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2017-18 BUDGET SUPPORTS AGRICULTURE

The Ministry of Agriculture's Budget for 2017-18 of \$388.6 million continues to support Saskatchewan's strong agriculture industry. Business risk management programs will be fully funded with an investment of \$264.1 million, an increase of almost four per cent.

"Our agriculture industry is an important part of our diversified economy," Agriculture Minister Lyle Stewart said. "This budget invests in programs and services that support our farmers and ranchers to drive sustainable growth in our sector."

Funding of \$71.2 million is again being provided for strategic initiatives under the federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 agreement. This budget continues the province's investment in agriculture research with \$26.8 million. \$172.2 million is being provided for Crop Insurance premiums and program delivery.

The 2017-18 Budget includes the decision to end the Saskatchewan Pastures Program (SPP) and consult on the future management of the land. 2017 will be the last SPP-managed grazing season for some pastures. The timelines for the first pasture transitions are expected by early summer.

"The SPP was originally created to help support the diversification of the industry," Stewart said. "However, our industry has evolved, as have the needs of producers. Managing private cattle is no longer a core business function of the government."

Public and stakeholder engagement along with First Nations and Métis community consultations on how the affected pasture land should be managed in the future will start in the coming days. An online survey will be available at www.saskatchewan.ca/pastures from March 27 until May 8.

"We want to hear from the public about how the land can be managed and used in the future to best benefit Saskatchewan people in a way that ensures continued environmental stewardship and ongoing grazing opportunities for our livestock producers," Stewart said. "The views of current pasture patrons, the wider agriculture industry, environmental groups, First Nations, Métis and others will help determine the best management plan for this valuable resource going forward."

The SPP includes 50 pastures incorporating approximately 780,000 acres of land.

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