

First, on behalf of the Town of Swan River I would like to thank you for making SWan River one of your stops on the pre-budget tour and giving us the opportunity to have some input as to what we see as our priorities.

The current governments pledge to reduce the Provincial Sales Tax by 1% is important to our businesses as they strive to compete with nearby Saskatchewan who has a lower PST. We urge you to make the 1% reduction as soon as possible.

The cost of police protection (RCMP) is the single highest item in our Town budget at 1.1 million dollars. We encourage your government to look for innovative ways to bring down these costs for urban municipalities and do something about the inequity of rural municipalities paying nothing for police protection. In Saskatchewan municipalities of 5000 or less pay \$77 per capita while municipalities with no police station ed in their jurisdiction pay \$44 per capita. Under this arrangement our policing costs would go down from just of \$1 million to \$380,000.

With health care being your biggest budget item we would like to suggest some cost effective things that would not only improve medical services here in the Swan Valley, but also save some money.

The first suggestion has to do with the designation of the 52nd parallel on the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg as the deciding line for air ambulance transport while on the west side of the province, including the Swan Valley it is the 53rd parallel. Currently, ambulance patients transported from the Swan Valley by land must travel 5 hours each way accompanied by two paramedics and possibly a nurse. While air transport would be about 1 1/2 hours with one paramedic an a nurse. Not only would this improve the patients experience but we are confident a cost analysis would show a financial saving.

The second suggestion is designed to add to the local medical treatments available in the Swan Valley by having the recently decommissioned CT Scanner (which was fully functional when taken out of service) set up in the Swan Valley Health Facility. It would be of a great benefit in the areas efforts to accuracy medical doctors and save patients from the area having to travel two hours each way to Dauphin.

The Swan River Town Council would like to encourage your government to continue to work closely with Tolkien, the union, and the Town of the Pas to keep that facility operating. Its closure would have a huge impact on the forest industry in the Swan Valley area with the loss of approximately 150 jobs and the possible closure of the Spruce Products Mill located here.

We welcome recent monies that been put into promoting tourism in Manitoba, however we need more efforts directed at rural Manitoba and the Swan Valley to assist us in diversifying the local economy and provide jobs so our young people don't have to leave the area to find employment. Diversification is dependent on an available workforce, reasonably priced hydro, natural gas, highways system, and rail transportation. We need your government to assist us in keeping CN committed to serving our area.

Thank you again for listening to us and we hope to work positively with you for the benefit of the Swan Valley and Manitoba.

Mayor and Council of the Town of Swan River.

