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KEEWATIN YATTHE RHA UPGRADING DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT

Ile a la Crosse 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.

"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 the region.

"We are very pleased with the support that the province has given," Keewatin Yatthe Regional Health Authority (KYRHA) chairperson David Seright said. "The new digital diagnostic imaging equipment will only enhance our capabilities to provide quality health services delivery for our region's residents."

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 KYRHA 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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