



Pre-budget Submission

2026 FEDERAL BUDGET

June 26, 2026

Submitted by: Prabha Ramaswamy, CEO

Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce

List of Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Explicitly include Northern Saskatchewan as an eligible priority region under the Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund.

Recommendation #2

Recognize helium as a critical mineral in the Income Tax Act in a manner consistent with its inclusion on Canada's Critical Minerals List and add helium to the list of minerals covered by the Critical Mineral Exploration Tax Credit (CMETC).

Recommendation #3

Raise the project size thresholds that trigger federal review for critical minerals projects and related infrastructure under the Physical Activities Regulations of the Impact Assessment Act, reserving federal review for projects with clear national, interprovincial, transboundary, or otherwise significant federal effects. Establish provincial review as the primary path for projects that fall within established provincial expertise.

June 26, 2026

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, MP
Minister of Finance and National Revenue
Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa ON
K1A 0G5

Via email: Varun.Srivatsan@fin.gc.ca

Dear Minister Champagne:

Re: Federal Budget 2026 Priorities for Saskatchewan Businesses

On behalf of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, thank you for your work supporting Canadian businesses and for your continued attention to the conditions required for private-sector growth, investment, and competitiveness. Businesses across Saskatchewan recognize the importance of stable fiscal policy, reliable national infrastructure, and a predictable investment climate. I am writing to bring to your attention several crucial matters that Saskatchewan businesses would like to see addressed in the upcoming Federal Budget.

Since 1920, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce has been the Voice of Business in Saskatchewan. Supported by provincial businesses, professional associations, and local Chambers of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Chamber is uniquely equipped to accurately reflect the needs of the broad Saskatchewan business community to help make Saskatchewan the best place to live, work and invest.

At a time when Canada is placing renewed emphasis on national unity, Saskatchewan businesses are hopeful that this commitment will be reflected in federal economic decision-making. National unity is strengthened when regions see themselves in national priorities and when federal programs bridge gaps rather than reinforce them. The current focus on building a stronger, more connected Canada creates an opportunity to ensure Saskatchewan's contributions to food security, energy security, critical minerals, export growth, and national prosperity are fully recognized.

The Saskatchewan Chamber's recommendations focus on targeted eligibility changes within existing federal programs and frameworks. These measures would not require new program spending. Rather, they would expand access to existing tools in a way that protects revenue generation, unlocks private investment, and creates the conditions for future fiscal growth.

Recommendation 1: Explicitly Include Northern Saskatchewan in the Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund

The Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund (CMIF) is an important federal tool for addressing infrastructure gaps that limit the development and expansion of Canada's critical minerals sector. Northern Saskatchewan faces many of the same development realities as other northern and remote regions, including remoteness, limited enabling infrastructure, higher capital costs, and the need for strong partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The Chamber recommends that the federal government explicitly define Northern Saskatchewan as an eligible priority region under the Critical Minerals Infrastructure Fund. Clear inclusion would improve access to appropriate funding shares, strengthen project scoring, and better align federal support with the real costs of advancing nationally significant critical mineral opportunities in Saskatchewan.

Recommendation 2: Recognize Helium as a Critical Mineral in the Income Tax Act

The Chamber was pleased to see the results of *"An Extraordinary Opportunity for Canada": The Development of Critical Minerals: Report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources*, produced by the Honourable Terry Duguid and his team in May 2026. The report identifies the existing challenges in the Income Tax Act for expansion of Canada's helium industry as well as the great potential that exists in this sector. Helium is essential to health care technology, semiconductor manufacturing, aerospace, fibre optics, nuclear research, defence applications, and advanced manufacturing. Saskatchewan is Canada's leading helium producer and has some of the strongest geology in the world for low-emission helium production. Although helium is included on Canada's Critical Minerals List, it does not receive equivalent treatment under the federal Income Tax Act because it is not classified as a "mineral" for the purposes of key exploration and development tax measures.

In support of recommendations 2 through 4 in the *Extraordinary Opportunity for Canada* report, the Chamber recommends that the federal government amend the Income Tax Act to recognize helium in a manner consistent with its inclusion on Canada's Critical Minerals List and add helium to the list of minerals covered by the Critical Mineral Exploration Tax Credit (CMETC). This change would help align federal tax policy with federal critical minerals policy. It would also improve investment certainty and support the growth of a secure Canadian helium supply chain. Unlocking the helium industry's access to Canadian Exploration Expense (CEE) tax treatment, flow through shares, the Mineral Exploration Tax Credit, and the Critical Mineral Exploration Tax Credit (CMETC) will spark new private investments in this strategic emerging sector, creating new revenue opportunities for Canadians.

Recommendation 3: Raise Impact Assessment Act Thresholds for Critical Minerals Projects and Related Infrastructure

The federal Impact Assessment Act is unintentionally discouraging the scale of Canada's critical mineral projects and the accompanying trade-enabling infrastructure. With a demonstrated preference for the more predictable, timely, and regionally focused approach offered by provincial processes, proponents are designing projects to remain below the IAA thresholds. Others are not undertaking projects due to the challenges of the IAA process. The additional rail capacity needed at Mosaic's Esterhazy facility is one example of this widespread problem. Their constrained rail capacity leaves 155,000 tonnes of annual production of potash unrealized, representing approximately \$46 million in lost value each year, including unrealized government revenue. Thresholds that are too low make otherwise beneficial projects smaller, slower, or just less attractive to finance.

The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce recommends that the federal government raise the project size thresholds that trigger federal review under the Physical Activities Regulations of the IAA. Federal review should be reserved for projects with clear national, interprovincial, transboundary, or otherwise significant federal effects. Provincial review should serve as the primary path for projects that fall within established provincial expertise. Adjusting thresholds would not eliminate environmental oversight; it would ensure federal review is focused where it adds the greatest value while allowing responsible investment to proceed with greater certainty. This would unlock economic growth by enabling larger critical mineral and infrastructure projects to proceed faster. This will expand production capacity, improve export reliability, increase government revenues, and strengthen Canadian supply chains, allowing Canada to capture more of the global demand for potash and other critical minerals.

These three recommendations are practical, targeted, and low-cost. They do not ask the federal government to create new programs or commit new spending. Instead, they expand eligibility or modernize existing policy frameworks so Saskatchewan projects and businesses can compete fairly within tools that already exist.

While these changes have limited direct fiscal cost, they can have a significant positive impact on the budget by protecting revenue generation and creating the necessary circumstances for its growth. Saskatchewan's critical minerals, helium, potash, uranium, agriculture, manufacturing, and export sectors generate economic activity that benefits the national economy. Removing avoidable barriers to investment helps preserve and grow the tax base over time.

Additional Federal Actions to Support Saskatchewan Businesses

In addition to the three priority recommendations above, the federal government can further support Saskatchewan businesses by improving access for small and medium-sized enterprises to federal procurement and defence-sector opportunities. As Canada increases its focus on defence readiness and supply chain resilience, Saskatchewan

manufacturers, innovators, service providers, and technology firms should have clear pathways to participate. Eliminating unnecessary barriers, improving guidance on certification and compliance, and ensuring procurement processes are accessible to SMEs would help expand Canada's industrial base while supporting regional economic growth.

The federal government can also play a constructive role in addressing labour shortages and improving stability in federally regulated labour relations. Saskatchewan businesses need access to skilled labour, responsive workforce programming, and immigration pathways that reflect regional economic needs. They also need greater predictability in national transportation and logistics systems, where labour disruptions can impose significant downstream costs on exporters, producers, consumers, and communities.

Finally, Saskatchewan businesses would welcome continued federal support for strategic trade-enabling infrastructure. Saskatchewan's export-driven economy depends on reliable access to West Coast gateways. Targeted federal action to expand capacity, improve rail and port fluidity, address bottlenecks, and accelerate project approvals would strengthen Canada's reputation as a dependable global supplier.

Conclusion

Saskatchewan businesses are ready to contribute to a stronger, more unified, and more prosperous Canada. The recommendations outlined in this submission are intended to bridge gaps in existing federal policy, to support national supply chains, and to ensure Saskatchewan's economic strengths are fully included in Canada's growth agenda. Minister Champagne, the membership of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce appreciates your time and consideration of these crucial matters. The Saskatchewan Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further and to work with your office on practical measures that strengthen Saskatchewan's contribution to Canada's economy.

Sincerely,



Prabha Ramaswamy, CEO
Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce