

## **Report from the Legislature July 23, 2020**

After months of isolation and social distancing, people across the province are starting to return to more regular routines. Almost everything is open again, most of us are back to work, and we are finally able to enjoy many of the activities we love while continuing to take the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Recently, a number of COVID-19 restrictions were revised or lifted from various amenities in the province. These include:

- Drive-in theatres: reducing distance between vehicles to two metres, down from five metres.
- Retail guidelines, libraries and places of worship: reducing the length of time that returned or donated items must be held to 24 hours, down from 72 hours.
- Fitness facilities: permitting 24-hour access to fitness facilities, and ensuring registration of guests to facilitate contact tracing, if required.
- Campgrounds: laundry facilities are now able to open following new guidelines for safe operation.

Yard and garage sales, as well as door-to-door canvassing and sales are now permitted. Social distancing and frequent hand hygiene are encouraged and there should be no sharing of common materials including pens, pencils, and promotional materials.

Saskatchewan had one of Canada's strongest rates of job growth in June as more of the economy re-opened and our province continued its recovery from the impact of COVID-19. Another positive sign is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business business barometer index for small business confidence which ranks Saskatchewan's business confidence above the national average and second-highest among provinces.

Subsidies and supports are available to employers and employees who may need them. For example, the Saskatchewan Temporary Wage Supplement Program provides a temporary wage supplement to eligible workers helping Saskatchewan's most vulnerable citizens through the COVID-19 pandemic. To learn more, I would encourage you to visit [www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca).

Recently, our government approved its first parcel of work packages to be completed through the Accelerated Site Closure Program (ASCP). The first parcel of work packages includes around 300 well and 300 flowline abandonments, 75 facility decommissions and 700 other activities. This will engage up to 50 service companies across the province, helping one of our most hard-hit industries, the oil

and gas sector, and help to develop a program that gets Saskatchewan companies back to work.

Continued investment in agricultural technology will be a driving force in our economic recovery and growth. That is why applications are now being accepted for the new \$1 million AgTech Growth Fund – the first program of its kind dedicated to the development of agricultural technologies in Saskatchewan.

Investments in local projects and initiatives will also be key to job creation. 303 new projects totaling more than \$16.6 million of provincial investment under the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program (MEEP) 2020 were recently announced. The \$150 million program is part of our plan to build a strong province and stimulate its economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can learn more about the program at [saskatchewan.ca/municipal-economic-enhancement](https://saskatchewan.ca/municipal-economic-enhancement).

Major infrastructure projects are planned and being completed to improve campsites and visitor experiences in Saskatchewan Provincial Parks. Recently, a brand-new pool opened at Buffalo Pound Provincial Park.

This year our government announced \$10.3 million in improvements to our provincial parks as part of our government's \$7.5 billion two-year capital plan. Parks are now welcoming visitors for recreation and relaxation. Health restrictions in response to COVID-19 remain in place and we ask that visitors comply within the guidelines to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone.

As we continue to ease restrictions and reopen our economy, it is important to monitor symptoms and encourage testing to prevent any further outbreaks. Universal testing for COVID-19 is now available, even in the absence of symptoms. A referral for testing can be made by contacting the Healthline at 811.

If you have questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, I encourage you to visit [saskatchewan.ca/COVID19](https://saskatchewan.ca/COVID19).