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Policy

October 29th, 2006

Today, the PC Party of Saskatchewan begins its rollout of policy initiatives for the provincial election campaign. The PC Party believes it is appropriate that agriculture should be dealt with first as Saskatchewan is Canada's largest agriculture province. Unlike the other parties who are totally preoccupied with buying voters with their own money, the PC Party believes in assisting Saskatchewan's natural strengths to build the economy and so to benefit all of Saskatchewan's citizens. Leader Rick Swenson says "the dollars we are committing to these policy announcements are sustainable long-term commitments well within the current budget of the province."

- The P.C. Party government worked with producers to bring about Saskatchewan's first ethanol plant at Poundmaker Feedlot near Lanigan, Saskatchewan. We believe that strategy was correct then as it is today and would encourage community-based development of ethanol and biodiesel production along side intensive livestock operations. The PC Party has successfully used the tax system to make this a successful venture and would work with industry to make it happen again.
- The PC Party has a long history of developing value-added agricultural enterprises in the province of Saskatchewan and believes today with the changing environment in marketing and transportation that it is absolutely crucial to expand these areas in the future. Therefore, a PC Party government would match dollars with private sector developers, cities of Saskatoon, Regina and Moose Jaw and the Federal Government to bring an inland container port to Saskatchewan so that agriculture-value added processing and related industries can compete on the world stage.
- The PC Party in the past through the development of GRIP and NISA programs fought for funding equality on the national level. We believe that the funding fairness is out of sync with reality in the current 60/40 funding formula split between the federal government and the provincial governments on disaster assistance. This formula must be changed to reflect Saskatchewan's huge land base.
- The PC Party government brought about the last large scale irrigation development along Lake Diefenbaker, the Saskatchewan River and the Qu'Appelle River systems. A PC Party government would commit to sustainable, long-term development of our water resources by committing a minimum of \$10 million dollars per year over current funding levels split evenly between infill of existing projects and new construction.

Swenson also says, "we believe these policies will help return prosperity to producers in Saskatchewan through better opportunities and to help them do what they do best – grow food for the world."

HEALTH POLICY

Saskatchewan's health policy should be based on long-term sustainability, universality and sound fiscal management.

PC Leader Rick Swenson says, "We believe our proposals will provide the right mix of opportunity and change so that Saskatchewan residents, no matter where they live, will have access to the best medical health care possible. Some of our solutions will require courage and foresight to implement. Progressive Conservatives are not afraid of the challenge. Duelling drug plans are not part of the solution – they are simply a way for the NDP and the Sask Party to avoid the real issues."

- Eliminate health boards and replace them with a provincial health central agency.
- Organ donations should be automatic unless revoked by written consent.
- Sask Health Card should become a Smart Card – all costs are automatically recorded and a statement would be issued to each card holder yearly.
- Offer young nurses full-time jobs to retain them in Saskatchewan.
- Establish a mandatory mentorship program for newly graduated nurses so the transition from study to practice is not as traumatic as is now being reported.
- Midwifery should be considered to be covered under medicare.
- Development of an independent provincial research ethics board so health professionals who do research can have research proposals reviewed - this would augment capacity.
- Pharmacists and other allied health professionals scopes of practice should be expanded so they can better utilize their education.
- Assist in qualifying foreign trained doctors who will commit to practicing in Saskatchewan for a protracted period of time.
- The PC Party in government did not tolerate waiting lists. By giving doctors the staff, equipment and facilities, the waiting lists can be greatly reduced.

Swenson adds, “Providing quality health care to Saskatchewan residents must once again have a sense of public service attached to its delivery. We cannot have our health system constantly dragged through the Legislature by one party or another to satisfy their own political agendas. Health care needs to be above politics. Saskatchewan residents deserve better.”

PC Leader Rick Swenson says, “We believe our policies today on tax reform and justice will send a message to Saskatchewan families that the PC Party of Saskatchewan believes in empowering taxpayers not politicians when it comes to spending decisions. Taxpayers with money in their pockets and living in safe communities is the best advertisement our province can have.”

TAX REFORM

- Reduction in personal tax rates – Saskatchewan taxpayers need to receive the benefits of the boom.
- Phased-in harmonization of the PST and the GST starting with agriculture, agriculture processing and designated industries to make Saskatchewan the most competitive jurisdiction in Western Canada.
- We will work with the Federal government on the \$800 million dollar equalization file to achieve goals that are beneficial to Saskatchewan rather than wasting time and money on court actions like the NDP and the Sask Party propose to do.
- All revenue in all provinces should be used in equalization calculations.
- Raise the level of income from the present \$8778.00 provincial tax threshold to a level which better reflects the realities of low income earners.

JUSTICE

- Replace jails with correctional centres.
- Establish, in consultation with the FSIN, a First Nations’ operated correctional centre.
- Lobby the Federal Government to change The Youth Justice Act (Young Offenders Act) to lower the age from 18 to 16 to deal with the ever-increasing level of crimes committed by young offenders.
- An enhanced childhood component should be added to the anti-gang strategy currently employed in the province.

Today the PC Party of Saskatchewan is announcing its policies on education and First Nations. The area of education has always been a priority of Saskatchewan people since the very founding of our province. The building of a school was always one of the first priorities of our pioneer forefathers. Continuing that tradition of providing a first-class educational opportunity in the face of dramatic population shifts from rural to urban and from reserve to urban means Saskatchewan people must be as innovative as we were one hundred years ago.

PC Leader Rick Swenson adds, "An educated workforce will guarantee Saskatchewan's continued strong economy as we develop further our many resources. That educational opportunity must be afforded to all of our citizens. First Nations people will only be able to share in the Saskatchewan dream if they have a quality education and job opportunities."

EDUCATION

- Return the provincial cost-share of education back to the 60/40 split as it was under the last PC government.
- The government's 60% share stays with the student no matter where the student attends at accredited educational institution.
- All new funding for post-secondary education should go towards the disciplines which are in short supply to keep our economy growing.
- A PC Party government would implement a system of bursaries to graduating students who stay in the province in areas of skill shortages for a guaranteed time frame.
- New systems of distance education must be explored and the contribution of local communities in achieving these new ideas must be recognized and rewarded. Children in rural Saskatchewan must have a quality of life equal to their urban counterparts. There is a limit to busing and school closures for both children and taxpayers.

FIRST NATIONS

- Establish a First Nations employment directorate to assist First Nations people in matching their education to skilled job openings.
- Establish a labour law that requires all available employment positions in Saskatchewan to be posted on a Department of Labour and Employment site for everyone's equal access.

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