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For Immediate Release

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News Release

“PNHR To Go Tobacco and Smoke-Free”

Prairie North Health Region is going tobacco and smoke-free. Board members today approved the Region’s new Tobacco and Smoke-free Policy which comes into effect April 1, 2011.

The Policy aims to foster an environment that protects PNHR clients, staff and the public from second-hand tobacco smoke and reinforces a social norm of being tobacco-free. The Policy provides help and support to PNHR clients and staff who wish to stop using tobacco products. The Policy respects and supports the traditional use of sacred medicines within First Nations healing ceremonies.

“Moving Prairie North Health Region toward being tobacco and smoke-free is a significant step in improving the health of our clients, health care providers, and the public,” said Glennys Uzelman, PNHR Vice-President of Primary Health Services. “Improving the health of our entire population is a key responsibility for us as a health region, and it is a responsibility we take very seriously,” Uzelman added.

The need for the policy is clear, Uzelman continued. “Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death, disease and disability in Canada. In Prairie North, nearly one-third (32.4%) of our residents smoke tobacco daily or occasionally. That is the second highest rate among Saskatchewan health regions and over 50% higher than the provincial average of 20%.”

“As part of the health system, if we can help reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and smoking in any way, we will positively impact health status, health outcomes, quality of life, and demands on the health system for individuals and the population as a whole,” Uzelman stated. “The Tobacco and Smoke-free Policy strongly reflects Prairie North’s vision of *‘Healthy People. Healthy Communities.’*”

Implementation of the policy is being phased in over the next 10 months – starting April 1, 2011 - to allow time to inform and educate everyone in the Region about requirements and responsibilities under the policy. The phased in approach will allow time and opportunity for individuals to stop smoking and/or using tobacco. The Region will also work to train all direct care providers in the brief intervention they will use to promote and support tobacco use reduction.

Effective Weedless Wednesday – January 18, 2012 – all PNHR property will be tobacco and smoke-free. As of that date, tobacco use or smoking will NOT be permitted in buildings, on grounds, and in/on parking areas owned or operated by Prairie North Health Region. Tobacco use or smoking will not be permitted in any facilities or spaces leased by PNHR or in vehicles owned, leased or operated by PNHR.

Only four exemptions apply: residents of special care homes owned or operated by Prairie North, and residents of Saskatchewan Hospital will be able to smoke only in designated outdoor locations of PNHR property. Ceremonial use of tobacco and prescribed use of medicinal marijuana will be permitted in PNHR facilities.

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Prairie North will provide support to clients, employees, and physicians in moving toward a tobacco and smoke-free environment.

Prairie North will undertake significant communication activities over the next 10 months to inform all stakeholders about the policy and its requirements.

"We are confident our clients, staff, physicians, and public will accept and respect the policy in the interests of their own and everyone's health," Uzelman concluded.

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MEDIA:

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