



**EMBARGOED RELEASE**

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Social Services 17-863

## **PROVINCE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT MOST VULNERABLE**

The 2017-18 Budget will continue to support Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people with an increase of \$73 million, or 6.9 per cent, to Social Services' 2017-18 budget. This increase brings the ministry's budget to \$1.125 billion, the largest ever in Social Services' history.

"In this challenging financial situation, our government remains committed to supporting at-risk children and families, people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income individuals and families," Social Services Minister Tina Beaudry-Mellor said. "We will continue to invest in programs that meet people's basic needs, at the same time that we focus on controlling costs and ensuring that our programs will continue to be available for those in need, now and in the future."

Child and Family Programs' budget will increase by \$13.4 million to \$256.3 million. This funding will help to address continued pressure to respond to emergency situations and provide children with safe, appropriate care.

Disability Programs will see an increase of \$2.3 million to \$209.4 million.

An overall increase of \$67.2 million for income assistance programs, to a total of \$586.2 million, will help to address larger caseloads and higher average costs per case. Increases include:

- \$25.0 million for the Transitional Employment Allowance (TEA), to \$61.5 million;
- \$15.9 million for the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program, to \$226.0 million;
- \$10.5 million for the Saskatchewan Assistance Program (SAP), to \$164.0 million;
- \$14.0 million for the Saskatchewan Rental Housing Supplement (SRHS), to \$51.3 million.

Funding was also increased for the Saskatchewan Employment Supplement, Personal Care Home Benefit and Seniors Income Plan.

"While we continue to invest in our current income assistance programs to meet our clients' needs, we recognize that they are outdated and, at times, overly complex," Beaudry-Mellor said. "We need a new program that is simpler for clients and workers, that focuses on the basic needs of our most vulnerable citizens, and that is sustainable for the future. The work that is well under way on income assistance redesign will transform our current programs and help us achieve these goals."

Social Services' budget also includes some reductions. The First Home Plan for recent graduates, offered through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, will be suspended, for savings of \$8.0 million.



# News Release

Some benefits in the TEA, SAP and SAID programs will be reduced or eliminated while others will be reviewed, for estimated savings of up to \$10.6 million. For example, TEA recipients who are expected to return to work will see a \$20 per month reduction, and the \$20 per month travel benefit for SAP and SAID clients in residential care will be eliminated (actual travel costs will still be covered). The reviews will include, for example, benefits for home repairs and special diets, as well as recovery rates for clients who have received overpayments. See Backgrounder for more information.

“At a time when our province is facing fiscal challenges, we need to ensure we are focusing our resources on those who need them most,” Beaudry-Mellor said. “The changes we are making this year will help us to meet the basic needs of a growing number of people, while we focus on transforming income assistance to better support those in greatest need.”

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