

# Saskatchewan rolls out good-news recession budget

BY ANGELA HALL, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE MARCH 19, 2009

If there's such a thing as a good recession, Saskatchewan's got it.

Premier Brad Wall made his province the envy of much of the developed world Wednesday as his government tabled a good-news surplus budget in the middle of a recession.

Bolstered by anticipated potash revenues of nearly \$2 billion, the Saskatchewan party government's budget promises to reduce the education portion of property tax, boost spending for the child-welfare system and provide cash for initiatives such as a long-planned children's hospital in Saskatoon.

Potash is used in fertilizer and is finding a growing market worldwide.

Billing the budget as one that will help "keep Saskatchewan strong and steady in the face of the current global economic crisis," Finance Minister Rod Gantefoer noted the general revenue fund will have a \$425-million surplus.

"We are optimistic in this province, but I think it's fair to say that we are also very cautious. We are better positioned than most provinces," he said.

The government expects lower revenues in 2009-10 of nearly \$10.7 billion. The government had planned to see revenues of about \$9.4 billion in 2008-09, although booming resource revenues saw the number rise through the year to more than \$12 billion.

Expenses are expected to reach about \$10.2 billion.

About \$1.14 billion will remain in the province's so-called rainy day fund as a "cash reserve."

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