the national average from year to year.



Source: Social Services, Social Worker Information Network (SWIN) and Saskatchewan Health Covered Population

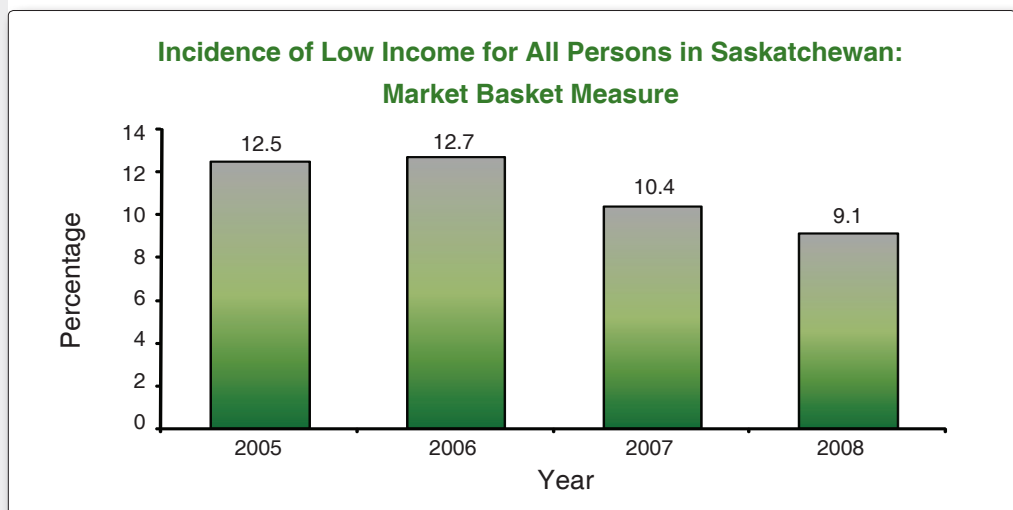
General Measures of Poverty

Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) - Represent an income threshold where a family is likely to spend 20 percentage points more of its income on food, shelter and clothing than the average family, leaving less income available for other expenses such as health, education, transportation and recreation. LICOs are calculated for families and communities of different sizes. The incidence of low-income reported in the figure below is based on after-tax income (LICO-AT).



Source: *Income Trends in Canada 1976-2008*, Statistics Canada 13F0022XIE

Market Basket Measure (MBM) is a measure of low income based on the cost of a specified basket of goods and services. A person or family in low income is someone whose disposable family income falls below the cost of the goods and services in the Market Basket in their community or community size. Many consider the MBM to be more of an absolute rather than a relative measure of low income.



Source: *Income Trends in Canada: 1976-2008*, Statistics Canada, 13F0022XIE

Moving Forward

Our government is committed to helping those most vulnerable in our society. Since being elected, we have introduced and enhanced a number of initiatives and programs to achieve that goal. We will continue to monitor our actions closely to ensure that the changes that we have implemented are translating into positive results in assisting those who need help the most.

We recognize that there is still more that needs to be done. Governments everywhere depend upon their citizenry to assist with challenges that affect the quality of life of their family, friends and neighbours. Fortunately, in Saskatchewan, our people have a history of confronting seemingly insurmountable problems with a spirit of generosity and a prairie work ethic that has helped us overcome the most formidable barriers. The people of this province are the best partners in the world, and our government will continue to work with health providers, social workers, community based organizations, educators and concerned citizens in communities throughout Saskatchewan to address the many factors contributing to poverty. Without our dedicated and hard-working partners in the community, our government is powerless to address this problem.

The four pillars of the poverty reduction represent a holistic approach that examines not only the financial end that determines poverty but rather the root causes that create a citizen's inability to achieve a higher level of success. Within the guidance of these pillars, our government will continue to move forward with concrete actions to create a climate for success and a better quality of life for everyone in the Province of Saskatchewan.

Support Services for Low-Income Individuals and Families

- **Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP)**
A program of last resort for families and individuals who, for various reasons, including disability, illness, low income or unemployment, cannot meet basic living costs.
- **Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA)**
An income support program designed to assist applicants participating in pre-employment programs and services or those who are “job ready” and seeking employment.
- **Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID)**
A program, designed in collaboration with members of the disability community, to provide income support for persons with significant and long-term disabilities separate from the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP).
- **Provincial Training Allowance (PTA)**
An income support program for low-income students enrolled in approved basic education, Workforce Development initiatives or in Quick Skills Training.
- **Saskatchewan Employment Supplement (SES)**
A monthly benefit that supplements the income earned by lower-income parents to assist with the child-related costs of working.
- **Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS)**
A monthly benefit that assists low-income families with children and persons with disabilities with their housing costs. The supplements are available to working families and individuals with disabilities as well as those receiving SAP or TEA benefits. For households on SAP or TEA, the supplement is in addition to the shelter support provided through those programs.
- **Child Care Subsidy (CCS)**
A monthly subsidy that helps Saskatchewan families meet the costs of licensed child care. Subsidies are provided directly to child care facilities to reduce the fees charged to eligible parents. Subsidies vary on a sliding scale with income – the lower the income, the higher the subsidy.
- **Seniors Income Plan (SIP)**
Provides a monthly supplement to seniors who have little or no income other than the federal Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

- **Saskatchewan Low Income Tax Credit**

The government replaced and enhanced the provincial Sales Tax Credit with a new Low-Income Tax Credit, effective July 2008, to reduce the taxes of lower-income provincial residents. The credit is fully refundable, meaning that a person does not have to pay income tax in order to receive the benefits.

- **Transportation Subsidies**

A Discounted Bus Pass Program is available in several cities in our province.

Mileage costs are paid to social assistance clients who use private vehicle transportation for funerals, medical appointments and other approved travel.

- **Social Housing Rental Program**

The Social Housing Rental Program provides suitable, adequate and affordable rental housing for low-income seniors and families in more than 280 communities throughout the province where the market currently cannot respond to their needs.

- **Affordable Housing Rental Program**

The Affordable Housing Rental Program provides moderate-income families and individuals with an opportunity for suitable rental accommodations in communities with an active private market. It is a subsidized program, with rents at an affordable level below average market rents in the community.

- **Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB)**

An amount paid monthly by the federal government for each child in a family who is dependent on the family's income.

- **GST Rebate**

An amount paid quarterly by the federal government dependent on the individual's income.

- **Subsidized Prescription Drug Costs**

Any prescription drug listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary will not cost any more than \$15 per prescription for all children 14 years of age or under and some seniors depending on their income.

- **Active Families Benefit**

The new Active Families Benefit helps families with the cost of their children's participation in cultural, recreational and sport activities by providing a refundable tax benefit of up to \$150 per year for children aged six to 14 years registered in cultural, recreational or sport programs.

- **Family Health Benefits**

A range of health benefits are available for lower-income families who meet financial criteria. These benefits help families pay for several children's health services, plus some services for adult family members.