

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Health Budget 2024-25 - \$7.59 Billion Investment

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2024-25 Ministry of Health budget is the highest-ever at \$7.59 billion, an increase of \$726.4 million, or 10.6 per cent, over the previous year's budget.
- Health capital will receive a \$179.3-million increase, for a total of \$516.8 million, the highest ever budget to deliver major health capital projects such as new hospitals and facilities.
- The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) budget for 2024-25 will increase by \$248.3 million, or 5.6 per cent, for a record \$4.681 billion total budget to support the provincial health system.
- The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) budget will increase by \$26.1 million, or 11.7 per cent, for a total record budget of \$248.9 million. This investment ensures Saskatchewan patients have access to the most current and effective oncology drugs, therapies and treatment options, including \$1.2 million for enhanced gynecological cancer therapy.
- eHealth will receive an increase of \$6.6 million, or 4.6 per cent, for a total budget of \$151.9 million to modernize the system, improve IT infrastructure and security, and prepare the system for future growth.

ACUTE CARE EXPANSION

This budget will expand on patient access and delivery improvements within acute care hospitals, facilities and other settings through a wide range of initiatives. These include:

- \$30-million increase to support the Saskatoon and Regina Capacity Pressure Action Plans to continue ongoing work in Saskatoon and Regina hospitals to address capacity pressures, including acute care and emergency department capacity enhancements. The Action Plans will expand community and continuing care services to better transition patients out of acute care when appropriate.
- \$9.8-million increase for Regina's Urgent Care Centre (UCC) to bridge the gap between primary health care and hospital-based acute care. The Regina UCC will be open 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week to provide a more suitable alternative to Emergency Departments for non-life-threatening illnesses, injuries and mental health issues that require same-day treatment.
- \$5.1-million increase to expand capacity for specialized CT and MRI medical imaging services. This investment will increase access for thousands of additional Saskatchewan patients beginning this year and help reduce waitlists.
- \$3.5-million increase dedicated to women's health for timely and high-quality health care services. The increase will support substantial breast health enhancements for Saskatchewan patients, including expanding access to mammography equipment, modernizing breast tumour

localization, establishing a Breast Health Centre in Regina and supporting additional laboratory staff to expedite biopsy and tissue processing. Annual funding will also be provided to expand eligibility for breast screening to women between the ages of 40 and 49.

- \$1 million in one-time funding to continue Ovarian Cancer Canada's research initiative conducted in Saskatchewan. This investment will support ovarian cancer research and clinical trials to improve diagnosis, treatment options and survival rates for Saskatchewan women.

Other 2024-25 Acute Care access highlights include:

- \$7.5-million increase to enhance emergency medical services (EMS). This investment will support additional EMS and community paramedicine positions to further enhance and stabilize services, including in rural and northern communities;
- \$4.5-million increase to stabilize and enhance neurology and cardiology services through additional staffing for Regina and Saskatoon inpatient/outpatient programs, as well as increased transcatheter aortic valve insertions (TAVI) and Mitral Clip procedures;
- \$3.5-million increase to support the surgical program, reduce waitlists and improve patient quality of life;
- \$2.5-million increase to address capacity challenges for kidney health and organ and tissue donation. This added funding will ensure kidney dialysis and pre-/post-transplant programs are better resourced so patients receive timely, safe and continuous care;
- \$2 million in new funding to expand Saskatchewan's robot-assisted surgery program in Regina;
- \$1.6-million increase for pediatric programs at Prince Albert Victoria Hospital to enhance and stabilize resource levels. This investment will improve access to neonatal care closer to home for northern Saskatchewan patients;
- \$1.5-million increase for continued investment in critical and intensive care services as part of a multi-year strategy to expand Intensive Care Unit (ICU) capacity. The funding increase supports recent recruits and new positions for clinical staffing at Battlefords Union Hospital and Yorkton Regional Health Centre, as well as new positions for Prince Albert Victoria Hospital;
- \$785,000 increase to stabilize Emergency Rooms (ERs) in rural and remote areas to support Registered Nurses and administrative staff recruits, as well as rural trauma training for physicians; and
- \$643,000 increase in annual funding to support the province's pediatric gastroenterology (GI) program to create a stable pediatric GI program and improve access and quality of care for Saskatchewan children.

STRENGTHENING PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE

The 2024-25 Budget invests \$43.4 million in new funding for seniors' care. Government is committed to providing quality health services and programs to support our seniors to live safely and comfortably in their communities. This investment includes:

- \$40 million for a new funding model for third-party long-term care (LTC) homes to address funding pressures and ensure sustainability. This commitment is an increase of \$31 million from the \$9 million in stabilization funding provided to third-party operators in last year's budget;
- \$8 million to expand LTC and convalescent bed capacity in the community and help alleviate pressures in Saskatoon's hospitals;
- \$2.4 million to support the replacement of LTC spaces in Regina;
- \$1.2 million to fully deliver on the commitment to add 300 Continuing Care Assistants (\$19.2 million ongoing annual investment).

Saskatchewan patients will have a path forward to achieve better health and connect with a primary care provider through the following enhancements and new funding allocations:

- \$4 million in new funding to extend the primary care pilot in Swift Current, and further integrate Nurse Practitioners and other allied health professionals to better support physician clinics and enhance patient access to primary care.
- \$3-million increase to better support HealthLine 811's free, confidential, 24-hour phone service that provides advice, education and support on a range of health and mental health and addictions concerns. The service receives an average of 650 to 700 calls daily, an increase of 200 per cent since 2019-20.
- \$2.5-million increase for Chronic Pain Clinics in Regina and Saskatoon to add full-time positions and meet the growing demand for services.
- \$1.8-million increase to expand access to Nurse Practitioners by permanently funding eight positions in four communities.
- \$1.5-million increase to improve provincial testing capacity and expand access to testing for sexually transmitted and blood borne infections. This investment will provide increased funding for laboratory staff, equipment and expanding innovative testing approaches.

Other important community health program investments include:

- \$686,000 in increased funding for Autism Services of Saskatoon to support ongoing work with children and families;
- \$547,000 for the University of Regina (U of R) to support additional hiring for a Nurse-Practitioner-led primary care clinic within the Student Wellness Centre, which serves 16,000 U of R students; and
- \$500,000 to pilot up to two Nurse Practitioner clinics.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

- The 2024-25 Budget includes a record investment of \$574 million for mental health and addictions services. This is an increase of \$56 million, or 10.9 per cent, from 2023-24. This year's increase includes \$34 million for targeted initiatives to expand services and improve care, and \$22 million for increased utilization of hospital-based services, physician visits and prescription drug costs.
- For more information on these investments, please refer to the Mental Health and Addictions news release and background.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Health's total record capital budget of \$516.8 million for facilities and equipment is \$179.3 million higher than last year and includes:

- \$180 million for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital redevelopment project to construct a new multi-level acute care tower, replace the adult mental health space, upgrade the emergency department and medical imaging services, design a new cultural space and increase capacity to 242 beds;
 - \$55 million for the Weyburn General Hospital replacement project to become an integrated facility with 25 acute care beds and 10 in-patient mental health beds;
 - \$27 million for construction of the La Ronge long-term care project;
 - \$21.9 million to complete construction on the Regina General Hospital parkade to improve safety and accessibility for hospital staff, patients and visitors;
 - \$20 million for Regina's long-term care specialized beds project;
 - \$2.5 million to continue work on the Estevan long-term care project; and
 - \$1.5 million to continue work on the Watson long-term care project.
- Other key infrastructure investments include:
 - \$10 million for construction of the Grenfell Long Term Care facility;
 - \$4 million for long-term care upgrades to meet programming and infection and control needs to deliver care safely in Regina; and
 - \$3 million for the Saskatoon Urgent Care Centre.

Since November 2007, the province has invested more than \$2.9 billion into facilities and equipment to improve the delivery of healthcare across the province.

HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES ACTION PLAN

The Government of Saskatchewan continues to build on the successful foundation of the Health Human Resources (HHR) Action Plan, which is now entering its third year since the plan was launched.

This year's key HHR Action Plan investments include:

- \$11.6-million increase for total annual funding of \$33.8 million to stabilize rural and remote staffing, which supports the commitment to add 250 new and enhanced full-time permanent positions in nine high-priority classifications in 54 rural and remote locations.
- \$6.7-million increase for the Saskatchewan Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive (RRRI), for a total of \$8.7 million to fund existing recipients of the RRRI completing their first and second-year service agreement, and extend this successful program with a further intake of recipients into 2024-25.

Other key HHR Action Plan commitment increases in 2024-25 include:

- \$3.8-million increase for the College of Medicine to add new residency training seats in areas like family medicine, anesthesia and psychiatry, as well as academic staff required to support expanded capacity;
- \$1.5-million new incentive for students enrolled in health care training programs located in other provinces where Saskatchewan has invested in specific training seats. The incentive will provide up to \$15,000 per year of study for up to two years, in exchange for a three-year return-of-service agreement to work in Saskatchewan;
- \$1.1-million increase to enhance clinical placement capacity within the SHA to support the province's expansion of training seats including nursing seats. The funding will support the clinical training requirements of Saskatchewan's future health care workforce;
- \$1.1 million for a new Clinical Associate program to provide opportunities for international physicians who are not eligible for regular licensure to provide care under physician supervision and provide vital support to key areas of the health system;
- \$1-million increase to the Rural Physician Incentive Program to support rural family physician recruitment and retention;
- \$1 million in new funding to enhance resources for clinical leadership and support to nurses working in rural and northern locations;
- \$600,000 increase for a total \$4.9 million to the Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment (SIPPA) to supplement the current 45 seats annually by an additional six to eight SIPPA seats. SIPPA assesses internationally educated physicians on their medical training and clinical ability as part of the licensure process to practice medicine in Saskatchewan; and
- \$405,000 to develop and implement training related to the expansion of pharmacist scope of practice.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- A \$214-million new physician agreement was reached that supports recruitment, training and retention of Saskatchewan doctors by enhancing compensation, incentive and benefit programs.
- \$1.4-million increase for the Special Needs Equipment Program. This investment helps people with physical disabilities achieve a more active and independent lifestyle, and assists in meeting the higher demands for equipment due to a growing and aging population.