

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SASKATOON HEALTH REGION UPGRADING EQUIPMENT**

Saskatoon Health Region will receive more than \$1.2 million in funding from Saskatchewan Health to purchase and upgrade 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.

"We are investing in diagnostic imaging equipment to benefit patients and health providers," Taylor said. "It is part of our plan to improve diagnostic imaging services and reduce wait times."

Saskatoon Health Region identified its highest priority diagnostic imaging equipment needs, which include a new fluoroscopy machine, "C-arm" (mobile fluoroscope), ultrasound unit and new X-ray equipment.

"This is a very exciting day for patients, technologists and physicians in our region," Saskatoon Health Region director of Medical Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Corey Miller said. "The replacement of this medical imaging technology will enable health care professionals within the Saskatoon Health Region to meet the increasing demand for diagnostic services."

The funding will enhance the health region's ability to utilize a new 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. Saskatoon is the first health region to introduce the technology, and installation is expected to be completed this fall.

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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