

Letter to the Editor

Saskatchewan needs to grow, but grow strategically and sustainably. Our province's current demographics mean we have a lot of people relying on a relatively few taxpayers. This problem will continue to be exacerbated as the baby-boomers retire.

Those that argue that our province should reject growth to protect the Saskatchewan 'way of life' are ignoring the reality of our demographics. The only reason a Saskatchewan resident would oppose growing our economy and our population is that they simply do not plan to be here when the bill comes due.

The way to preserve the Saskatchewan 'way of life' is to expand our tax base so that we can continue to pay for and support the programs and activities that define Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan residents are well aware of the negative impact unplanned growth as had on other provinces. We have experienced a little of this pressure as our population and economy significantly increased for the first time in almost a decade, however, we can work collaboratively to ease the pain of growth.

All the residents, businesses and governments need to embrace and support the fact that Saskatchewan will and must continue to grow. By saying now that our province is going to experience a continual influx of people and economic activity we can put in place the houses, training, jobs and infrastructure needed to support them.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has projected that by 2030 the population of our province is going to be 1.5 million. We are encouraging our members to prepare for this by expanding services. We have advised the government to take action on several policy fronts to support this growth. First, enact policies to enable and encourage the increased investment necessary and second to focus public sector spending now; on areas that will be put under the most strain in the future.

If you don't want the future of our province determined by spin-off from Alberta or by the uncontrollable world prices of oil, you need to start making decisions and supporting initiatives that promote strategic growth. The Chamber is asking for you to educate yourself on the issue and to help to make our province a welcoming place for new residents and businesses, while continuing to encourage the growth of our current enterprises. I urge you to ask your candidates today what they are going to do to support growth in Saskatchewan.

To learn more please view the Saskatchewan Chamber's Growth Strategy online at www.saskchamber.com. We are entering the era of a New Saskatchewan and we need to work collaboratively to meet the challenges and capitalize on the rewards from the opportunities that lie ahead.

Steve McLellan
Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce CEO