

Our Growth Strategy is Growing Up and Moving On

October 2013 was an important anniversary for the Saskatchewan Chamber; marking six years since we launched *The Sustainable Growth Strategy for the New Saskatchewan*. Looking back, we knew at the time what we were undertaking was big (the months spent pouring over statistics and measures gave us a scope of the project) but none of us really understood what an impact the Strategy would have on the policy landscape six years later.

The launch of the Growth Strategy was a natural evolution for the Saskatchewan Chamber. Our 2005 *Action Saskatchewan* initiative had concluded and its challenge of ‘Up Your Attitude’ had been heard. The people of the province were ready.

The premise of the Growth Strategy started out simple: What would Saskatchewan need if we wanted 1.5 million people to live here by 2030. The logic spread; what started as a population target, moved to housing, post-secondary education targets and community size. Eventually the growth strategy with its target of 1.5 million people became the fundamental driver of every policy effort put forward by the Chamber. We needed changes to happen to support the growth for which we were planning.

The response was amazing! Infrastructure and facilities, both privately and publically, were being built to easily accommodate future expansion; this is now a regular occurrence. As a province, we are making planning to grow the pie instead of just cutting off a larger chunk for ourselves.

The introduction of the Strategy in conjunction with the 2007 provincial election brought it to the front of discussion for the political leadership and we were very proud when then Leader of the Opposition Brad Wall signed onto our memorandum of understanding. Over the past six years our policy calls for increased immigration, strategic infrastructure investments, additional post-secondary training capacity, an attractive taxation environment and so many other efforts, all driving towards the attainment of the Growth Strategy targets, have been acted upon.

Nevertheless, the massive change in the business community’s planning mindset and the ongoing policy victories pale in comparison to what is inarguably the Growth Strategy’s biggest accomplishment. One of the fundamentals of the Growth Strategy (and a position echoed tirelessly over the years) was our urgent call for the political leadership to think beyond the four year election cycle. Finally in October 2012, five years after the launch, we saw action. The provincial government’s 2012 “*Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*” provides a vision with clear outcomes for Saskatchewan stretching until 2020.

In many ways the Plan for Growth parallels the Strategy. This left the Saskatchewan Chamber with a decision to make; do we continue to push for our targets or do we adopt those set out by the government and monitor their progress, push for the completion of the commitments and celebrate the successes on they have achieved?



We have determined that as a sign of support and belief in the province's plan, we will advance and monitor the province's Plan for Growth without clouding the landscape with our own targets. However, the Saskatchewan Chamber will continue to use the target of supporting 1.5 million people by 2030 as a tool in our policy evaluation and decision making process.

Therefore, the "*Sustainable Growth Strategy for the New Saskatchewan*" will no longer be updated and a new process to monitor and measure the *Saskatchewan Plan for Growth* will be implemented. We are excited about this significant advocacy win and believe it will be a cornerstone to help develop better public policy on every front over the long-term. The results of our new monitoring will be communicated widely and will impact future Saskatchewan Chamber advocacy efforts.

We offer our thanks to the numerous businesses and community leaders who have helped us advance the Growth Strategy over the last six years. Our deepest appreciation goes out to the members of our Growth Strategy Task Force, which has been chaired since inception by Dave Dutchak. Through their ongoing determination and effort, we have taken a big step towards making Saskatchewan the best place to live, work and invest.

Yours truly,

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Board Chair
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