

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Aug. 28, 2007

Health 07-655

SUNRISE HEALTH REGION UPGRADING DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT

Yorkton Regional Health Centre will receive \$190,000 in funding from Saskatchewan Health for a new ultrasound 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.

"We are committed to initiatives that benefit both patients and health care providers," Taylor said. "This investment is another step towards improving the quality of diagnostic imaging services, and will achieve the most effective results for the people who need those services."

The new ultrasound unit was identified as a high priority by the region.

"The benefits to patients will be significant," Health Region's Technical Director of Medical Imaging Maria McLaren said. "A side benefit will be staff retention. The new ultrasound machine replaces an aging machine to improve image quality and the ability to detect problems sooner; this is excellent news for patient care. Staff will appreciate the ergonomic design of the machine that will reduce stress and injury for the Diagnostic Medical Sonographer who operates it."

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

"The funding from Saskatchewan Health allows us to replace old equipment with today's advanced technology," McLaren said. "With excellent image quality and future capacity for film-less electronic image storage, this ultrasound replacement fulfils today's needs and positions us well for the future."

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 Sunrise 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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