

**EMBARGOED RELEASE**  
**Mar. 18, 2026**  
**2:15 PM**

Health 26-5508

## **2026-27 HEALTH BUDGET PUTS PATIENTS FIRST BY PROTECTING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE, HOSPITAL CARE AND SURGERY**

Saskatchewan's 2026-27 record health care budget will continue to protect and accelerate progress in priority areas for patients, families and health care providers. This year's investments will strengthen emergency and critical hospital care, open more entry points to primary care providers, provide life-enhancing options for seniors and focus on other priority areas to improve access for patients.

"This budget delivers on the priorities outlined in our Patients First Health Care Plan to ensure everyone can receive the right care in the right place at the right time," Health Minister Jeremy Cockrill said. "Our Patients First Plan will make sure everyone has access to a primary care provider and ensures those who need it can get diagnostics and surgery in a more timely manner."

The Ministry of Health budget is \$8.47 billion, an increase of nearly 5 per cent, over the previous year. The Saskatchewan Health Authority will receive \$5.15 billion to improve access to care for patients.

This Budget puts patients first with transformative investments connecting thousands more Saskatchewan residents with a primary care provider - a physician or nurse practitioner (NP) for consistent, relationship-based care. This budget supports the largest primary care NP expansion in provincial history, enabling an unlimited number of NPs to enter into primary care contracts. This will provide similar opportunities for NPs as are available for family physicians.

An \$11.9 million investment in Primary and Preventative Care will fund additional independent NP contracts and significantly enhance primary care capacity, to fulfill Saskatchewan's commitment to ensure every resident has a primary care provider by the end of 2028. About \$1 million from this investment will support a pilot to enable selected contracted NP clinics to hire additional primary care team members, such as a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse, to develop a primary care team to increase further access for patients.

This year's budget will also strengthen team-based care by increasing funding for Patient Medical Homes (PMH), which builds on the successful Swift Current pilot program by fully integrating team members and supporting them to work to the full extent of their training. Patients experience improved access to a primary care provider, more timely appointments, and better coordinated services.

Ten PMHs in communities across the province were approved or expanded in communities across Saskatchewan including Esterhazy, Kamsack, Loon Lake/Good Soil, Lloydminster, Maple Creek, Moosomin, Swift Current, Wadena, Wakaw, and Yorkton. New PMHs will be developed in new communities throughout 2026-27.

New funding will pilot virtual care projects to improve timely access to primary care for residents who currently lack access and will reduce unnecessary emergency department visits.

Saskatchewan is putting patients first with a nearly \$98 million increase that will accelerate progress on the addition of 146 more hospital beds in Saskatoon, further invest in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), augment critical care and other acute care supports.

Sixty new permanent inpatient beds will be divided between Royal University Hospital (36 beds) and St. Paul's Hospital (24 beds). Since opening 40 acute care beds last fall at Saskatoon City Hospital, work is underway to open 69 more beds as part of a full realignment of services to help stabilize patient flow and better match patient needs.

This budget increases access to intensive care for critically ill and surgical patients. An investment increase will permanently staff four additional intensive care unit (ICU) beds at St. Paul's Hospital and construction will begin on a seven-bed expansion of the ICU at Royal University Hospital to ensure access to timely, life-saving care.

The 2026-27 Budget provides a substantial increase to support pediatric enhancements across Saskatchewan to ensure safe, sustainable care for critically ill and premature infants, and children requiring specialized services. Saskatchewan continues to grow its impressive pediatric programs with further supports to permanently staff six pediatric inpatient beds at Jim Pattison Children's Hospital and expand Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) capacity at Regina General Hospital from 25 to 28 bassinets. It also provides permanent funding to support NICU nursing positions previously added at Regina General Hospital (RGH).

This year's budget continues investing in Urgent Care Centres (UCC), with a significant increase to support enhanced staffing levels in Regina and build a full care team to staff the Saskatoon UCC. The province has partnered with Ahtahkakoop Cree Developments to build a state-of-the-art UCC in Saskatoon, which is expected to open in early 2027. The budget also supports continued work to develop five more UCCs in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon.

"By focusing our spending on investments that have a lasting impact, we are protecting and improving our health system so that patients can access the care they need, when and where they need it," Cockrill said. "We are seeing strong patient demand for Regina's Urgent Care Centre, which has cared for over 65,000 patients, more than 100 patients per day since opening, and eased pressure on Regina's emergency departments. It is exciting that Saskatoon patients will soon benefit from this same expanded access to care."

Providing safe and reliable ambulance services is a priority for Saskatchewan. This year's budget includes a significant increase to enhance EMS by increasing capacity and resources, delivering better patient response times, and building a sustainable, resilient EMS workforce through additional mental health supports.

Since 2022-23, Saskatchewan has made significant investments to support approximately 215 additional full-time equivalent paramedic positions in 76 rural and remote communities. This budget's increase will support an additional 24 annualized full-time equivalent (FTE) paramedic positions in 12 communities as a part of EMS stabilization. Over the past three years, the province has supported approximately 270 bursaries for Primary Care and Advanced Care Paramedics, along with additional funding to support Emergency Medical Responder training. These programs help ensure communities have access to skilled EMS providers.

The 2026-27 Budget will continue accelerating diagnostic capacity to provide additional specialized imaging services such as CT, MRI and PET/CT scans for thousands more patients annually. Increased funding will also be dedicated for surgical services, with focused improvements on spine surgery and joint replacement surgery pathways to reduce waitlists and deliver more timely access to surgery for patients.

Increased funding will enhance the provincial Genetics and Metabolics Program - one of the fastest growing areas of medicine - to provide critical diagnostic and treatment pathways for individuals and families affected by complex or rare health conditions.

The 2026-27 Budget will strengthen kidney health programming across Saskatchewan by funding positions that support safe, consistent patient access to dialysis services.

Lifesaving treatments and improved care for cancer patients will be delivered through a 10.5 per cent budget increase for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This investment ensures Saskatchewan's cancer patients can access the most current and effective oncology drugs, therapies, screening and treatment options.

This budget allocates \$9.2 million to enhance long-term care supports for seniors and individuals with complex needs, which includes support for more personalized long-term care services; staffing for new beds in Regina and La Ronge, and enhanced inspection, oversight and quality improvement.

Further investments will bolster home care services throughout Saskatchewan, complemented by upgrades to province-wide software systems to improve efficiency and ensure consistent, high-quality care across the region. Additional support will help community programs for people with complex needs, including investments in the Rural and Remote Memory Clinic at the University of Saskatchewan and an autism summer program.

"Saskatchewan is protecting seniors and individuals with complex care needs through thoughtful, practical approaches that help them remain safely in their homes and communities, improving their overall quality of life," Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors, and Rural and Remote Health Minister Lori Carr said. "These

investments expand care options and strengthen capacity at the community level, ensuring people can access the support they need closer to home.”

Continuing to support progress on a multi-year commitment for mental health and addictions remains a top priority for Saskatchewan. To improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities, this year's budget will continue building provincial treatment capacity, take steps to transition to a recovery-oriented system of care, and increase system access to resources. To date, 312 of the 500 new spaces under Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Mental Health and Addictions are now available to Saskatchewan residents.

The 2026-27 Budget will increase funding by \$28.6 million to protect and enhance initiatives under the *Health Human Resources (HHR) Action Plan*. More than 7,500 professionals have joined Saskatchewan health care teams since 2022 and are making a real difference in patient care.

The HHR Action Plan will move into a new phase with more career opportunities for Saskatchewan people and added initiatives to retain Saskatchewan's valued health care teams. The Saskatchewan Healthcare Recruitment Agency will receive a significant budget lift to support recruitment activities to attract health care workers to the provincial workforce.

Expanding physician training seats at the college of Medicine is a key strategy for the province as hundreds of Saskatchewan students compete for limited seats each year. The College will add 20 more medical undergraduate seats increasing from 108 to 128; and expand residency seats from 150 to 160, including family medicine and other specialties.

The 2026-27 Budget will expand the Rural Physician Incentive Program (RPIP) to attract more doctors to rural and regional locations such as the Battlefords, Lloydminster, Moose Jaw, Swift Current and Yorkton. This year's budget will support additional assessment capacity for internationally trained physicians to help bring more qualified family physicians into our communities. These initiatives improve access to care for patients by ensuring more family physicians and specialists are available where needed most.

New funding will introduce a transformative career laddering program for Saskatchewan registered nurses from select communities to train to become NPs, and a new incentive will be made available to support them while learning. A similar HHR initiative provides new funding to assess future career laddering opportunities for Continuing Care Assistants (CCAs) interested in becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and LPNs becoming Registered Nurses. New budget funding is also available to support a unique Indigenous CCA pilot program to better meet future staffing needs in Northern Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan will continue to protect, modernize and enhance our health system through a nearly six per cent increase to eHealth for a total operating budget of \$170.8 million. This increase will support health sector growth, mitigate threats, and continue delivering secure and reliable digital health technology across the health sector.

Saskatchewan will continue investing heavily in capital projects and modernizing existing facilities across the province with a \$635.7 million total budget dedicated to constructing hospitals, long-term care homes, urgent care centres, as well as technology. Major infrastructure investments for 2026-27 include:

- Ongoing construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital acute care tower;
- Ongoing construction of the Regina Specialized Long-Term Care, La Ronge Long-Term Care, and Grenfell Long-Term Care projects;
- Royal University Hospital's ICU Expansion project;
- Construction start for the Saskatoon Cancer Patient Lodge;
- Expansion of Complex Needs Facilities;
- Six new youth detox beds in Saskatoon;
- Construction completion of the Saskatoon Urgent Care Centre;
- Ongoing planning for new UCCs in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, as well as second UCCs in Regina and Saskatoon;
- New capital funding to establish a Regina-based Multiple Sclerosis Clinic offering specialized care closer to home and improving quality of life; and
- Ongoing planning activities for major projects, including the Yorkton Regional Health Centre, Rosthern Hospital, Esterhazy Integrated Care Facility, and Battlefords and District Care Centre.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Media Relations

Health

Regina

Phone: 306-787-4083

Email: [media@health.gov.sk.ca](mailto:media@health.gov.sk.ca)

