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HEARTLAND HEALTH REGION UPGRADING DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT

Outlook's hospital will receive \$117,000 in funding from Saskatchewan Health for a new X-ray machine.

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 purchase will help both patients and health providers," Taylor said. "Our investment is another step towards increasing our ability to provide diagnostic imaging services, and achieving reasonable wait times for people who need those services."

The new X-ray unit was identified as a high priority by the region.

"This Saskatchewan Health funding has enabled us to upgrade the X-ray equipment in the Outlook and District Health Centre currently under construction," Heartland Regional Health Authority board chair Lyle Leys said. "We'll be ready to tie into the new provincial digital imaging network, which means that Heartland residents will have greater access to diagnostic services and results."

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

The upgrades will help health regions benefit from 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 Heartland Health Region is expected to be completed in 2008.

Recent investments in diagnostic imaging services 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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