

Budget cuts end 42-year partnership between Province and humanitarian groups

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SASKATCHEWAN – Through cuts made in its most recent budget, the Government of Saskatchewan has ended its 42-year long partnership with the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC), a coalition of humanitarian and global poverty agencies.

Although not mentioned anywhere in the 2016-17 Budget document, the Provincial Government has quietly decided that it will no longer fund the Matching Grants in Aid Program (MGAP). Originally created as a dollar-for-dollar grant matching program, the MGAP has been administered by SCIC since 1974 when a resolution to fund humanitarian, international cooperation, public education, and global poverty reduction programs on behalf of Saskatchewan people was unanimously agreed to by all parties in the Legislature.

“SCIC is deeply disappointed that for the first time in the program’s history, the Government of Saskatchewan has decided to terminate this funding, which supported our members’ work with partners around the globe building strong, resilient communities, and which had a huge impact given the small amount of money it takes to fund this program,” said Jacqui Wasacase, SCIC’s Executive Director.

Projects funded through the program range from maternal health and food security, to co-operative business development, teacher training, children’s rights, emergency response, and more. SCIC’s members include leaders in the field such as Oxfam, Save the Children, as well as the relief and development programs of major churches – many of which run programs in Canada as well as internationally – such as Canadian Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Presbyterian World Service & Development.

The MGAP was founded as a partnership between Saskatchewan citizens and the Provincial Government to leverage more funds for global cooperation, justice and peace. **“We know that Saskatchewan people are generous and that their generosity is not put aside during times of struggle”** said Wasacase. **“They continue to uphold their end of the deal and then some, donating more than \$17.7 million to SCIC member organizations over the last three years alone.”**

The real impact of the cuts is already being felt by SCIC member organizations and their international partners, who annually count on the matching fund to reach more people in need. For example, a current application to respond to flooding caused by Cyclone Roanu in Sri Lanka, which has affected more than 300,000 people, will not be funded as a direct result of the cuts.

“For 42 years our members have been doing the difficult work of long-term, sustainable community development – the type of work which is often overlooked because it happens when the cameras turn away,” said André Magnan, SCIC’s President. **“Up until now, this Government has been proud to demonstrate the value of this program year after year, so we were surprised to hear that this is no longer the case.”**

REACTIONS FROM SASKATCHEWAN HUMANITARIAN GROUPS

“I recognize that when times are tough it is easy to feel our precious dollars should stay at home, but in the past 42 years Saskatchewan has faced many difficult budgets and it has never ended the funding to SCIC.” - Phyllis Goertz, member representative for HOPE International Development Agency for the last decade.

“This is a terribly short-sighted and punishing move on the government's part. SCIC's work is respected around the country, and by extension Saskatchewan as a province is also respected for its commitment to linking local and global justice.” - Julie Graham, Education Coordinator for Saskatchewan Conference, The United Church of Canada

“SCIC's work and funding support has made a significant, positive change to people around the planet, and for so little money relatively speaking.” - Karen Farmer, member representative with USC Canada, a leading organization that supports farmers in Canada and around the globe to implement sustainable food security programs.

ABOUT THE MATCHING GRANTS IN AID PROGRAM

At \$410,000 per year, the Matching Grants in Aid Program (MGAP) contributes provincial funds to Saskatchewan organizations that have received donations from Saskatchewan citizens; have been approved for funding from the federal government; adhere to a code of ethics; and that cooperate to share best practices for effective, sustainable development. In comparison, the Manitoba Government Matching Grant Program provides \$1 million annually for Manitoba organizations.

Among the programs cut is the Saskatchewan Emergency Assistance Program, a small but efficient fund of \$23,100 that can be quickly disbursed for disasters and emergencies to a network of highly qualified organizations with long-standing partnerships in affected communities around the globe. Emergency projects funded in the last year include food for people affected by conflict in South Sudan, Somalia, Jordan, and Myanmar, as well as the Ebola crisis in West Africa, and flooding response in Myanmar.

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