

Media Release

For immediate release

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Provincial Chamber of Commerce calls for greater investment in northern economic and social development

Today, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce released its Northern Business Task Force Report which contains recommendations focused on finding creative solutions to accelerate northern Saskatchewan's economic and social development. The report included 12 recommendations that addressed issues such as electricity rate codes, ice road closure dates, telecommunications coverage, and increasing subsidies for healthy foods.

The Northern Business Task Force was created by the Chamber in 2013 to examine issues and opportunities in Saskatchewan's northern communities and the group is made up of representatives from companies that operate in the northern part of the province. The Task Force held meetings throughout 2013 and 2014 and also hosted two tours of numerous remote northern communities that involved participants from the business community, government, and media.

All 12 recommendations are listed on the next page, and are discussed in greater detail throughout the report, which is available at www.saskchamber.com.

There has already been progress made on a number of the issues, but the Chamber's advocacy efforts will continue into 2015. Another northern tour will also be held in the coming months which will include people who have not been on the previous trips.

"The Task Force's recommendations are real solutions to some of the issues facing our northern communities," said Saskatchewan Chamber CEO Steve McLellan. "It is our goal to enhance the quality of life and the ability of businesses to operate competitively in the north, and this report is a solid starting point for that."

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Recommendations of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Northern Business Task Force Report

December 2014

- Increase efforts to encourage energy efficiency
- Change all northern communities from E03 electricity rate code to E02 code
- Adjust ice road closure dates on an annual basis
- Increase the provincial budget for northern roads by a meaningful amount every year
- Build the all-weather Garson Lake Road from La Loche to Fort McMurray
- Build an all-weather road from Highway 905 to Wollaston Lake
- Increase awareness of career opportunities and training options among northern residents
- Ensure that educational opportunities and attainment standards are comparable to southern Saskatchewan
- Ensure comparable access to bandwidth and cellular coverage for northern communities
- Increase Nutrition North Canada subsidy for healthy foods
- Continue to improve internal communication and cooperation between Crown Corporations and Ministries on northern issues
- The Premier and appropriate Ministers should visit Saskatchewan's remote northern communities