



Saskatchewan  
**Health Authority**

# Saskatoon Capacity Pressure Action Plan

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Saskatchewan Health Authority

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# Saskatoon Capacity Pressure Action Plan

## Overview

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has been working closely with the Ministry of Health to take a number of concrete actions to make improvements to our hospital capacity in Saskatoon. We acknowledge that current hospital capacity pressures create a difficult environment for our patients who are seeking care in our Emergency Departments, and for staff and paramedics who have continued to provide excellent care.

Within this environment, the SHA's Executive and Senior leadership have been meeting with Emergency Department staff over the Remembrance Day weekend and will continue engagement with them in the following weeks. We want our staff to feel supported and to work in an environment that they can do their best for our patients. Our leadership team will learn from and support the necessary actions to improve the work environment and address our hospital capacity issues.

Even with significant investment made to date in Saskatoon, demands on the health system have continued to exceed available capacity. This can be partially attributed to increasing population growth, particularly in our urban centres, and changing demographics.

The Saskatoon Capacity Pressure Action Plan has been designed by the SHA with support and collaboration from the Ministry of Health to alleviate and address the immediate pressures facing hospital capacity in the Saskatoon, while introducing several long-term measures to meet the current and future needs of Saskatchewan residents accessing health care services in Saskatoon.

## Highlights

- Hospital capacity pressures in Saskatoon impact the SHA's ability to deliver the level of service patients expect.
- The SHA is taking immediate action to address current pressures, including the addition of beds, staff supports and enhancing community care.
- Long-term measures will be introduced to meet the future health service needs of Saskatoon.

## Previous Actions

As Saskatchewan's largest urban centre, addressing capacity pressures in Saskatoon has been prioritized by the SHA and Ministry of Health with previous investment and operational initiatives.

Significant recent investments have been made to increase hospital capacity in Saskatoon, including:

- The addition of 84 beds at Royal University Hospital;
- An additional 29.5 RN/PRN FTEs at St. Paul's Hospital Emergency Department and Medicine Units since 2022;
- Additional three 24/7 staffed ambulances in the community.
- The previously announced Health Human Resources Action Plan has introduced a number of immediate and long-term measures to recruit, train, incentivize and retain health care providers to stabilize and grow the provincial health workforce.
- Future investment in the Saskatoon Urgent Care Centre will support patients who need urgent, but not emergent care, thus freeing up capacity in our tertiary Emergency Departments.

## Actions currently being implemented

In recognition that more action has been necessary to immediately address capacity pressures in Saskatoon, SHA has taken concrete measures prior to the release of the Action Plan to provide immediate support to the hardworking health professionals providing tremendous patient care under difficult circumstances.

Actions currently being implemented include:

- Addition of 32 transitional beds added by the end of November to facilitate discharge and care transitions for patients from acute care to appropriate care settings;
- Deployment of primary health care staff to support the Emergency Department and inpatient units to identify patients that could be cared for at home or in community to avoid admission to hospital;
- Additional staffing underway to support 43 additional beds at Royal University Hospital, including:
  - 21 temporary inpatient beds;
  - 22 temporary flex beds and EMS transition beds.

## Immediate Actions

In addition to previously announced actions or immediate actions that are currently being implemented, SHA will be taking immediate action to implement the following measures to address capacity pressures in Saskatoon over the next 30 days.

These immediate actions include:

- Temporary deployment of staff to acute care units to coordinate the discharge of patients from acute care to appropriate care settings.
- Enhance weekend staffing in Saskatoon facilities to ensure weekend patient discharge and care transitions in alignment with standard discharge practices occurring during the week.
- Increasing adherence to existing Overcapacity Protocols and line of site for senior leadership to transition patients out of the Emergency Department to appropriate care environments and appropriate receiving facilities to reduce pressures on tertiary care.
- Enhance the Community IV Therapy Program to avoid emergency department presentations and more appropriately serve patients in community.
- Add temporary Emergency Department staffing, including nursing, social work, support workers and security personnel to improve patient and staff safety while longer term actions are underway.

## Actions being implemented within 90 days

While work to implement immediate actions is underway, the SHA in collaboration with the Ministry of Health will be undertaking coordination of a number of actions to be implemented within a 90-day period.

Actions being implemented within the next 90-days include:

- Procurement of additional community-based long term and convalescent care beds to enable patient discharge and care transitions from hospital to appropriate care settings.
- Increase of home care and palliative care community resources to prevent Emergency Department presentations and support decreased inpatient admissions and length of stay.
- Opening an additional three ICU beds at Royal University Hospital to ensure capacity for those patients requiring Critical Care services.

## Actions to be implemented in the next three to six months

While short and medium term actions being implemented are anticipated to provide significant immediate relief, a number of additional actions will be undertaken by the SHA in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to implement changes that will address capacity pressures in Saskatoon on a longer term basis. Implementation of these longer-term changes is targeted to occur over the next three to six months.

These actions include:

- Implementing rapid access for unattached patients to primary care through Nurse Practitioner and Primary Care physicians in the community to avoid Emergency Department presentations and admission to hospital.
- Developing community-based programming specific to common Emergency Department presentations to better serve patients in community, keep patients healthy at home, and prevent acute care admissions.
- Implement more robust home health monitoring in Saskatoon for falls prevention and chronic disease management to prevent Emergency Department presentations.
- Complete an inpatient bed and long-term care needs assessment for Saskatoon facilities to determine the appropriate number and mix of acute care and long-term care beds required to meet the current and projected needs of the community.
- Improve access to information between acute and community services to enable seamless patient flow and care planning across care settings and better transition patients home. This means augmented WIFI capability within Saskatoon facilities to ensure staff can easily access and share patient information across care providers.

## Conclusion

The actions articulated within this Action Plan are anticipated to provide immediate relief to capacity challenges within Saskatoon while the SHA and Ministry of Health collaborate on longer term solutions.

Throughout implementation of this Action Plan, the SHA commits to continued engagement with our front-line staff to hear their ideas, understand their needs and ensure we are working collaboratively to provide the best possible care to our patients. SHA senior leadership will continue to visit front line care areas to ensure we can remove barriers and challenges as they occur and adapt the plan to ensure needs are well known and responded to.

