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## 2024-25 HEALTH BUDGET DELIVERS RECORD INCREASE IN HEALTH CARE FUNDING

The new Saskatchewan budget delivers the largest-ever increase in health care funding to expand patient care and services to meet the increasing demands of a growing population, increase access to primary care through support for physicians, nurse practitioners and other health professions, and fund key infrastructure projects like new hospitals and long-term care homes across Saskatchewan.

This year's Ministry of Health budget is \$7.59 billion, an increase of \$726.4 million, or 10.6 per cent, over the previous year. The Saskatchewan Health Authority will receive a \$248.3 million, or 5.6 per cent, increase for a total highest-ever budget of \$4.68 billion.

"This year's Health budget sets a high benchmark for delivering improved patient care to residents within communities across the province," Health Minister Everett Hindley said. "Connecting residents to primary care through support for our physicians and health care professionals is a priority of this budget. We are investing in women's health, life-saving cancer care advancements and increasing access to primary care.

"Our government is supporting physicians in their practices with enhanced compensation and supporting nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals to work to their full scope of practice and skillsets, ensuring patients receive appropriate and timely health care services."

This year's budget investment will deliver timely and quality cancer care services for Saskatchewan women. A \$3.5 million increase for breast cancer care and screening initiatives will include technology enhancements, new diagnostic imaging equipment and development of a new Breast Health Centre in Regina. A continued investment of \$1.0 million will be designated for important ongoing ovarian cancer research.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) will ensure patients can access the most effective and leading-edge oncology drugs, therapies and treatment options. This will include \$1.2 million for enhanced gynecological cancer therapy. The SCA will see an increase of \$26.1 million, or 11.7 per cent, for a total record budget of \$248.9 million.

This budget will increase patient access to primary and community-based care, supporting Saskatchewan residents in receiving care closer to home and alleviating pressures on the acute care system through investments totaling \$59.4 million.

A \$16.0 million total increase will be distributed across several primary, public health and community care initiatives, including increasing access to nurse practitioners and other allied health professionals through integration into primary care teams, funding to support Healthline 811 and added supports for Chronic Pain Clinics in Regina and Saskatoon.

Seniors' care initiatives will receive a \$43.4 million total increase to stabilize services and programming for Saskatchewan seniors. This includes a \$40.0 million commitment for a new funding model for third-party long-term care homes to address pressures and create a consistent funding model for future years. This commitment is a \$31.0 million increase from the \$9.0 million in stabilization funding provided to third-party operators in last year's budget.

This year's budget also includes \$214 million for the recent Saskatchewan Medical Association contract agreement, including increased physician compensation and new programs to support the province's efforts to recruit and retain physicians and remain competitive as one of the best places for doctors to live and work.

The 2024-25 Budget will improve access to acute care through a \$71.4 million total increase for multiple initiatives, including a substantial investment to address hospital capacity pressures and opening the new Regina Urgent Care Centre to help address these pressures and expand points of entry to the health care system.

A \$30.0 million funding increase will support the Saskatoon and Regina Capacity Pressures Action Plans that include measures to enhance acute care, community-based care and emergency department capacity to support a growing population's needs for hospital-based care.

The Regina Urgent Care Centre will receive a \$9.8 million increase to support operations, and will be available to patients 24/7 for illness, injuries and mental health issues requiring same-day treatment. The facility will open in Summer 2024.

The 2024-25 Budget includes an increase of \$5.1 million for specialized medical imaging services to add essential CT and MRI capacity in the province. This expansion will help increase access and reduce waitlists for these important diagnostic procedures.

A \$3.5 million increase for surgical programs will improve quality of life for thousands of patients and continue reducing the surgical waitlist.

Other measures to improve care and access:

- \$7.5 million increase in annual funding to enhance emergency medical services (EMS) across the province, which will support EMS and community paramedicine positions in Saskatoon and other locations, including rural and northern communities;
- \$4.5 million increase to stabilize and enhance neurology and cardiology services;
- \$2.5 million increase for kidney health and organ and tissue donation programs;
- \$2.2 million increase for children's care, including the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and pediatrics unit at the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, as well as the provincial pediatric gastroenterology program; and
- \$2.0 million in new funding to expand Saskatchewan's robot-assisted surgery program in Regina.

This budget will build on the foundation of Saskatchewan's Health Human Resources Action Plan by significantly investing in the recruitment and retention of physicians, nurse practitioners and other professions in high demand.

This year's Health budget will receive a \$29.2 million increase for the Action Plan, including \$11.6 million to fully fund the commitment to add 250 new or enhanced permanent full-time positions in rural and remote locations. A \$6.7 million investment for the Saskatchewan Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive will fund existing recipients of the program and extend this successful initiative for another year.

"Stabilizing and strengthening the important health care services that rural communities rely on continues to be a high priority for our government," Rural and Remote Health Minister Tim McLeod said. "While our Health Human Resources Action Plan is seeing success, we know that there is more work to be done, and Budget 2024-25 makes significant investments in continuing that work."

Health's total record capital budget of \$516.8 million for facilities and equipment is \$179.3 million higher than last year and includes:

- \$180.0 million for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project;
- \$55.0 million for the Weyburn General Hospital replacement project;
- \$27.0 million for construction of the La Ronge Long-Term Care (LTC) project;
- \$21.9 million to complete construction on the Regina General Hospital parkade project; and
- \$20.0 million for Regina's LTC specialized beds project.

Since November 2007, the province has invested more than \$2.9 billion into facilities and equipment to improve the delivery of health care across the province.



# News Release

For more information, contact:

Media Relations

Health

Regina

Phone: 306-787-4083

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

