

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Aug. 28, 2007

Health 07-651

**SUN COUNTRY REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY UPGRADING EQUIPMENT**

St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan will receive \$117,000 in funding from Saskatchewan Health for a new X-ray machine. This is the second grant for diagnostic imaging in Sun Country Health Region in two years.

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

"Both patients and health providers will benefit from this purchase," Taylor said. "It will help us increase our capacity to provide diagnostic imaging services, and shorten wait times for people who need those services."

The new X-ray unit was identified as a high priority by Sun Country Regional Health Authority.

"Additional funding for this diagnostic imaging equipment helps us keep diagnostic imaging at St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan at a state-of-the-art level," Sun Country Regional Health Authority president and CEO Cal Tant said. "We are in the process of replacing one x-ray machine at St. Joseph's Hospital and these dollars will help us replace the second."

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 Sun Country 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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