

# HEALTH MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

## BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2026-27 Ministry of Health budget is the highest-ever at \$8.47 billion, an increase of \$393.4 million, or 4.9 per cent, over the previous year's budget. This Budget will protect and strengthen Saskatchewan's health care system with investments that positively impact patients, families and providers.
- The Saskatchewan Health Authority will receive \$5.15 billion to advance patient-first plans and improve access.
- Health capital will benefit from a \$635.7 million total budget to progress new builds and facility upgrades across the province including hospitals and facilities, long term care homes, and urgent care centres, as well as new investments in IT technology and equipment.
- The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) budget will receive a total budget of \$308.6 million. This investment ensures Saskatchewan cancer patients continue to have access to high-quality, world-class care close to home including the most current and effective oncology drugs, therapies and treatment options. The SCA will continue to focus on health promotion, early detection, treatment and cancer research.
- eHealth will receive a total budget of \$170.8 million as provincial health partners increasingly rely on a strong digital foundation. This increase will support health sector growth, deliver secure and reliable technology, modernize legacy systems, and mitigate critical incident risk or system failures impacting patient care.
- The Saskatchewan Healthcare Recruitment Agency will receive a total \$5.6 million operating budget to maximize efficiencies within the health-care system.
- Canadian Blood Services will receive a \$15.2 million funding increase to support the national blood system. This funding will support Saskatchewan's contribution to national operations of Canadian Blood Services. It will also ensure ongoing sustainability of blood and plasma collections, as well as plasma-derived products and medications used to treat several complex bleeding disorders and other rare illnesses for Saskatchewan patients, and all Canadian citizens.

## CONNECTING PATIENTS TO PRIMARY CARE

- This Budget will dedicate \$11.9 million to support transformative work occurring in Primary and Preventative Care to open new entry points to relationship-based care for thousands of people seeking a physician or nurse practitioner (NP) and address Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBIs). This investment includes:
  - A \$6.7 million increase to fund additional independent NP contracts to continue enhancing primary care capacity. NPs provide comprehensive patient care including assessments, diagnosis, referrals and treatment of

acute and chronic illness. A full-time NP contract can accommodate at least 800 patients.

- a \$1.8 million increase will strengthen team-based care through Patient Medical Homes, which empower professional health teams by fully integrating allied team members to work to their full scope of practice. Patients receive care from the provider best able to meet their needs to enhance capacity and timely care to more patients.
- a \$1.2 million increase will fully fund resources added last year to address STBBIs in the province and focus on prevention, testing, diagnosis, treatment and ongoing care. This funding will increase program staffing capacity and the expansion of the Prenatal Outreach and Resource Team (PORT) in northwest Saskatchewan.
- a new \$1 million fund will enable a pilot for contracted NPs to hire additional team members, such as a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse to develop a primary care team that can accept more patients.
- a new \$1 million fund will pilot virtual care projects to improve timely patient access to convenient and accessible primary care. Virtual care vastly improves essential primary care access for patients, particularly rural and northern residents.
- \$220K for the University of Saskatchewan Chronic Pain Clinic to hire additional navigation and support staff.

## **STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY, ACUTE AND CRITICAL CARE SERVICES**

- Saskatchewan is putting patients first by investing \$97.6 million in emergency, critical and acute care improvements to address hospital bed capacity, develop more urgent care centres, advance surgical and medical imaging services, bolster pediatric care, and stabilize Emergency Medical Services. Investments include:
  - a \$43.7 million total increase will continue resolving inpatient capacity pressures at Saskatoon hospitals by adding 60 permanent inpatient beds - 36 at Royal University Hospital and 24 at St. Paul's Hospital. The additional beds will better stabilize patient flow and improve safety for both patients and staff.
  - This increase is also allocated to Saskatoon City Hospital's (SCH) expansion of 109 acute care beds, featuring 60 medicine beds, 22 acute-rehab beds, 12 acquired brain injury beds, and 15 high-acuity beds. This funding protects the \$30 million investment made last year to support this large-scale, ambitious project to realign services at SCH to provide more acute hospital-based care.
  - a \$14.3 million increase will enhance Emergency Medical Services (EMS) across Saskatchewan to improve response times in rural, urban and remote locations; strengthen capacity and reduce workload pressures for paramedics and emergency medical communications staff; divert less-urgent EMS 911 calls to more appropriate community-based providers in

Regina and Saskatoon; and continue building a more resilient, sustainable EMS workforce with additional mental health supports.

- a \$13.6 million increase will support staffing for Urgent Care Centres (UCCs) in Regina as well as support staffing and operations to introduce this model of care to Saskatoon. UCCs offer an alternative for residents seeking care for urgent but non-life-threatening health issues while alleviating demands on emergency departments.
- an \$8.3 million increase will enhance pediatric care including inpatient, neonatal and specialty programs across Saskatchewan. This investment supports permanent staffing for six pediatric inpatient beds at Jim Pattison Children’s Hospital and expands Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) capacity at Regina General Hospital (RGH). It also provides permanent funding to support NICU nursing positions added at RGH. This helps ensure safe, sustainable care for critically ill and premature infants, as well as children requiring specialized services.
- a \$5.7 million increase will expand CT, MRI and PET/CT capacity to reduce waitlists and improve timely access to critical diagnostic services, adding capacity by 5,000 additional CT patients, 3,000 more MRI patients, and 650 more PET/CT patients.
- a \$3.8 million increase will continue strengthening critical care staffing for intensive care units to care for more critically ill patients requiring highly specialized treatment. This investment will permanently staff four additional ICU beds at St. Paul’s Hospital, improving workload for care providers and increasing the hospital’s ability to deliver intensive care services. ICU beds support the sickest patients in the province, including those requiring complex surgeries, advanced procedures, or life-sustaining care.
- a \$2.4 million increase for surgical services to support timely access to care for Saskatchewan patients. This investment focuses on strategic priority areas such as spine surgery and joint replacement, helping reduce waitlists, and improving access to assessment and treatment for the longest-waiting patients.
- a \$2 million increase to support the multi-year Central Intake and Referral Management System to better streamline processes, enhance patient care, reduce patient wait times, improve communication across the system, eliminate faxing, and reduce administrative burdens.
- a \$1.7 million increase will support the provincial Genetics and Metabolics Program to provide critical diagnostic testing and treatment pathways for individuals and families affected by complex or rare conditions, including cancer, hereditary disorders, pregnancy loss and metabolic diseases identified through newborn screening.
- a \$1.5 million increase for endoscopy and ambulatory care will support third-party, community-based delivery of endoscopy and ambulatory care services in Saskatchewan to provide patients with faster access to care. The budget

also provides funding to complete the next implementation phase of a modernized provincial endoscopy software system.

- a \$986 thousand increase will strengthen kidney health programming across Saskatchewan by supporting additional multidisciplinary positions added last year to stabilize dialysis services and support access to safe, life-sustaining patient care closer to home.
- a \$397 thousand increase will support operations at both the Regina and Saskatoon Breast Health Centres, which represent best practice in coordinating breast care. This investment ensures women continue to have timely access to breast diagnostic services, reducing wait times for diagnosis and treatment and supporting better patient outcomes.

## **INVESTING IN BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SENIORS**

- Saskatchewan will invest \$9.2 million to better protect and improve quality of life for seniors and individuals needing complex care through practical approaches that provide options and supports to help them remain safely in their homes and communities. Key investments include:
  - \$4.7 million in new funding to support long-term care (LTC) services for seniors and other LTC residents. This funding will provide more resident-centred and appropriate models of care that are better tailored to individual needs. This investment will also increase capacity by supporting additional staffing for hundreds of new long-term care beds added in Regina and La Ronge. The funding will also support long-term care inspectors, strengthen oversight, and enhance quality improvement.
  - a \$3.9 million increase will strengthen home care services across Saskatchewan. Home care is fundamental in helping residents age with dignity, remain close to family and community, and receive care in familiar settings. This investment supports independence for more seniors and individuals with chronic illness or disabilities to remain safely at home and better connected to their communities. This funding will also support a province-wide software replacement project.
  - a \$651 thousand increase will better support community-based programs for individuals with complex medical needs or disabilities. This funding increase includes targeted investments in the Rural and Remote Memory Clinic - Community-Based Dementia Program and the Autism Resource Centre (ARC) summer program.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

- The 2026-27 Budget provides a record investment of \$674 million to support mental health and addictions programs with a \$49.9 million or 8.0 per cent increase from 2025-26. For more information on these investments, please refer to the Mental Health and Addictions news release and background.

## MORE HEALTH CARE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- The year's Health budget will invest \$117.2 million, an increase of \$28.6 million, to evolve the *Health Human Resources (HHR) Action Plan* into a new phase with ambitious career opportunities for Saskatchewan people; added initiatives for Saskatchewan's valued health care teams; and further empowerment and expanding role for the Saskatchewan Healthcare Recruitment Agency.
  - An increase of \$12.4 million will be dedicated to the College of Medicine to continue building the future physician workforce for Saskatchewan. The College will add 20 more undergraduate seats for a total of 128 available seats for medical students; increase postgraduate set increases by another 10 seats for a total of 160; continue to support new training programs in Regina and Saskatoon for Anesthesia, Dermatology, Plastic Surgery and other specialties, as well as support previous seat increases and academic positions.
  - A \$6.7 million increase will be dedicated to physician recruitment and retention by supporting the Rural Physician Incentive Program and expanding the program to regional communities, supporting assessments for internationally trained physicians able to relocate to the province, and funding to incent trainees in high demand residency programs to practice in Saskatchewan. Strengthening the physician workforce will improve access to care and support continuity for patients.
  - The 2026-27 budget will provide new funding for career laddering opportunities for healthcare professionals already working in Saskatchewan's health care system. \$1.5 million in new funding will support competency-based assessments to retain Continuing Care Assistants (CCAs) and assist in career laddering from a CCA to a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) to a Registered Nurse (RN).
  - \$984 thousand in new funding will support an RN to NP career laddering opportunity offered in select communities to support students with tuition and books. This '*grow your own*' initiative will support 25 Saskatchewan RNs who wish to train as an NP for a return in service agreement to their community.
  - \$290 thousand of new funding to support a unique Indigenous CCA pilot program to meet future HHR needs in Northern Saskatchewan.
  - \$115 thousand of new funding will expand the use of software to support clinical placement coordination for new and recently expanded health training programs.
- In addition, the 2026-27 Budget includes ongoing funding to support successful recruitment activities, including:
  - \$8.7 million for new and existing recipients of the Saskatchewan Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive program to stabilize health care in

communities. Since its launch in 2022, the incentive has attracted more than 500 new employees in rural and remote communities experiencing service disruptions due to staffing challenges; and

- \$870K will support licensure for internationally educated health care professionals through faster pathways to ensure a stable and growing workforce is in place to support current and future patient needs.

## **BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR HEALTH CARE**

Saskatchewan will continue momentum in health infrastructure with state-of-the-art new builds and facility upgrades across the province including hospitals and facilities, long term care homes, and urgent care centres as well as software and equipment upgrades. The total capital budget in 2026-27 is \$635.7 million. Major infrastructure investments include:

- \$238.4 million for ongoing construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital;
- \$100 million for the Regina Long-Term Care Specialized bed construction;
- \$24.3 million for the Grenfell Long-Term Care project;
- \$22.1 million for the La Ronge Long-Term Care project;
- \$17.1 million for the Royal University Hospital's ICU Expansion project construction;
- \$9.4 million for Saskatchewan Health Authority and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Pharmacy Clean Room Renovations throughout the province;
- \$8.3 million for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Saskatoon Patient Lodge;
- \$8 million for Complex Needs Facilities expansion;
- \$8 million for Phase Two of the Regina Electrical Infrastructure Renewal Program;
- \$5.3 million for the Saskatoon Urgent Care Centre's equipment and information technology, which in partnership with Ahtahkakoop Cree Developments, is expected to be fully constructed later in 2026. The SHA will lease the site and be responsible for its operations.
- \$3.5 million to support planning for the new UCCs in Prince Albert, North Battleford and Moose Jaw, and establishing second UCCs in Regina and Saskatoon;
- \$3.5 million to continue planning activities for major projects, including Yorkton Regional Health Centre, Rosthern Hospital, Esterhazy Integrated Care Facility, and Battlefords and District Care Centre;
- \$3.2 million for a new six-bed Youth Detox Unit at Calder Centre in Saskatoon;
- \$2.3 million to establish a Regina-based Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Clinic that will provide comprehensive outpatient neurosciences program in southern Saskatchewan;
- \$2 million for Regina Long-Term Care Standard Beds capital upgrades.

Saskatchewan will continue embracing tools and technologies that modernize and enhance our health system with capital investments to stabilize and enhance laboratory medicine services across Saskatchewan, replace the end-of-life renal data system with a modern provincial electronic records system, and enhance the provincial endoscopy software.