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# News Release

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Health

## **RECORD HEALTH BUDGET ADDRESSES HIGHEST PRIORITIES**

*Funding to Reduce Wait Times, Improve Services for Seniors and Build Health Infrastructure*

Saskatchewan will invest nearly \$5 billion in health care in 2014-15 to continue the health system's 'patient first' transformation and support improved access to high quality care for the province's growing population. The funding is a \$144 million or three per cent increase over 2013-14.

"Our government's health care priorities are based on meeting the needs of patients and their families," Health Minister Dustin Duncan said. "This budget supports better access to services, improved quality of care and shorter wait times. We continue to focus on using resources responsibly in priority areas that will make the greatest difference in improving the quality of life for Saskatchewan people."

The budget includes investments to reduce surgical wait times and emergency department waits, advance key capital projects, develop additional Collaborative Emergency Centres, improve services for seniors and support the rural physician workforce.

Capital investments in 2014-15 total \$95 million. Funding for ongoing projects includes \$16.0 million to complete the new hospital in Moose Jaw and \$27 million to continue construction of long-term care facilities in Biggar, Kelvington, Kipling, Maple Creek and Prince Albert.

In addition, the budget commits new funding of \$3.5 million for facility planning. This includes renewal of Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital, replacement of long-term care facilities in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and planning for more long-term care beds in La Ronge.

The province has earmarked \$4.0 million to reduce emergency department wait times and improve patient flow. This includes an emergency department wait time initiative, development of a program to provide house calls to seniors with complex needs and implementation of the "hotspotting" concept.

"Our health system struggles to meet the needs of patients with complex and varied issues - sometimes related to mental health," Duncan said. "These patients may not require hospitalization but they are using the emergency department."

In the coming year, a "hotspotting" pilot program will begin in Saskatoon and Regina to identify and assist these high-cost, high-use patients, helping them receive the care they need.



The budget also invests \$60.5 million in surgical waitlists to support achievement of the three-month wait time target in all health regions by the end of 2014-15.

The 2014-15 budget provides investments in long-term care, home care, acute care, prescription drugs and other services for seniors. It also provides an additional \$7 million for improvements to seniors' care, including funding for the Home First/Quick Response pilot program.

Other priority investments include an additional \$3.4 million for improved primary health care and more Collaborative Emergency Centres, and an increase of \$2.6 million to continue incentives that encourage physicians to work in rural communities and provide locum physician relief for those who are temporarily away from their practices.

Regional Health Authorities will use \$3.25 billion - an increase of \$107.5 million or 3.4 per cent compared to last year - for operating funding and for targeted initiatives. This funding will support care provided through hospitals, health centres and long-term care facilities, along with numerous health services including mental health, addictions and public health. Within this funding, \$24.0 million has been provided to address population growth pressures.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will receive \$155.7 million to provide services through its cancer centres in Regina and Saskatoon, offer prevention and early detection programs, and conduct research. This represents a \$4.9 million or 3.3 per cent increase over last year.

The health system continues to seek new ways to be more efficient and sustainable. In 2014-15, Regional Health Authority and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will work to collectively identify \$51.9 million in savings through sharing of services, attendance management and reduction of lost time due to injuries, premium pay and sick time.

"All of our health system partners are focused on finding efficiencies to provide the best possible health services at the lowest possible cost," Duncan said. "We are on track to achieve better care, better health and better value for the people of our province."

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