**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Social workers express thoughts over recent budget**

The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW) was pleased to see the Government of Saskatchewan invest significant money in essential mental health service through Budget 2019, but was disappointed to see a lack of commitment to reducing poverty.

The government is putting $30 million more toward mental health and addictions, coupled with a $6.25 million contribution from the federal of government that brings the Ministry of Health's total dollars for mental health and addictions to $402 million in 2019-20.

"We were pleased to see the government make a much needed investment in our province’s mental health services,” said Wanda Miller, SASW President. “There are many vulnerable individuals in our province who struggle with mental health issues or addiction every day and it’s crucial that we have necessary resources to support them.”

Budget 2019 also sees supports for at-risk children and families increasing by $27.7 million, with $23.5 million going toward an enhancement of the range of services that help keep children safe, including intensive direct services for families to help keep their children safely at home, community-based homes and group homes, and private treatment for children with high needs.

SASW is encouraged with the increases to support families and children, particularly because this funding will help keep children safely with their families. However, SASW feels that the government missed an opportunity to address poverty in the budget: “One in four children in Saskatchewan live in poverty. This is an issue that desperately needs the government’s attention and we’re disappointed that there isn’t a broad approach in place to reduce poverty,” Miller said.

SASW represents more than 1,800 social workers in the province.

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