

# Another \$1B for infrastructure

BY WILL CHABUN, THE LEADER-POST MARCH 19, 2009



The provincial government's budget includes \$14.6 million toward the construction of an interchange at the south end of Lewvan Drive in Regina.

**Photograph by:** Roy Antal, The Leader-Post, The Leader-Post

For the second consecutive year, the provincial government's budget has put \$1 billion into building and renovating infrastructure.

And with an additional \$500-million "booster shot" of infrastructure spending unveiled in February, total direct spending over the current and next fiscal years will be \$2.5 billion.

Of this year's infrastructure spending, \$473.5 million will be by the government itself and the balance in

third-party transfer.

Not shown in the budget are spending plans by Crown corporations SaskTel and SaskPower, which will be "north of a billion dollars", Crown Investments Minister Ken Cheveldayoff said.

"Big-ticket" items include \$200 million over the next two fiscal years to start planning on a children's hospital in Saskatoon.

Finance Minister Rod Gantfoer said this demonstration of the government's commitment should help with fundraising.

Spending plans for the Regina area include \$14.6 million toward an interchange at the south end of Lewvan Drive, plus \$12.3 million toward road and other infrastructure work at the planned Global Transportation Hub west of Regina. As well, \$9.3 million is allocated for work on the Yorkton truck route.

Sixty-one million dollars is allocated for school projects and Education Minister Ken Krawetz indicated an announcement spelling out details of school spending will be held March 26.

As well, the provincial Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure will have capital spending of \$358.2 million, including \$100 million for rural and northern projects. A total of \$136.3 million is earmarked for municipal infrastructure.

The spending was enthusiastically welcomed by the trucking and construction industries, with David Marit, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities adding, "what we really like about this is that the province has said to us, 'Look, you know where that money is needed; we're going to leave it up to you to allocate where the money goes.'"

A mildly dissenting voice was that of NDP Leader Lorne Calvert, who asked, "Is the capacity out there to put this infrastructure in place? Are the hands ready to hold the hammers that will build the nursing homes and so on?"

But Michael Fougere, president of the Saskatchewan Construction Association, said SCA members have built up their capacity "by 30 per cent over the last three years to deal with this issue. Our members are coming to the table and they're ready to do it."

© Copyright (c) The Regina Leader-Post