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PRAIRIE NORTH HEALTH REGION UPGRADING EQUIPMENT

Prairie North Health Region will receive \$183,000 in funding from Saskatchewan Health to upgrade and replace diagnostic imaging equipment.

Health Minister Len Taylor said the funding from the 2007-08 provincial budget recognizes the need to support timely access to quality health services.

"This investment will bring substantial benefits to both patients and health providers," Taylor said. "It will help us achieve shorter wait times for people who need diagnostic imaging, through increases in our capacity to provide these services."

Prairie North Health Region will use the funding to purchase high priority needs it identified, an ultrasound machine for Lloydminster, and a mobile fluoroscope, or "C-Arm", for North Battleford.

"We appreciate the Government's commitment to improving access to diagnostic imaging, and to updating equipment on a regular basis," Health Region Chief Executive Officer David Fan said. "It has certainly allowed our staff to serve the patients and general public better."

The equipment will help the health region prepare for implementation of a Radiology Information System and a Picture Archiving Communications System. These systems will improve diagnostic imaging services and make images and results available electronically to health care providers across the province. Installation in Prairie North Health Region is expected to be completed in 2008.

In total, Saskatchewan Health is distributing almost \$5 million to health regions to upgrade and replace diagnostic imaging equipment.

Recent investments in diagnostic imaging have significantly increased the services being provided. In 2006-07, Saskatchewan provided 12 per cent more MRI exams, 20 per cent more CT scans and 21 per cent more bone mineral density (BMD) tests. Last year, the number of patients waiting for BMD tests dropped nearly 50 per cent, while the number waiting for an MRI dropped 23 per cent. The wait list for CT scans increased by six per cent due to increasing demand, even though the province completed 20,000 more scans than in the previous year.

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For more information, contact:

Joan Petrie
Health
Regina
Phone: 306-787-4083

Linda Lewis
Prairie North Health Region
North Battleford
Phone: 306-446-6625