



Government
of
Saskatchewan

News Release

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RECORD \$5.17 BILLION INVESTMENT IN HEALTH CARE

Government to Look at Reducing Number of Health Regions, Cutting Administration Costs

A record \$5.17 billion Health Budget will be invested in health infrastructure, improving access to care and reducing wait times for surgery and diagnostic services for Saskatchewan people. The 2016-17 Health Budget is an increase of \$57.4 million, or 1.1 per cent, over 2015-16. There has now been a 50 per cent increase in the health budget since 2007.

“Our government is committed to providing Saskatchewan residents with access to timely and high-quality health services while ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the health system,” Health Minister Dustin Duncan said. “Investing in cost-effective programs that deliver results for patients and communities continues to be a priority for the Ministry of Health.”

Duncan also announced that a special commissioner will be appointed to recommend options for fewer health regions and more effective and efficient delivery of province-wide services. The name of the commissioner will be announced in the coming days.

“We know that reducing health region administration and providing better frontline care is important to Saskatchewan residents,” Duncan said. “Delivering health care through fewer health regions will fundamentally change the way services are administered in Saskatchewan.”

Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) will receive \$3.4 billion for operating funding, an increase of 2.3 per cent over funding provided to RHAs last year, and a 56 per cent increase since 2007. Included is \$20 million in additional funding to reduce surgical wait times. The demand for surgery continues to rise in Saskatchewan, with an estimated three per cent more surgeries needed in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16. Surgical funding in 2016-17 will be above both 2015-16 and 2014-15 levels.

“Saskatchewan has gone from the longest surgical wait times in Canada in 2007 to the shortest wait times in 2015,” Duncan said. “Unfortunately, we have seen wait times begin to creep back up a bit in recent months. This additional investment in surgeries should reverse that trend and ensure we continue to have the shortest wait times in the country.”

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is receiving more than \$167 million in funding in this budget, up \$9.8 million from last year, or 6.2 per cent. The substantial increase in funding will help pay for the addition of 15 new cancer drugs that were approved last year. Since 2007, funding for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency has increased by nearly 113 per cent.



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The Health Budget includes \$500,000 to fulfil the government's campaign commitment to expand its robotic telemedicine to more northern communities. This project allows health care professionals to connect with patients remotely and provide real-time assessment, diagnosis and patient management.

The Budget is also reducing RHA administration expenses by \$7.5 million and re-investing that funding to frontline staff in long-term care homes. This equals a five per cent reduction in general administration costs, to be determined as part of RHA budget finalization in coming months.

Capital investments total \$71.4 million in 2016-17, including a 25 per cent increase (to a total of \$34.7 million) for capital maintenance across the province. Capital funding is also being provided for a power plant upgrade at Saskatoon Royal University Hospital, electrical renewal projects at Regina's General and Pasqua hospitals, and completion of construction at the Kelvington Integrated Care Facility.

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For more information, contact:

Tyler McMurchy
Health
Regina
Phone: 306-787-4083
Email: tyler.mcmurchy@health.gov.sk.ca

