

Report from the Legislature July 9, 2020

A unique, three-week session of the legislature recently came to an end in what we now consider our “new normal”. This involved the implementation of many “firsts” including new health protocols and record investment in Saskatchewan industries.

Our government introduced and passed a provincial budget that includes record investment in health, education and economic stimulus that provides the necessary funds to help financially recover from the impact of the COVID-19.

This includes:

- A record \$435 million for mental health and addictions supports and services;
- \$20 million to reduce surgical wait times;
- \$80 million to build new long-term care facilities in Grenfell and La Ronge and to support renewal projects in 51 long-term care facilities across the province;
- Record funding for schools, including \$2.6 billion to support Prekindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms, early learning and child care, libraries and literacy;
- \$278 million in no-strings-attached Municipal Revenue Sharing – an 11 per cent increase and the highest amount ever provided under the program;
- \$150 million for the Municipal Economic Enhancement Program for municipal infrastructure projects; and
- \$715 million to improve highway safety and efficiency, including more than 20 new passing lanes to be constructed in 2020.

On the final day of the legislative sitting, government members along with the Official Opposition acknowledged and thanked retiring Members of the Legislative Assembly. All eleven retiring MLAs were given an opportunity to address the Assembly for the final time. They shared fond memories, accomplishments, and hope for the future, filling the Assembly with laughter, joy and a few tears. I know that all Members work hard on behalf of their constituents and I wish them the best in their next chapter.

This past week, SaskEnergy released its 2019-20 annual report. Highlights include nearly \$1 million in rebates to residential and commercial customers who installed energy efficient natural gas furnaces and heating systems.

In the first year of the federally-imposed carbon tax, SaskEnergy collected approximately \$65 million while TransGas collected \$14 million. This senseless taxation is not an environmental plan, it’s a taxation plan that has hurt our energy industry as well as many others. Our government will continue to fight this unfair and unnecessary tax and looks forward to winning the battle for Saskatchewan people and industries.

Our government's Re-Open Saskatchewan plan is working well with almost all businesses returning to full operations with new guidelines and social distancing policies in place.

Casinos, bingo halls and rodeos may now resume. Starting July 16, live music and entertainment can once again be enjoyed in local venues. Other updates to Re-Open Saskatchewan include seating areas now being permitted at drive-in theatres, as well as public and farmers markets. If you attend, physically distancing will be required, and it is recommended that only members of the same group should be seated together.

Guidelines for the second half of Phase 4 are now available on Saskatchewan.ca. This includes:

- Temporary food vendor guidelines;
- Racing and rodeo guidelines;
- Banquet and conference facility guidelines; and
- Car Show and Trade Show guidelines

Guidelines for door-to-door solicitation, items by donation and garage sales are currently being developed.

With the warmer weather, I encourage residents to go out and explore Saskatchewan. Our provincial parks are open to enjoy with new guidelines and protocols that will keep you and your family safe. What better time than now to rediscover your own backyard? Whether it is a day trip to one of our provincial parks, or an afternoon tour of a museum, there is so much to do and see right here at home. For any questions on tourism and COVID-19 guidelines, please visit tourismsaskatchewan.com.

If you will be visiting one of our Provincial Parks, please remember to bring your own sanitizer, maintain a physical distance from others, and please respect the restrictions and rules that are in place.

Most importantly, enjoy your summer, Saskatchewan. Have fun and stay safe!