

# THE UPSTREAM ECONOMY

A Generational Dialogue for Transformative Change

#transformSK



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The #TransformSK report — tabled jointly by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Saskatchewan Construction Association, Saskatchewan Mining Association, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan division of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters — outlines 45 *calls to action* as the foundation for a comprehensive, provincial dialogue to embrace *transformational change*, and cultivate shared, long-term social and economic prosperity.

This document is the result of the most extensive pan-industry consultation in Saskatchewan history, conducted between November 2016 and January 2017, which encompassed 60 roundtable discussions in 14 communities, and a three-month effort to collect input electronically via written and video submission. The process yielded hundreds of ideas from thousands of Saskatchewan residents, including feedback from the five founding partners, as well as organizations championing business, economic development, education, healthcare, organized labour, rural and urban governance, Indigenous Peoples, and the environment.

Although such broad-based consultation rarely concludes with universal consensus, several common themes *did* emerge. Most notably, the need to concentrate efforts on and direct investment in *upstream transformation* was widely cited as Saskatchewan's greatest opportunity to generate growth, wealth, and an ever-improving quality of life for the next generation. Four specific pillars were identified as cyclical engines of *upstream transformation*:

- **Education:** Graduating informed, prepared global citizens by positioning schools as the hub of our social and economic support model;
- **Health:** Nurturing the healthiest people and communities on Earth by institutionalizing innovation in service delivery and prioritizing preventative care;
- **The economy:** Building a thriving, resilient economy that leverages our strengths as a commodity-producing jurisdiction, while fostering an environment of innovation, and aggressively incenting and sparking new investment in advanced technologies, environmental sciences, and value-added industries; and
- **Diversity:** Respecting differences in culture, heritage, and thought as our supreme strength, and embracing the potential of all Indigenous Peoples.

Sustained progress, however, requires a conducive ecosystem. And, at the core of that system, is outcomes-based leadership and accountability — not just on the part of the provincial government, but also on behalf of its federal and municipal counterparts, community partners, and individuals. We all have a shared responsibility in the change we want to see.

Additionally, this report establishes a clear set of guiding principles, to provide the criteria and minimum benchmark for *transformative* policy and action, including in other targeted areas of priority focus, from world-class infrastructure and environmental stewardship to amplifying the Saskatchewan story, both at home and abroad.

*Transformational change* is a living process — it does not start or stop with any consultation or report. Nor are all the calls to action contained in this document finite *recommendations* or the policy positions of the five founding partners. Rather, they are a reflection of what was said by participants in the consultation process: Saskatchewan-sourced ideas, some big and some small, meriting further analysis and study (refer to the full report for detail on each *call to action*):



## OUTCOMES-BASED LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Implement a five-year rolling financial planning cycle within the Government of Saskatchewan and all Saskatchewan municipalities.
2. Appoint a fast-moving, non-political agency responsible for prioritizing and implementing transformational change efforts in government.
3. Clearly define the long-term role of Crown corporations.
4. Transition Deputy Ministers to departmental, competency-based Chief Executive Officers.
5. Reintroduce mandate letters for all Cabinet Ministers and public sector CEOs (formerly Deputy Ministers), aligning staff and budgets to measurable outcomes.
6. Build a culture of effective governance by requiring all Ministers and CEOs (including Crown, academic, and agency CEOs under their purview) to take regular governance training. This same training should also be taken by Members of the Legislative Assembly.
7. Proactively reward and recognize innovation, while disincentivizing the status quo in the public sector.
8. Allocate funding and incentives on a regional, not jurisdictional, basis — accelerating collaboration between ministries, agencies, municipalities, and First Nations.
9. Enact and maintain regulation only if it is outcomes-based, evidence-based, risk-based, and economically achievable.
10. Require municipal utility services to be delivered on a cost-recovery basis where provincial funds are provided.
11. Consider legislative changes authorizing municipalities to generate reasonable own-source revenue.
12. Budget for and retain a high level of technical expertise within government ministries.
13. Remove major research and development (R&D) projects in the provincial interest from Crown budgets and operations, repositioning them under a Ministry of Technology & Entrepreneurship.

## EMBRACING THE POTENTIAL OF ALL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

14. Fully consult on, review, and execute a 'Saskatchewan response' to the calls to action outlined within Canada's Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) report.
15. Introduce a graduated plan to expand the role of Indigenous Peoples in government procurement.
16. Proactively work with tribal councils, First Nations bands, and Métis communities to offer supports to implement and/or build the capacity of investment and economic development strategies.

## GRADUATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL CITIZENS

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17. Commit, at all levels of government, to a *Saskatchewan Students' Charter*.
18. Support parents' responsibility in child development, utilizing schools as community hubs to enhance the availability of public education and professional resources.
19. Require all new Saskatchewan high school teachers to obtain supplemental education beyond a teaching degree in the subject area(s) for which they are providing instruction.
20. Ensure 'money follows the need' – that schools receive the necessary funds to react to changing special needs realities throughout the year.
21. Require system-wide, single-table planning between all post-secondary academic institutions.
22. Ensure cross-cultural learning opportunities are embedded or offered in all primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions.

## THE HEALTHIEST PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES ON EARTH

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23. Immediately shift policies and resources toward preventative and community-based service to reduce the 'downstream' financial pressure on the acute care system.
24. Embark on an independent panel review process to evaluate regulation, policy, and practice, to ensure the best-suited healthcare professionals are providing the proper patient services.
25. Maximize the quality and efficiency of public healthcare delivery through the continued use of private medical partnerships.
26. Pilot, for full-scale evaluation, a universal basic income (UBI) program.

## A GREENER SASKATCHEWAN

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27. Lead a national dialogue in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders on the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation of petroleum resources.
28. Recognize, reward, and expand agricultural practices that sequester carbon.
29. Divert existing public expenditures to create the Saskatchewan Green Innovation Fund, stimulating new private sector investment in environmental sciences and technologies.
30. Investigate R&D and production opportunities in modular nuclear power generation.
31. Create a funded, multi-generational plan to best protect and leverage Saskatchewan's precious water resources.

## CELEBRATING THE SASKATCHEWAN STORY

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32. Administer a multi-year public awareness campaign that promotes Saskatchewan business innovation, tourism destinations, and cultural heritage internally to the people of our province.
33. Assemble a Team Saskatchewan ambassador program to assist provincial agencies and institutions in international recruitment.



## WORLD-CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

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34. Develop a clear decision-making protocol to direct regional infrastructure funding.
35. Develop an action plan linking both public and private sector partners to ensure 100 per cent cellular and high-speed mobile internet connectivity across Saskatchewan (minimum 4G LTE standards).
36. Introduce Government of Saskatchewan Infrastructure Bonds, available to institutional, public, and private sector investors, to help finance infrastructure renewal.
37. Widen the directive of the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership (STEP) to serve as a province wide coordinating body with other government-funded and community-based partners to expand air service and trade-enabling infrastructure.
38. Continue the good work of Priority Saskatchewan, and proactively engage with small and medium-sized businesses in the province to increase their competitiveness and role in the local procurement supply chain.
39. Endeavour to position Saskatchewan as a global centre of excellence for the analysis and application of *big data*.

## BUILDING A RESILIENT, THRIVING & DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

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40. Strive to foster the most competitive business climate in Canada, as measured in part by the total tax burden.
41. Embed entrepreneurship as a core part of the K-12 curriculum. A provincial youth industry-education strategy would serve as an effective mechanism for co-delivery.
42. Rollout North America's most aggressive Angel Investment Tax Credit.
43. Direct policy and programming to encourage and resource pay-for-success models, such as social impact bonds.
44. Introduce a royalty tax credit, rewarding the use of Saskatchewan and Indigenous sourced content in resource development supply chains.
45. Optimize investment attraction efforts across Saskatchewan through the conception of a single window, province wide rapid response unit.

## BACKGROUND

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On June 1, 2016, The Hon. Kevin Doherty delivered the 2016-17 provincial budget — his first as Minister of Finance. Anchored by sluggish commodity prices and a projected deficit that ballooned steadily through the year, the rallying cry amongst policymakers centred around the need for *transformational change* — finding new, innovative approaches to stimulate growth, protect long-term prosperity, and improve the quality of life for all Saskatchewanians.

It soon became clear that realizing this ambitious goal would require extensive outreach and collaboration across political, economic, geographic, and cultural lines. No single entity could tackle the conversation on its own. That's why, in September 2016, five of the province's most prominent business support organizations — the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Saskatchewan Construction Association, Saskatchewan Mining Association, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan division of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters — came together to launch *#TransformSK* — what would become the largest pan-industry consultation in Saskatchewan history.

Over the span of three months, between November 2016 and January 2017, this consortium — representing key sectors of the provincial economy — toured across Saskatchewan, hosting 60 in-person public and targeted consultations in 14 communities, asking three simple questions:

- What are our largest challenges?
- What are our greatest opportunities?
- And, what are our best ideas for transforming Saskatchewan?

The group also established [www.transformsk.ca](http://www.transformsk.ca) — a website where any organization or individual could provide comments via written or video submission. In total, the process yielded hundreds of ideas, representing input from thousands of Saskatchewan residents, including feedback from the five founding partners, as well as organizations championing business, economic development, education, healthcare, organized labour, rural and urban governance, Indigenous Peoples, and the environment.

## PROCESS

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Following public consultations, the five founding *#TransformSK* partners convened to collate hundreds of pages of notes and formal submissions. From the information collected, several common themes began to emerge. These themes formed the basis for this report.

It is important to note these *calls to action* are not necessarily finite *recommendations*, nor do they necessarily represent the individual or shared policy positions of the founding partners. Instead, they are 'big ideas' and concepts heard in the consultation process, meriting further research, consideration, and public dialogue.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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To the residents of Saskatchewan, *transformational change* is more than a political catch phrase — it is a call to action to shape and own our collective future.

While our province is rich in natural resources, our greatest strength remains our people — our unrelenting sense of community, our entrepreneurial spirit, and our willingness to roll up our sleeves and get to work. These same tenets are how we will realize prosperity in the years and generations ahead.



Photo courtesy of The Mosaic Company

As we move forward, however, it is important all stakeholders — from government and educational partners to business leaders and everyday citizens — share a common lens through which we view *transformation*. It is not the responsibility of government alone. We all have a role to play in being the change we want to see.

To lead us along a common pathway, in dialogue, in policy, and in action, this report has established a set of core, *transformational* principles. These values established the criteria and minimum benchmark for each of the calls to action outlined herein:

- **Outcomes-based:** A commitment to and strategic emphasis on achieving results;
- **Upstream-focused:** Addressing the root cause of our most important social and economic issues;
- **Data-driven decision-making:** Ensuring information influences action;
- **Sustainability over expedience:** Making decisions today for the betterment of tomorrow;
- **Indigenous reconciliation:** Respect and progress for Indigenous Peoples;
- **Collaboration:** We are all in this together;
- **Transparency:** A baseline of earned trust through honesty, integrity, and disclosure; and
- **Diversity:** Leveraging differences in thought and heritage to drive growth.

## NEXT STEPS

*Transformational change* is a living process — it does not start or stop with any consultation or report. Nor are all the calls to action contained in this document implementable overnight. This is the beginning of a generational dialogue that will require long-term commitment from policymakers, extensive cost modeling, expert analysis, and deep public engagement.

To help provide continuity and accountability, the #TransformSK partners are calling for (as detailed in *Call to Action #2*) the creation of a fast-moving, non-political agency responsible for implementing transformational change in government, across all departments and ministries. Reporting directly to the Premier, independent from the party in power, this entity should be comprised of both private and public sector representatives, and should issue an annual scorecard on the progress achieved over the preceding year.

This report also calls for the launch of a #TransformSK Advisory Council, to support and advise the work of the agency, and to ensure Saskatchewan sees the benefits of transformational change in a timely manner. The council would include representatives from the five founding partners, government, the Official Opposition, labour, health, education, and Indigenous Peoples.

**“Stop protecting the net and go get the puck.”**

## OUTCOMES-BASED LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

Any enduring transformational change begins with political will and effective governance. These characteristics are anchored in decentralized operational control, fiscal discipline, bipartisan cooperation, adherence to performance metrics, and a business-friendly approach to policy. But, above all else, our elected officials and their representatives must work every day to institutionalize transparency and cultivate an informed, engaged society.

### CALLS TO ACTION

#### 1. Implement a five-year rolling financial planning cycle within the Government of Saskatchewan and all Saskatchewan municipalities.

In politics, it can be a delicate balance between managing the narrative and acting in the vested long-term interests of the constituency. After all, the mandate to govern is often provided in durations much shorter than an elected official's ability to deliver upon that same mandate. Running deficits, for instance, may actually be 'the right thing to do' — so long as there is a realistic and articulate plan to get out of debt. By transitioning to a five-year rolling budget cycle and annual fiscal updates, governments would have sufficient bandwidth to exercise longer-term planning and execute multi-year investments, without the pressure of immediate political repercussions.

#### 2. Appoint a fast-moving, non-political agency responsible for prioritizing and implementing transformational change efforts in government.

Realizing and sustaining true *transformational change* will require stalwart leadership, cross-departmental and inter-ministerial cooperation, and focus — the same characteristics that have proven instrumental through other evolutions in approach to government, such as with Priority Saskatchewan.



Reporting directly to the Premier, a nimble, dedicated agency solely mandated to the coordination and implementation of transformative ideas would accelerate internal processes and remove bureaucratic obstacles en route to demonstrable change. This agency should include representation from both the private and public sectors.

#### 3. Clearly define the long-term role of Crown corporations.

Every provincial election, the future of Crown corporations drives a wedge between the electorate, and distracts from many other issues that deserve a heightened degree of attention. It's time — as a matter of provincial identity and business practice — to determine the long-term existence, scope, and purpose of Crown corporations, as well as other government agencies and institutions. This may mean the private sector playing a greater role in public service delivery. It may also translate into government maintaining or becoming more involved in functions where the public interest exceeds the effectiveness of private delivery. SaskTel, SaskPower, and SaskEnergy are three Crown corporations in particular, where economic realities (such as our reliance on rural-based agriculture and mining), vast geographical demands, social requisites (support for Indigenous and remote communities), and a limited tax base, make a compelling case for permanent public ownership. Regardless, decisions must be made through an open and transparent process to end the pendulum swings impacting Crown employee productivity and private sector planning.





#### **4. Transition Deputy Ministers to departmental, competency-based Chief Executive Officers.**

While there are many differences between government and business, there are lessons to be learned from each. The clear delegation of authority is one practice that would, if applied in government, advance overall performance and outcomes. Think of Cabinet as a board of directors and each Deputy Minister as the CEO of an organization owned by the same parent company. These distinct lines of responsibility would empower duly qualified CEOs (formerly titled *Deputy Ministers*) to take ownership of clear targets, set by Cabinet, and would help prevent elected officials from becoming unnecessarily involved in operational decisions.

#### **5. Reintroduce mandate letters for all Cabinet Ministers and public sector CEOs, aligning staff and budgets to measurable outcomes.**

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau first took office, he issued mandate letters to all Cabinet Ministers, publicly outlining their roles and responsibilities. This practice was borrowed from several notable leaders, including Premier Brad Wall during his first years in office. The Government of Saskatchewan should take this process one step further — also communicating measurable objectives and key performance indicators, operational and financial, to both Cabinet Ministers and public sector CEOs. Real-time progress and a public rendering of accounts should then be made available on the Government of Saskatchewan website.

#### **6. Build a culture of effective governance by requiring all Ministers and CEOs (including Crown, academic, and agency CEOs under their purview) to take regular governance training. This same training should also be taken by Members of the Legislative Assembly.**

As with many government-controlled not-for-profit organizations and public utilities, there is an expectation on those overseeing public entities, both as management and as boards, to exercise best practice in governance. Usually, that requires some element of ongoing training and skills development. Taxpayers should hold this same expectation of their elected officials.

#### **7. Proactively reward and recognize innovation, while disincentivizing the status quo in the public sector.**

It has been said that what is not moving forward is moving backward. This is the mindset that allows businesses to stay profitable in an age of evolving technology and mounting competition. The same mindset, coupled with a greater level of managed risk tolerance, must be ingrained into the culture of the public sector. Governments must work to negotiate contracts and establish employee and management programs that incent process and technological innovation on the frontlines; and, we as taxpayers must do a better job celebrating these achievements when they occur. The *Innovation in American Government Awards*, coordinated through Harvard's Ash Centre for Democratic Governance and Innovation, can be a model for jointly recognizing such contributions.

#### **8. Allocate funding and incentives on a regional, not jurisdictional, basis — accelerating collaboration between ministries, agencies, municipalities, and First Nations.**

Positives strides have been made in recent years to eliminate silos in policy and investment through pan-ministry, inter-agency, and multi-jurisdictional budgeting, reporting, and strategy. The Mid Sask Municipal Alliance, which is comprised of four rural municipalities, five towns, three villages, and the City of Humboldt, is a model for how a cooperative approach can more effectively address regional issues, from infrastructure and housing to health and educational services. But significant efficiencies across the province continue to go uncaptured. Although the *#TransformSK* consultations ceded no broad consensus on the issue of municipal amalgamation, there are other vehicles by which to benefit from a similar effect.

Through the provision of funding, governments have a powerful means to drive and incentivize further collaboration, reducing costs and streamlining the delivery of public services. The expansion of shortline railways and the building of infrastructure (with a supplemental focus on building infrastructure in the north) are two areas where this approach could make a consequential impact.

**9. Enact and maintain regulation only if it is outcomes-based, evidence-based, risk-based, and economically achievable.**

Business is seldom against regulation — *if* it is supported by fact, is achievable using current technology, is non-prescriptive, and does not unnecessarily increase the cost of compliance. Regulation that does not meet these criteria is what deters investment and ultimately erodes the tax base. The Province should immediately explore the creation of a joint government-industry task force, with full authority, to evaluate existing regulations and ‘rationalize’ any future rules in a manner that adheres to these standards, enforces trade agreements, maximizes value for money, and affords for reasonable flexibility.

**10. Require municipal utility services to be delivered on a cost-recovery basis where provincial funds are provided.**

On a cash flow statement, there are revenues and expenditures. If the expenditures encompassed under a specific revenue item exceed the revenue generated, changes need to be made. The allocation of public dollars, and how those dollars are generated, is no different. There are many cases across the province where funding has been provided on a non-cost-recovery basis. For example, if the Government of Saskatchewan provides funding for the construction of a water treatment facility in a municipality, that municipality should be required to demonstrate it has a system of taxation in place that collects sufficient fees to cover the costs of both the capital investment and ongoing operations.

**11. Consider legislative changes authorizing municipalities to generate reasonable own-source revenue.**

Current rules limit or complicate the ability of municipalities to collect new, own-source revenues to offset capital expenditures and service delivery. This legislation produces two adverse effects: One, it necessitates near-full reliance on provincial and federal governments for the appropriation of resources; and, two, it stifles competition amongst jurisdictions vying to attract new residents, secure business investment, and enhance quality of life. Municipal governments should have ample power to make strategic decisions on investment and taxation that allow communities and regions to differentiate and position themselves for growth.

**12. Budget for and retain a high level of technical expertise within government ministries and Crown corporations.**

To prevent the erosion of private and public sector productivity, government bodies and Crown corporations overseeing legislation, regulation, and procurement must be equipped with the technical capacities to make informed decisions and ensure reasonable enforcement. A reduction in the burden of unnecessary regulation, and the corresponding impact of freeing up government resources, should allow for elevated investment in knowledge and skill without additional spending.

**13. Remove major research and development (R&D) projects in the provincial interest from Crown budgets and operations, repositioning them under a Ministry of Technology & Entrepreneurship.**

There are suitable situations that call for significant public investment in scientific R&D, such as the recent exploration of carbon capture and sequestration technology. Especially in cases where the project is directly related to a publicly-held utility or asset, the investment should be managed under an independent authority — to ensure it is a true *investment* with a strategic purpose and intended return, and to avoid premature ‘cost creep’ in service delivery.

## EMBRACING THE POTENTIAL OF ALL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Throughout the #TransformSK consultations, 'better engaging Indigenous Peoples' was positioned synchronously as the province's greatest challenge, as well as its greatest opportunity. According to University of Saskatchewan Economist Eric Howe, closing the education gap alone would result in a \$90 billion net benefit in our lifetime. That's a big number. Beyond statistics, though, there are real people — neighbours, colleagues, and friends — who deserve to share in the same opportunity and prosperity. It is not an either-or equation. There is both a business case and a societal imperative to embracing the full potential of all Indigenous Peoples.

### CALLS TO ACTION

#### **14. Fully consult on, review, and execute a 'Saskatchewan response' to the calls to action outlined within Canada's Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) report.**

On June 2, 2015, the TRC of Canada released its executive summary, which included the findings of its nationwide consultation, along with 94 calls to action, charting the roadmap to redress the legacy of residential schools. Home to one of the largest Indigenous populations in Canada, representing roughly 16 per cent of the province's total population, Saskatchewan, its communities, and its residents, must consult on, review, and respond to the recommendations contained in the report, and continue to lead a dialogue to undo decades of institutionalized racism. This is not just a government priority. We all have a responsibility to bolster cultural awareness and a historical understanding across the province — in schools, businesses, and communities.

#### **15. Introduce a graduated plan to expand the role of Indigenous Peoples in government procurement.**

Procurement is one of the few devices government has at its disposal to propel meaningful change in private sector behaviour. Over a span of five years, government ministries and departments at all levels, Crown corporations, as well as public agencies and institutions, should rollout incremental increases in the share of procurement allotted for Saskatchewan-based, economically-competitive Indigenous content, recognizing Indigenous-owned businesses, and non-Indigenous businesses that have demonstrated a commitment to improving Indigenous participation in their respective workforces.

#### **16. Proactively work with tribal councils, First Nations bands, and Métis communities to offer supports to implement and/or build the capacity of investment and economic development strategies.**

Sustained prosperity for Indigenous Peoples starts with opportunity — to obtain an education, to secure reliable, well-paying jobs, and to create wealth through entrepreneurship. As the province enjoys economic expansion, we must ensure that Indigenous Peoples have every reasonable opportunity to participate and invest in Saskatchewan businesses. The Ministry of the Economy could play a leadership role in the identification of and preparation for these opportunities in the north and south of the province. It stands to reason that one of the most effective ways to nurture Indigenous workforce participation is to boost the number of Indigenous-owned and -operated enterprises Saskatchewan-wide.

## GRADUATING THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF GLOBAL CITIZENS

Every organization — from business to the public service — shares one universal input: *Human capital*. The quality of that input will fundamentally chart the pathway to success, both at home and in the international arena, where competing on cost and market access is no longer enough. Instead, Saskatchewan must lead the world in preparedness, entrepreneurship, foresight, innovation, ingenuity, and work ethic. We must renew our pledge to stand as global pioneers. That is, by no means, an easy task. In fact, the full, downstream effect of these investments will not be felt for at least 18 years — an entire generation nurturing young people through the primary and secondary school system, through to advanced training and the workforce. Education and community-based engagement are key. Schools must serve as the hub of our social and economic support model; and we must exercise the patience, matched with the necessary investment, to see it through.



Photo courtesy Keith Hershmillier

## CALLS TO ACTION

### 17. Commit, at all levels of government, to a Saskatchewan Students' Charter.

The introduction of a Saskatchewan Students' Charter would establish a common vision, a shared set of values, and a public commitment to work toward guaranteeing every child in the province, from pre-kindergarten up to the time of high school graduation:

- a. Equal per student base funding for education, both on and off First Nations;
- b. Affordable access to healthy food;
- c. Timely access to healthcare and mental health supports through the school system, including — but not limited to — counsellors, pediatricians, and nurses;
- d. An open, constructive, and safe learning environment;
- e. Year-round access to industry-best teachers and continuous education, including through distance learning tools;
- f. High-speed internet access in all classrooms;
- g. The right to fail — a progressing education that prepares young people for the challenges of life and the workforce;
- h. The right to literacy — to be equipped with the foundational skills for economic and social success;
- i. Appropriate staff-to-student ratios, allowing teachers to teach and students to receive the attention they need;
- j. Access to experiential learning opportunities, including through the use of advanced technology and cross-cultural exploration;
- k. Pre-kindergarten alternatives; and
- l. A voice in educational governance.

## “Sometimes our reaction to situations is like putting a band-aid on a broken leg.”

This initiative should be accompanied by a fundamental, top-down review of current methodology (class sizes, resource provision, accountability, curriculum, etc.) and delivery mechanisms. Charter schools and accelerated student learning pathways should be considered exploratory *options* in this review process.

### **18. Support parents’ responsibility in child development, utilizing schools as community hubs to enhance the availability of public education and professional resources.**

Child development is the primary responsibility of parents. It is therefore vital that parents feel supported by communities and empowered to make informed, balanced decisions related — but not limited — to nutrition, education, health, discipline, gender and cultural identity, and behaviour. Public workshops, private consultative services, and ‘virtual’ resources such as parental helplines should be standard approach to holistic family wellness.

### **19. Require all new Saskatchewan high school teachers to obtain supplemental education beyond a teaching degree in the subject area(s) for which they are providing instruction.**

In the *upstream economy*, education is the preeminent hinge in public policy. It can either be the engine of growth and prosperity, or the epicentre of stagnation and deficit. To graduate the next generations of global leaders, we need the world’s best teachers — trained and compensated accordingly. Under this *call to action*, in addition to the education degree currently required to obtain employment as a teacher in Saskatchewan, new high school teachers entering the profession would require, from a recognized institution, a second university degree, a two-year college diploma, or accredited journeyman status, specializing in the subject area(s) for which they will be providing instruction. Individuals with significant practical experience should also have the option to challenge that requisite through a prior learning and assessment recognition process. These specialized professionals don’t need to be located in each school, either. Distance learning tools should be used more frequently to share resources and ensure students are receiving their education from the most qualified available sources.

### **20. Ensure ‘money follows the need’ — that schools receive the necessary funds to react to changing special needs realities throughout the year.**

With the increasing mobility and urbanization of families, it is essential students who require special supports, such as educational assistants, speech pathologists, and educational psychologists, have continued access to those resources. Per student funding should be ‘attached’ to the individual as that student relocates or moves through the system.

### **21. Require system-wide, single-table planning between all post-secondary academic institutions.**

Given a population of less than 1.2 million people, Saskatchewan is home to an expensive and administratively burdensome post-secondary system. We have two universities, one polytechnic, four institutions dedicated to Indigenous and northern education, eight regional colleges, and dozens of career colleges and private training bodies. It is, however, *one system* — the various entities within that system should not ‘compete’ with one another. As such, the Government of Saskatchewan should require (and allocate funding on the basis of) single-table planning, to streamline the introduction of new course offerings, align course transferability through articulation agreements (an engineering student in Regina, for instance, should be able to seamlessly transfer to Saskatoon, and vice versa), recognize private training credentials, and distribute resources to support efficiencies in administration, registration, international recruitment, and facility utilization.

### **22. Ensure cross-cultural learning opportunities are embedded or offered in all primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions.**

Now more than ever, young people must be culturally aware and globally literate to understand the dynamic perspectives and pressures shaping our province. And there is no educational substitute for experience. While all schools should readily embrace the Essential Citizen Competency curriculum proposed by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, institutions at every level must build bridges by enriching cooperative learning opportunities in First Nations, Métis, and rural communities, as well as internationally.

## THE HEALTHIEST PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES ON EARTH

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Transformation is everyone's responsibility; but it starts at the root. Just as one cannot expect bumper crops from nutrient-depleted soil, we cannot expect to forge new frontiers without healthy people and communities from which to draw. Health and education are the 'eternal spring' or 'source' of the *upstream economy* — let's clear the dams holding us back.

### CALLS TO ACTION

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#### **23. Immediately shift policies and resources toward preventative and community-based service to reduce the 'downstream' financial pressure on the acute care system.**

By almost every measure, the cost of healthcare is substantial — and swelling. Our reliance on expensive acute care services, paired with our inability to reduce the dependency of the system for high-volume users, has resulted in an plethora of economic and societal 'side effects' — from reduced investment in other critical growth areas, to longer-than-necessary wait times, to a widening health disparity gap. An 'upstream-centric' approach to healthcare must include:

- a. An official review of seniors care, with a strategy to enhance home-based, community-based, and non-medical assistance (meet or exceed the 2020 targets set forth in the provincial government's 2016-17 health plan);
- b. A plan to ensure every Saskatchewan resident has — and has ready access to (partly through the application of remote communication and monitoring technology) — a family doctor by the year 2020;
- c. The implementation of a provincial food security policy, instituting standards, education, and cooperative programs to guarantee all Saskatchewan communities basic, affordable access to healthy food;
- d. A collaborative approach with cities and remote communities to improve affordable public transportation services to low-income individuals; and
- e. A multi-channel campaign to educate the public on the true cost of healthcare. This could include issuing annual 'statements' to Saskatchewan residents, outlining the cost of services used in the past year.

#### **24. Embark on an independent panel review process to evaluate regulation, policy, and practice, to ensure the best-suited healthcare professionals are providing the proper patient services.**

*The right patient, the right professional, the right way:* Providing a superior quality of patient care must remain the first and foremost priority of the health system. But consideration must also be given to *who* is providing that service, and if it could be provided by a different professional or in a different manner, with the same quality at a lower cost. Throughout the *#TransformSK* consultations, the widespread public belief was that additional efficiencies do indeed exist; and, to impartially identify and capitalize on those efficiencies, an independent panel review process must examine the full healthcare continuum, from government regulation to institutional practice.

#### **25. Maximize the quality and efficiency of public healthcare delivery through the continued use of private medical partnerships.**

The private sector has long played a pivotal role in healthcare delivery across Saskatchewan. Many doctors, chiropractors, and audiologists are private providers that have complemented the public patient care system. So long as the quality and availability of public health services are not degraded, the provincial government must aggressively champion this socially-responsible relationship through the utilization of privately-held assets and service channels.

#### **26. Pilot, for full-scale evaluation, a universal basic income (UBI) program.**

In 2015, the General Council of the Canadian Medical Association passed a motion in support of UBI. And, although the jury is still out on many pilot programs being administered around the world, including in Finland, one Canadian iteration alone stands as reasonable cause for further exploration.

The *MINCOME* experiment, conducted in the 1970s in Dauphin, Manitoba, led to better high school completion rates and an 8.5 per cent reduction in hospitalizations, without harming labour supply. Ontario is now rolling out with a pilot of their own, and Saskatchewan should follow suit, with a limited, costed pilot that secures existing income and does not dissuade individuals from pursuing employment.

## A GREENER SASKATCHEWAN

Despite recent shifts in commodity prices, resource development endures atop of the podium as a fundamental engine of the Saskatchewan economy and our unsurpassed quality of life. We must continue to capitalize on these strengths responsibly — embracing reduced greenhouse gas methods of energy production and seizing on global opportunities in research, advanced component and process integration, and commercialization, including in cold-weather and environmental technologies.

### CALLS TO ACTION

#### **27. Lead a national dialogue in partnership with Indigenous stakeholders on the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation of petroleum resources.**

The *social license* required to proceed with new resource development projects, such as the construction and expansion of pipelines, is largely garnered through public support. That support, however, is being increasingly influenced by a vocal but coordinated minority. The safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of Saskatchewan's petroleum resources is intrinsically linked to our social and economic health — provincially and nationally. By fully engaging the Indigenous community in all aspects related to the building and maintenance of energy infrastructure, new employment pathways will emerge, and ecological protection will continue to hold precedence.

#### **28. Recognize, reward, and expand agricultural practices that sequester carbon.**

Saskatchewan represents roughly 40 per cent of the arable farmland in Canada. To meet our CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction targets while supplying the booming global demand for food, Saskatchewan must recognize, build, expand research, and support implementation of world-leading agricultural practices that sequester carbon in soils and landscapes.

#### **29. Divert existing public expenditures to create the Saskatchewan Green Innovation Fund, stimulating new private sector investment in environmental sciences and technologies.**

This dedicated fund, capitalized through a diversion of resources from post-secondary primary research and under-performing agencies, should combine the use of research vouchers, tax credits, and grants, to enable Saskatchewan entrepreneurs, companies, and First Nations to invest in applied R&D that is concentrated on environmental sciences and technologies. Special consideration should be given to those converting waste streams into commercialized, value-added business ventures, as well as renewable energy. Note that this should be done through reallocation and not new spending.

#### **30. Investigate R&D and production opportunities in modular nuclear power generation.**

Small modular reactors, or SMRs, are rightfully breathing new life into Saskatchewan's nuclear debate. Historically, generating capacities afforded by traditional plants have far exceeded the application of a comparatively modest provincial grid. SMRs, however, offer more practical production loads at a fraction of the cost of a large-scale reactor — creating a low-carbon supply of affordable energy using local fuel sources.

#### **31. Create a funded, multi-generational plan to best protect and leverage Saskatchewan's precious water resources.**

From mining to agriculture, several of Saskatchewan's primary economic drivers are water intensive. Moreover, it is a cornerstone to our quality of life. Managing this critical resource and the infrastructure that supports it will require a visionary plan, broad stakeholder cooperation, and reliable, long-term funding.

## CELEBRATING THE SASKATCHEWAN STORY

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Around the world, the Saskatchewan brand is synonymous with ingenuity, quality, reliability, and integrity. It is in our DNA. We are immensely proud of our products and our pursuits, yet our best brand ambassadors — Saskatchewanians themselves — remain *quiet* champions. Sometimes, we're silent altogether. Yes, we are humble by nature, but we are also often uninformed of the great work going on around us. Cultures are largely products of behaviours — and, if we preserve a firm sense of humility while emboldening our united narrative, we've only scratched the surface on what we can accomplish.

### CALLS TO ACTION

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**32. Administer a multi-year public awareness campaign that promotes Saskatchewan business innovation, tourism destinations, and cultural heritage internally to the people of our province.**

We can't sell a story we don't know or believe in ourselves. Any internal campaign should be facilitated as a broad partnership, encompassing organizations like Tourism Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership (STEP), and should scale up existing initiatives in which we've already found success (the *Saskatchewaner*, for example).

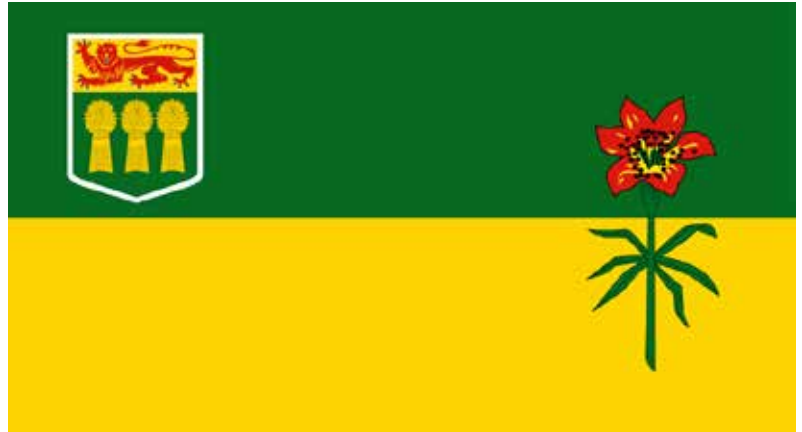
**33. Assemble a Team Saskatchewan ambassador program to assist provincial agencies and institutions in international recruitment.**

The *intellectual economy* has sparked a cross-border battle for the best and the brightest. Immigration has always been viewed as an economic catalyst; but, now, it is also a foundation for growth. Saskatchewan needs its own best and brightest on the front line, helping recruit global talent to our companies, academic institutions, and public service. This small, agile task force should bring together the top business leaders and public sector innovators to be the 'face' of Saskatchewan abroad.

## WORLD-CLASS INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

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When the Government of Saskatchewan unveiled its *Action Plan for Growth*, the word *infrastructure* appeared in the official document 83 times — and by no mistake. Saskatchewan is not only geographically



dispersed, it is increasingly reliant on exports to generate wealth. The linkages that bridge communities with utilities, and goods and services to markets, are essential building blocks to our provincial wellbeing. We are already staring down the barrel of an immense infrastructure deficit. We must renew our commitment to close that gap and invest in growth-enabling connectivity for future generations.

### CALLS TO ACTION

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**34. Develop a clear decision-making protocol to direct regional infrastructure funding.**

In direct support of the recommendation set forth by the Canadian Association of Management Consultants – Saskatchewan (CMC-Saskatchewan), this call to action is intended to establish a consistent approach and toolset to the sharing of data, prioritization of investment, and coordination of standards, to facilitate the most expansive period of infrastructure renewal in our province's history. An online platform to transparently and concisely communicate these processes could drastically improve public and private sector engagement. Spending decisions, meanwhile, must be made as part of a regional, not *jurisdictional*, infrastructure strategy.

**35. Develop an action plan linking both public and private sector partners to ensure 100 per cent cellular and high-speed mobile internet connectivity across Saskatchewan (minimum 4G LTE standards).**

The business case for network connectivity in Saskatchewan is perhaps stronger than anywhere else in Canada. Our economic, educational, and social services needs are not concentrated in any one populated area. If we are going to leverage technology to drive down costs, improve



# “Let’s move to food security – rather than food charity.”

efficiencies, and reinvigorate our innovation capacity, we will need to embrace the ‘interconnectedness of things,’ as well as the infrastructure realities that come along with it. Consider the coming revolution in automated agriculture: Saskatchewan is better situated than any other jurisdiction to be a global leader in this space, but it will depend upon our ability to communicate with each other, and technology, at lightning-fast speeds. This principle has equal bearing in service-based industries as well. A financial services worker in Weyburn, for example, could serve as a community engagement lead for a provincial or national entity, interacting with customers and head office in the same day with little travel or incremental cost. *Connectivity* will be a precondition for rural economic development in the coming decade – which is why a strategy to expand service to northern communities must also accompany this plan.

## **36. Introduce Government of Saskatchewan Infrastructure Bonds, available to institutional, public, and private sector investors, to help finance infrastructure renewal.**

Record investments in infrastructure renewal must be augmented by alternative means of financing. The concept of government-backed infrastructure bonds would allow investors from within the province to receive a partial tax write-off and nominal rate of return, while supporting the future growth of Saskatchewan.

## **37. Widen the directive of the Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership (STEP) to serve as a province-wide coordinating body with other government-funded and community-based partners to expand air service and trade-enabling infrastructure.**

Under a strengthened mandate, STEP would be tasked with:

- a. Leading a provincial task force to raise the profile of airports as an economic driver, and facilitate new solutions to attract and retain air services (passenger and cargo) to key U.S. and international destinations;
- b. Proactively advising government on investments that support the development and/or renewal of trade-enabling infrastructure, including north-south trade corridors, as well as logistics services; and
- c. Identifying infrastructure opportunities in other Canadian provinces, and assisting Saskatchewan firms in preparing for and pursuing those projects through information sharing, business development missions, and supplier readiness initiatives.

## **38. Continue the good work of Priority Saskatchewan, and proactively engage with small and medium sized businesses in the province to increase their competitiveness and role in the local procurement supply chain.**

Priority Saskatchewan has been hailed by business organizations as one of the best examples of government responsiveness to industry. The commitment to procuring on best value – for the Saskatchewan taxpayer, and for the Saskatchewan economy – must realize steady progress and become institutionalized among all ministries, Crown corporations, and municipalities. As Priority Saskatchewan transitions its focus from *implementation* to sustaining success, it should divert existing resources to assist in enhancing the preparedness and competitiveness of Saskatchewan businesses in local supply chains.

## **39. Endeavour to position Saskatchewan as a global centre of excellence for the analysis and application of big data.**

The manner by which data is now collected and analyzed is changing the world. In every industry, it is changing how decisions are made, how organizations operate, and how public and private sectors plan for the future. According to IBM, 2.5 quintillion bytes of data are created each day – at such a rapid pace that 90 per cent of all data that exists has been generated in the past two years. Saskatchewan should strive to be a pioneer the application of this technology to drive both business and social innovation – a sector that is expected to grow to more than \$1.8 billion in Canada by 2020.

## BUILDING A RESILIENT, THRIVING & DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY

*Diversification* must be more than a variation on a theme. That's not to say we, as a province, must move away from our strengths. To the contrary: Advancing Saskatchewan's role in value-added sectors must be a central priority of governments at all levels. But we must also think big, and look beyond what we lean on today. Entrepreneurship and scalable growth should be goalposts by which we measure every policy; and we must do more than just *compete* for investment — we must be a forerunner in attracting it. Our borders are disappearing by the day.

### CALLS TO ACTION

#### **40. Strive to foster the most competitive business climate in Canada, as measured — in part — by the total tax burden.**

Akin to the sourcing of talent or the sale of goods and services, attracting investment is now subject to intense global competition. Businesses now evaluate opportunity across multiple regions, provinces, and countries, on merits ranging from the availability of skilled labour to, of course, taxation. The Government of Saskatchewan, as well as individual Saskatchewan communities, must welcome a unified mission to become not only the most competitive business environment in Canada, but also in North America — as measured, in part, by the cumulative corporate tax burden. A public dialogue exploring the introduction of a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) could contribute to the advancement of this climate — by simplifying cumbersome and costly Provincial Sales Tax (PST) exemptions and refund programs, and removing the 'layering of taxes' incurred by businesses and passed onto consumers.

#### **41. Embed entrepreneurship as a core part of the K-12 curriculum. A provincial youth industry-education strategy would serve as an effective mechanism for co-delivery.**

Saskatchewan's entrepreneurial spirit is rooted in our history. When farming equipment wasn't cutting it in the field, we invented a solution. When mining shafts were too unstable to tap into massive potash deposits, we came up with the Blairmore Ring. By nature, we roll up our sleeves and devise with new ways to get the job done. Times, though, have changed. *Entrepreneurism* is becoming increasingly sophisticated, requiring exposure to a growing list of skill sets — many of which didn't exist even a decade ago. To sow the next generation of businesses and business leaders, schools — in collaboration with educational partners such as the Saskatoon Industry Education Council, and the Regina and District Industry Education Council — must be sufficiently resourced to present entrepreneurship as a first-choice career option, paired with embedded learning in subjects such as financial literacy, human resources, and sales.

#### **42. Rollout North America's most aggressive Angel Investment Tax Credit.**

Access to capital is a major determining factor in the make-or-break success of start-ups, regardless of industry. By allowing 'angel investors' to write off losses (should they occur) and accelerate eligible small-scale, targeted investments made in Saskatchewan to support Saskatchewan ideas, we are inherently speeding up commercialization cycles, incentivizing new businesses, 'connecting' small pockets of local capital, and de-risking radical or disruptive innovation — including in the emerging *shared* and *creative economies*.

#### **43. Direct policy and programming to encourage and resource pay-for-success models, such as social impact bonds.**

A *social impact bond* (SIB) is a pay-for-performance contract between the government and a private entity, in which the government pays for social outcomes that result in taxpayer savings. In short, it removes the taxpayer risk incurred in social programming by paying out only in the case of achieved results. Private philanthropists may also act in place of, or complement, the funding role of government in SIBs. To maximize finite public dollars in a time of massive investment demands, the Government of Saskatchewan must accelerate the use of SIBs across every social sector and ministry, putting in place responsive mechanisms to react to new opportunities. Just this past September, a partnership between the Province, Mosaic Company Foundation, and Mother Teresa Middle School, partnered on a \$1 million SIB to improve student performance and graduation rates for children from economically disadvantaged homes — the first of its kind in Canadian schools, with the potential to save taxpayers \$1.7 million.



**44. Introduce a royalty tax credit, rewarding the use of Saskatchewan and Indigenous-sourced content in resource development supply chains.**

From oil and gas, to potash, to uranium, Canada’s natural resources are a key driver of business investment and economic wealth across the country, and in no place has that been more evident than Saskatchewan. But as supply chains diversify and commodity prices fluctuate, governments should consider alternate tools to encourage the further integration of domestic content in resource-centric private procurement activities. By implementing — ideally alongside reciprocal partners in other provinces — a royalty tax credit, primary extractors and processors would enjoy a reduction in provincial royalties proportional to the percentage of goods and services they have domestically sourced, with an added return for Saskatchewan-based Indigenous content (measured according to Priority Saskatchewan guidelines). While this will undoubtedly impact provincial royalty revenues, it should be amply offset by increases in both the resulting business and personal income tax bases.

**45. Optimize investment attraction efforts across Saskatchewan through the conception of a single window, province-wide rapid response unit.**

The process of business investment must be made as simple as possible, whether it is the expansion of an existing enterprise or the establishment of a new venture. Potential investors should only need to manage one relationship to access all the services and information required to make cognisant decisions, from permitting and labour market data to financial incentives (such as abatements) and technological support. Inter-ministerial and intra-provincial collaboration through a single-window access point is a notable step to standardizing responsiveness.

## FOUNDING PARTNERS



## SPONSORS



info@transformsk.ca  
Phone: 306-525-0171  
320 Gardiner Park Court  
Regina SK S4V 1R9

[www.transformsk.ca](http://www.transformsk.ca)