



# *Saskatchewan*

***Healthy People. A Healthy Province.***

*The Action Plan for  
Saskatchewan Health Care*

*A Summary*



# The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care

The top priority of our government is our commitment to an accessible, quality health care system.



Healthy people and a healthy province are at the heart of *The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care*. The quality of our lives depends on our health. As Saskatchewan people, we rely on having a wide range of health care services and programs available to us when we need them. We are fortunate to have a health care system that is fundamentally strong.

Surveys tell us that most Saskatchewan people are very satisfied with the care they receive – from getting a flu shot to undergoing major surgery or receiving cancer treatments.

Yet, we know there are shortcomings. We face many challenges today, including shortages of key health care providers, longer waiting times for surgery and diagnostic tests, and the rising cost of new medical treatments and technologies.

To help us understand these challenges, the Commission on Medicare was appointed to study our health care system, and to outline potential solutions. Following the Commission's report, community members, health care providers, and other interested groups told us about the issues that matter most to them. Many people told us they want quality care with good access to doctors, hospitals, emergency care, and other vital services. They are not looking for dramatic changes that would disrupt the delivery of health services in their communities.

We listened and we are responding with a plan that offers a practical, balanced approach to change, at a manageable pace.

## WHAT DOES THE HEALTH PLAN MEAN FOR MY FAMILY AND MY COMMUNITY?

This health plan offers strong leadership by taking the necessary steps to improve health care for families and communities throughout our province. Our plan:

- Provides better access to health care services, including primary, hospital, and emergency care;
- Improves health workplaces and addresses shortages of key health providers;
- Improves quality, efficiency, and accountability measures to ensure long-term sustainability of our Medicare system; and
- Supports good health and the prevention of illness.

## KEY POINTS OF THE HEALTH PLAN

- A province-wide network of hospitals. No closures or conversions of hospitals.
- Primary health care teams of doctors, nurses, and other health providers.
- A 24-hour toll-free telephone line with immediate access to health advice.
- More funding to reduce waiting times for surgery.
- \$3 million in new funding to train, attract, and keep more health providers.
- Support for 240 new or existing ambulance attendants to become emergency medical technicians.
- Canada's first Quality Council, to promote excellence and effective health spending.
- 12 Regional Health Authorities to replace 32 districts.
- Support for health research with a 40 per cent increase in funding in 2002-03 and further increases to follow.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Primary health care is the first and most frequent point of contact people have with the health system. It covers everything from the diagnosis of common illnesses to the treatment of minor injuries, and the management of ongoing problems like asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, or anxiety.

Our plan will have teams of doctors, nurses, therapists, and other front-line providers working together in primary health care networks to meet the needs of patients.

Telephone advice lines can eliminate unnecessary trips to a physician's office or an emergency room. They save patients' time and travel costs.





# The Action Plan

*“Ask people what makes them and their community healthy and they’ll tell you – a good job, a decent education, a clean and safe environment, proper housing, less poverty, and a sense of community.”*

Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (University of Regina/University of Saskatchewan) submission to the Standing Committee on Health Care

## Primary Health Care

Our plan includes:

- Primary health care networks in all 12 Regional Health Authorities;
- A 24-hour toll-free health advice line, staffed by nurses; and
- Continuation of existing 74 health centres.

## Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Health is more than treatments and cures. Eating nutritious foods, exercising, quitting smoking, and having adequate housing and income can help us to lead healthier, longer lives.

Our plan includes:

- A province-wide strategy that balances the need for treatment services with the wisdom of having programs that keep us healthy and prevent disease;
- More primary health care services that focus on the needs of Aboriginal communities; and
- A Northern Health Strategy that addresses circumstances leading to higher rates of accidents and illness in the North.

## Emergency Care

Our plan includes:

- 240 new or existing ambulance attendants trained and licensed as basic EMTs over a three-year period;
- Provincial regulation for road ambulance fees to ensure greater consistency across the province; and
- All calls for ambulance service in the province co-ordinated through the five existing wide-area dispatch centres. This does not change where ambulances are based in the province.

The vastness of our province and its small, scattered population are a constant challenge for emergency medical services (EMS) workers.

Our health plan will improve Saskatchewan’s EMS care through better training, co-ordination, efficiency, and fairness.





## Hospitals

Our health plan establishes new hospital categories so people know which services to expect in each hospital.

- **Community hospitals** in 44 smaller communities. These will offer 24/7 emergency services, general medicine, and basic lab and x-ray services.
- **Northern hospitals** in four northern communities: La Ronge, La Loche, Ile a la Crosse, and one under construction in Stony Rapids. These include the same services as community hospitals, as well as special programs to meet the specific needs of the North.
- **District hospitals** in nine communities:
 

Estevan	Weyburn	Meadow Lake
Melfort	Humboldt	Nipawin
Kindersley	Melville	Tisdale

These hospitals will provide 24/7 emergency services, general medicine services for adults and children, low complexity surgeries, and low-risk deliveries of babies.

- **Regional hospitals** in six communities. This category is divided into two levels:

- Level 1 - Prince Albert and Moose Jaw.
- Level 2 - Lloydminster, North Battleford, Swift Current and Yorkton.

All regional hospitals will provide emergency services, general medicine, and basic specialty services, including general surgery and intensive care services.

- **Provincial hospitals** in Regina and Saskatoon. These five major hospitals will focus on a full range of services, from basic to highly specialized.

This plan does not call for any hospital closures or conversions. Communities will be involved in decision-making if a hospital cannot be maintained due to shortages of key health professionals or other circumstances.

## Services for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Our plan includes:

- A greater range of community-based options for seniors and people living with disabilities, including an expansion of personal care homes; and
- A funding option that would give those with long-term disabilities the opportunity to hire their own provider or aide.



Many seniors and people with disabilities prefer living in their own homes. We support their desire to remain independent. Home care has helped thousands of citizens stay in their communities, while receiving the care they need.

### Waiting Times for Elective Services

Our plan includes:

- More funding for surgical centres;
- Creative initiatives to train, keep, and attract key health providers;
- A province-wide surgical waiting list to track all patients that need surgery;
- Guidelines to ensure patients receive surgery based on need; and
- More information about waiting times for surgery on Saskatchewan Health's web site and through contact people on toll-free information lines.

Some people are waiting too long for elective surgeries and diagnostic tests. People want a surgical system that is fair, accessible, and easy to understand.

### KEEPING, ATTRACTING AND TRAINING HEALTH PROVIDERS

Our plan includes:

- New training seats for the providers needed most;
- Bursary programs for hard-to-fill professions;
- More education and training opportunities for health care workers;
- Opportunities for full participation of Aboriginal peoples in the health sector; and
- Better workplaces that attract new employees.

Our health plan provides a province-wide human resource strategy to secure the health providers needed. An initial investment of \$3 million will be made to develop specific initiatives in co-operation with health care providers and employers.

### Health Sciences Education

Our plan includes:

- A new Academic Health Sciences Network where all health disciplines will work together. This includes practical training and mentorship programs in rural and urban settings;



- Support for the College of Medicine as a key resource in the delivery of health services, in meeting provincial training needs, and in conducting research; and
- Support for health research with a 40 per cent increase in funding in 2002-03, and further increases to follow.

## A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY

Health care is a top priority for Saskatchewan people. This year, the province will spend over \$2.2 billion on health care – nearly 40 per cent of provincial program spending.

We have listened to people from across our province talk about the services that matter to them and their families, and about how we can make those services better. We listened to the Commission on Medicare, and adopted some of its best ideas. *The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care* provides a clear direction to improve access to care and the quality of services, while securing the future of our public health care system.

This health plan will address the immediate needs of our health system, while providing the long-term vision that will guide future decisions and investments in health care. In the months ahead, we will work closely with communities, health care providers, and our health partners to begin making the changes outlined in this plan.

We know how and where the money is being spent, but we need better information about whether health dollars are going toward the programs and services that provide the greatest health benefit. Our plan includes:

- A Quality Council to encourage excellence throughout the health care system and report to the public on the quality of care.

### Regional Health Authorities

People have told us they want more efficient management, and more accountability. The new Regional Health Authorities will be formed without delay so that they can focus on the important work of improving hospital and emergency services and developing primary health services networks. Our plan includes:

- 12 Regional Health Authorities to replace 32 health districts;
- A new budget process so RHAs receive early budget targets and have their budgets approved at the outset of the fiscal year; and
- Community Advisory Networks to ensure public involvement across each region.

Information about board nominations will be published in your local paper soon.  
To inquire, please call 306-787-6714.



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