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LLOYDMINSTER AREA BENEFITS FROM ENHANCED HEALTH SERVICES

Lloydminster ... Saskatchewan Health Minister Don McMorris and the Honourable Ron Liepert, Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness for Alberta, today announced an enhancement of diagnostic services in the Lloydminster area.

Effective Sept. 1, the Government of Saskatchewan will cover the cost of bone mineral density tests (BMD) provided to Lloydminster and area residents who receive the test at a medical clinic located in Lloydminster on the Alberta side of the border.

Residents will be able to undergo a BMD test at the Lloydminster clinic without prior approval from the Saskatchewan Health Ministry, if they have a referral from a physician. Prior approval is normally required for all BMD tests done in medical clinics outside of the province.

Lloydminster residents also have enhanced access to magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services thanks to a unique partnership between Alberta and Saskatchewan. The mobile MRI based in Alberta now operates at Lloydminster Hospital one week in every five. The MRI also provides service to four Alberta communities. The Prairie North Health Region pays for scans provided to Saskatchewan residents.

Currently, many Lloydminster and area residents must travel to Saskatoon and Regina to receive diagnostic services. McMorris said the BMD policy change and the MRI partnership are common sense solutions that address the unique circumstances of Lloydminster.

“Our government is striving to ensure Saskatchewan residents have access to high quality health care services as close to their home as possible,” McMorris said.

“We are also interested in working collaboratively with other provincial governments to enhance health-care services. We are pleased to be teaming up with Minister Liepert and the Alberta government to improve care in Lloydminster.”

The Alberta government is providing funding of \$1.3 million in 2008-09 for the operation of the mobile MRI unit.

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"The Alberta government is committed to public health to reducing wait times for patients and improving health services outside larger centres," said Ron Liepert, Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness. "This mobile MRI service allows us to share our technology not only with rural Albertans but also our Saskatchewan neighbours. That's the tremendous benefit of this partnership."

"I am very pleased Lloydminster residents living on the Saskatchewan side of the border will have enhanced access to important diagnostic services," Tim McMillan, MLA for Lloydminster, said.

"Lloydminster is growing rapidly and the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Alberta intend to support that growth by working together to provide high quality health care."

"The mobile MRI service is the first of its kind in Alberta and it is having a positive impact on residents in this region," said Lloyd Snelgrove, MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster. "Patients can now receive these diagnostic tests closer to home without the added expense of travelling great distances. Ensuring Saskatchewan residents have access to this technology as well is the right thing to do."

McMorris and Liepert, along with McMillan and Snelgrove, were in the city to discuss health-care issues with local officials.

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