



March 2017

Priority Saskatchewan Action Plan Update

In March 2015, the Priority Saskatchewan team at SaskBuilds revealed their action plan to transform government procurement. 13 items were identified to help taxpayers get better value for their dollar and help local companies compete for and win contracts. The action plan promised more than a change to practices, it sought to alter the mindset of government procurement away from “lowest initial price” towards “best long term value.” While changes to the culture of a profession take time, the Priority Saskatchewan agenda has taken important steps forward.

In 2014, Premier Wall created Priority Saskatchewan as a branch of SaskBuilds to modernize how government buys its goods and services. Its mandate was to improve procurement based on the feedback of local businesses. Lionel Labelle quickly began the first round of consultations with groups like the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and, by March 2015, announced an action plan of 13 transformative items.

Big changes have since taken place. Crowns like SaskPower, which are investing nearly \$2 billion dollars a year on infrastructure, can often be found with a new phrase on their competitions: *this opportunity restricted to suppliers who qualify as a New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA) region supplier*.

Ministries and Crowns are also standardizing their templates. More than 100 types of procurement documents are now in use, adding unnecessary red tape for bidders. The team at Priority Saskatchewan is whittling that down to a core set for use across government, meaning less time spent on paperwork.

Most importantly, “best value” is becoming the new standard for awarding contracts. While not ignoring the importance of price, this standard can take into account important factors like quality, experience, costs of operation and maintenance, and innovations. Best value can also reward suppliers with knowledge of local conditions, an important factor in everything from construction to consulting.

The transition to best value will take time. Judging value takes a longer-term, more strategic mindset that will take time to set in.

To help that transition, Priority Saskatchewan has released a new procurement guide. It can be found online at <http://saskbuilds.ca/PrioritySK/index1.html>. Its authors are also offering training sessions around the province to both government officials and private sector suppliers. Those interested in

attending may reach out to the Chamber or contact Priority Saskatchewan directly at saskbuilds.prioritysk@gov.sk.ca.

Private sector spending is recovering from 2016 but will take time to reach its prior highs. Working with our partners at Priority Saskatchewan, the Chamber will continue to offer feedback on public sector investments to enhance the value we receive as a province.