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## Review of False Expectations: Politics and the Pursuit of the Saskatchewan Myth

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**False Expectations: Politics and the Pursuit of the Saskatchewan Myth.** By Dale Eisler. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 2006. xii + 251 pp. Photographs, endnotes, index. \$24.95 paper.

For much of its history Saskatchewan has been a net exporter of people, mainly to adjacent Great Plains locales and across North America. Many expatriates retain psychological ties to this prairie province that stretch beyond familial or historical connections, and this deep sense of identity is puzzling to students of prairie politics. Unlike other established societies with high out-migration levels such as Newfoundland, Saskatchewan was settled fairly recently, and many families lived there for one or two generations at most before leaving. How is it that in a relatively brief period many new immigrants developed such a deep and abiding association with this province?

Eisler's work answers this question simply and directly. Saskatchewan, he writes, is a state of mind. Its citizens believed they were blessed to inhabit the promised land of Saskatchewan, mainly because it had a great destiny to fulfill. Within a hundred-year span of history, he probes the province's development in light of its original and central myth: "the singular, collective idea that Saskatchewan had unrealized potential." Eisler works to uncover the role of myth in politics with two resolves: to explain how Saskatchewanians were mobilized to support particular social goals and political objectives; and to demonstrate how this myth has served to obfuscate and conceal reality. He clearly explains how the myth's negative by-products—particularly the problems of false expectation and self-deception—have led (and allowed) governments to pursue poor policy choices. Eisler is unforgiving in his criticism, concluding the main body of his argument with a pointed, well-justified account of how the myth of Saskatchewan's "wide open," twenty-first-century future masks an ongoing failure to empower Saskatchewan's marginalized First Nations and Métis people.

*False Expectations* is well written and informative. Its layout, design, and indexing are excellent. Students of

Great Plains politics in particular will enjoy its account of Saskatchewan's socioeconomic context and key political figures. The author draws upon a rich collection of source materials, as well as personal insight gained from many years as a resident and senior political reporter, to present a focused argument that is innovative as well as genuinely entertaining. This is necessary reading for students of the region's political and public policy history. **Cristine de Clercy**, *Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario.*