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Mar. 23, 2011

2:15 PM

Health 11-202

## **PATIENT-CENTERED CARE TOP PRIORITY FOR HEALTH BUDGET**

The provincial budget will continue to improve Saskatchewan's health system with a \$4.46 billion health budget. This is an increase of \$260 million or 6.2 per cent from the previous fiscal year, reflecting the government's commitment to health care.

"We are continuing our focus on putting the patient first – to ensure Saskatchewan people receive timely and quality health services," Health Minister Don McMorris said. "We have already hired more than 800 nurses, meeting our election commitment and providing better care to patients. This budget also includes funding for physician positions and other important health initiatives."

Health's 2011-12 Budget provides significant investments to help meet the health care demands of Saskatchewan's growing population.

New funding is augmented by recent announcements for the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative, to bring sooner, safer and smarter surgical care to Saskatchewan people; funding for health facility, equipment and other access improvements province-wide (including funding for eHealth: one patient-one record); investment in diagnostic PET-CT treatment and research; as well as significant funding for the Saskatchewan Children's Hospital.

In 2011-12, \$5 million will go toward the establishment of helicopter air medical services in Saskatchewan. The service will focus on care and transport of critically ill or injured patients in rural and remote areas of the province.

"Helicopter medical services will ensure residents in urgent circumstances or difficult-to-access locations receive faster medical attention and transportation to health facilities," McMorris said.

The 2011-12 budget continues with education, recruitment and retention efforts for health providers, including an additional \$1.5 million for the Clinical and Medical Teaching Units at the U of S and Regina General Hospital to ensure students have access to appropriate training, and an additional \$800,000 for four faculty positions at the College of Medicine to ensure a stable supply of pediatricians.

"We recognize that access to physicians and health services is a top priority for Saskatchewan people," McMorris said. "This budget addresses that, with funding for more recruitment and training so Saskatchewan people can receive more timely access to quality health care."

Other incremental funding highlights of the health budget include:

- \$10.9 million to address increased volumes in diagnostic imaging services, cardiac care and chronic kidney disease;
- \$4.2 million for bone marrow transplant patients, to undertake treatments in Saskatchewan and help reduce the number of patients being transferred out-of-province/country;
- \$780,000 to expand the colorectal screening program to Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region (currently underway in Five Hills and Kelsey Trail Health Regions);
- \$493,000 to the Ombudsman to establish a dedicated health care unit within the provincial office;
- \$1 million for Autism Spectrum Disorder assessments, interventions and training, as part of government's Children and Youth Agenda;
- \$600,000 for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevention, diagnosis and supports, as part of Government's Children and Youth Agenda;
- \$2.8 million for additional specialist services (Prince Albert and Saskatoon);
- \$2.5 million for a provincial HIV strategy;

- \$2.4 million for Electronic Medical Record expansion into physician offices;
- \$2 million for Kidney Transplant Program revitalization, to recruit and hire more specialists and resume deceased donor transplants in Saskatchewan; and
- \$850,000 for tobacco reduction activities, including social marketing to influence behaviour.

As part of government's continued commitment to addictions supports, an estimated \$57 million is being allocated for alcohol and drug services in 2011-12. The money funds a full range of alcohol and drug treatment services including detox, in- and out-patient treatment, long-term residential services, day treatment and community mobile outreach, as well as substance abuse prevention and health promotion activities across the province. Funding builds on recent investments, including a 45-bed detoxification facility in Regina, six youth stabilization beds at Saskatoon's Calder Centre, a 14-bed detox facility in Prince Albert, as well as two other facilities soon to come on-board in Prince Albert (an eight-bed family treatment facility and, in co-operation with Prince Albert Grand Council, a 15-bed youth inpatient treatment centre).

The largest portion of the government's investment in health – 73 per cent of the 2011-12 Budget – goes toward paying health care workers.

Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) will receive \$2.8 billion from the Ministry of Health in 2011-12, an increase of \$250 million or 9.7 per cent, to better deliver health services to Saskatchewan people. RHAs operate the day-to-day delivery of health care and programs to provincial residents.

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