

# Spending Decisions Backgrounder

In addition to spending restraint throughout government, the 2016-17 Budget includes difficult but necessary decisions to ensure the sustainability of valuable services to citizens.

## **Children's and Seniors' Drug Plan**

The Children's and Seniors' Drug Plan is rising by \$5 per prescription effective June 1, 2016, resulting in a \$25 per prescription maximum. Drug Plan costs have grown by an average of \$10 million annually since 2012-13. This change helps makes the plan more sustainable, offsetting some of the annual increase by \$6.75 million in 2016-17, and \$9 million annually.

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## **Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre**

Buffalo Narrows Community Correctional Centre is being closed. The centre can house up to 18 inmates. Inmates from the centre will be transferred to other facilities in Saskatchewan. The closure is expected to save the province \$661,000 in 2016-17 and just over \$1 million annually.

## **Police consulting groups**

Aboriginal Police Consultation Groups will be reduced by \$580,000 leaving \$172,000 in 2016-17. Saskatchewan is the only province in the country that provides funding to aboriginal police consultation groups.

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### **Urban park funding**

Provincial funding totaling \$540,000 for five urban parks - Wakamow in Moose Jaw, Chinook Parkway in Swift Current, Pehonan in Prince Albert, River Valley in Battlefords and Tatagwa in Weyburn - has been eliminated.

### **Active families benefit**

The Active Families Benefit, a refundable Personal Income Tax credit, is being eliminated, saving the government \$5.5 million per year.

The credit was initiated to assist families with the cost of registering children in cultural, recreational and sports activities. Better support for these families is available through programs at the community level. For example the *Give Kids a Chance* charity manages *KidSport* and *Creative Kids* and is administered through the Lotteries Trust Fund and funded through private personal and corporate donations. They assist low income families with up-front payment of registration fees for sports and culture activities.

A similar federal tax credit was eliminated in the recent federal budget.

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### **Justice programs**

The Aboriginal Courtworker Program will receive \$1.3 million in 2016-17, which is down from \$1.9 million in 2015-16. This reduction brings the program back to the original goal of an equal funding partnership with the federal government.

The Special Investigations Unit grant, used to investigate allegations of municipal police officer misconduct will receive \$83,000 in 2016-17, down from \$166,000 the previous year.

Community Justice and Alternative Measures programs will receive \$2.4 million in 2016-17. While funding is being reduced by 20 per cent, savings will be achieved primarily through operational budget areas or by restructuring local service-delivery models.

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### **Training Program Adjustments**

The Ministry of the Economy has reduced funding to labour market programs by \$3.49 million recognizing reduced demand for apprenticeship training and supports. Some program realignments and under-utilization of other programs also contributed to lower funding levels.

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### **Deferred funding**

The province will defer funding for the Health Sciences facility project at the University of Saskatchewan, and the province is also suspending funding for the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Water Security for 2016-17. Support for these initiatives will be considered in future years.

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## **Saskatchewan Employment Supplement**

In 2015-16 the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement changed to target the supplement to applicants with children 12 years old and under. However there was a grandfathering provision, leaving families who were already in the program eligible to receive support for children 13 years old and over.

The grandfathering provision is being removed to focus the program on families with the highest need. Combined with projected lower utilization the province is forecast to save \$2.5 million in 2016-17 with the supplement projected to cost \$12.6 million.

### **Program Changes**

Some social services and assistance program changes will be introduced in this fiscal year to increase fairness and equity among clients and enhance the sustainability of the programs, while ensuring that vulnerable citizens receive the supports they need.

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