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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouveau-Brunswick | 56e | 4e | Estimés budgétaires de l’année fiscale | 26-01-2010 | Mary Schryer | Ministre de la Santé | PL |

*(Le discours est bilingue)*

**Committee of Supply**

(**Mr. Speaker** vacated the chair, the House going into Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Fraser** took the chair at the committee table and called for consideration of the estimates for the Department of Health.)

**Department of Health**

**Hon. Mrs. Schryer,** after all the items under the Department of Health had been presented: First of all, I would like to have permission to speak from a chair other than my own.

**Mr. Chairman**: Agreed.

**Hon. Mrs. Schryer**: Thank you. It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to release the Department of Health’s budget estimates for the 2010-11 fiscal year. The investments in the

Department of Health’s budget will ensure the availability of services that provincial residents rely on, both today and in the future. Our government is committed to seizing the opportunity for quality health care by enhancing access to quality health care in both rural and urban New Brunswick, balancing the promotion of good health with the provision of care, harnessing innovation, strengthening the health care system for the future, and seizing opportunities to ensure system sustainability.

Ordinary Account spending at the Department of Health is increasing by $82.8 million in 2010-11, over the revised 2009-10 estimates, to a record funding level of $2.46 billion.

It is no secret that our province has embarked on an ambitious journey toward self-sufficiency by 2026. To achieve this goal, we need a first-class health care system to serve a growing, diverse, and prosperous population. The foundation of our health care system is a dedicated team of health care workers who provide direct patient care to New Brunswick citizens.

The Provincial Health Plan recognizes that maintaining and recruiting a strong health care workforce is vital. To this end, it is my pleasure to announce the addition of 25 new physician

billing numbers in 2010-11. The new billing numbers will support the commitment in *Transforming New Brunswick’s Health-care System: The Provincial Health Plan 2008-2012* to add 100 new billing numbers over four years. We have already added 50 new billing numbers, and 2010-11 will bring us up to 75 new billing numbers, putting us on track to meet that goal. In addition, a total of 11 new physician positions will be created to support the medical education programs in Saint John and Moncton.

Also, 5 new nurse practitioner positions will be added in 2010-11. Since 2006, the province has added 25 new nurse practitioners to the system. A total of 54 nurse practitioners are currently working in New Brunswick. As well, the budget includes $400 000 to support the recruitment and retention of nurses in hard-to-recruit positions throughout the province through the New Brunswick Forgivable Loan Program for New Graduate Nurses. This program will provide up to $10 000 for nursing graduates who accept positions that are hard to fill.

Health funding for medical education services provided to the regional authorities will increase by 6.5% in 2010-11, an increase of $700 000. The Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick program will accept its first class in September 2010. In addition, we are making capital investments to accommodate these medical education teaching programs within various New Brunswick hospitals.

Our government is committed to a patient-centred health care system that is best positioned to

meet the needs of individuals and communities. We are also committed to targeting available

health care dollars into high priority areas.

The Department of Health’s 2010-11 budget includes new funding to expand and deliver new

dialysis services to better serve individuals closer to home. Unfortunately, the demand for dialysis services continues to increase in New Brunswick, as part of a national trend. Therefore, the 2010-11 budget includes $1.36 million in capital and operating funding to support the new dialysis unit in the Charlotte County Hospital in St. Stephen. The funding will support the unit with five hemodialysis stations, operating three days per week, 12 hours per day, with the capacity to serve 10 patients.

There will be $200 000 in additional operating funding used to support the expansion of the

hemodialysis service in the Upper River Valley Hospital, in Waterville. The funding will support the doubling of dialysis services capacity at the hospital, enabling the unit to operate six days per week, 12 hours per day, with the capacity to serve 20 individuals.

Other important new investments that we are making include $1.5 million to support enhancements to the cardiac surgery program at the New Brunswick Heart Centre. Also, $80 000 will be provided for a new nurse navigator position with Regional Health Authority A. This new position will support an integrated breast health centre with Regional Health Authority A to better serve breast cancer patients.

To support the establishment of a colorectal cancer screening program, $500 000 will be provided. Our government recognizes that colorectal cancer screening is a critical weapon in fighting the disease that is the fourth most common cause of new cancers in our province and the second most common cause of cancer-related deaths. The budget also includes $3.4 million to fund the intravenous drug Avastin for eligible patients with metastatic colorectal cancer.

The Department of Health is also supporting the three-year extension of health care for those who leave social assistance for a job. This honours a commitment made by our government in *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan.* Our health care is stronger today, and, if we want to continue to make our system even more resilient for the needs of tomorrow, we must ensure that our focus is not simply on how much more money we are investing but also on making wise investments that will best position us for the future.

The department’s budget will also include funding for specific health care initiatives, including $2.5 million in funding to support the provincial trauma system, ongoing funding for e-health initiatives, additional funding for hospital services, and funding to support the delivery of a strong public health service.

Funding for the RHAs will increase to $1.7 billion in 2010-11, an increase of $69.4 million—or 5%—compared with the 2009-10 revised estimates.

The budget for the RHAs to deliver mental health services will increase by 7.5% to $77.7 million. The budget for mental health services includes investments to support funding increases for programs and services at the local level. In addition, the construction of the new psychiatric hospital complex is moving forward to replace the aging Restigouche Hospital Center, in Campbellton. The budget also includes funding of $17.8 million for RHAs to deliver addiction services, an increase of 7.3%. This budget will address increased demand for addiction services as well as funding for programs and services required at the community level.

The H1N1 pandemic has shown us how vital public health services are to the protection and welfare of the public. Public health services support healthy growth and development, foster healthy lifestyles, control communicable diseases, and protect the public from the adverse health consequences of exposure to chemical, physical, and biological agents. The budget also includes $21.5 million for the RHAs to deliver public health services, an increase of 11.5%.

On top of funding for services and programs, our government recognizes that investments in infrastructure are among the best investments that any government can make. Investments in health care infrastructure not only improve the experience of patients and working conditions for health care employees, but also these investments generate jobs and economic activity.

In 2010-11, the Department of Health will invest $79.3 million in health facilities and equipment. This includes $64.9 million for various capital construction projects as well as $4.4 million to upgrade various health facilities around the province.

For the Chaleur Regional Hospital, in Bathurst, the capital budget includes $1.5 million to provide improved accommodations in the intensive care/step-down unit as well as the beginning of planning for the major redevelopment and revitalization of the hospital. There is $20 million to continue work on the major expansion of the Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital, in Moncton; $12.8 million to complete the new emergency department in Saint John; and $7.5 million to continue construction on the linear accelerator expansion at the Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital.

The capital budget also includes $3.5 million to improve laboratory medicine, medical imaging, and ambulatory care services at the Grand Falls General Hospital, $2.4 million to complete the installation of sprinklers at the Moncton Hospital, and $2.6 million for clinical teaching renovations associated with the Dalhousie University medical education program. This includes the renovations at the Moncton Hospital, the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital, and the Miramichi Regional Hospital. The clinical teaching renovations at the Saint John Regional Hospital are currently under way.

There is also $650 000 for the new therapeutic park at the Stan Cassidy Centre for Rehabilitation, in Fredericton; $400 000 to complete the new Rexton community health centre, which is expected to be completed in June 2010; and $10 million for capital equipment.

In addition to the $10 million that I just mentioned for capital equipment, additional funding is being provided in 2010-11 for a major renewal of diagnostic imaging equipment in the province. The diagnostic imaging equipment is critical to the timely and accurate diagnosis and treatment of provincial residents. We know that, in several health care facilities, either additional capacity is required to better serve the patients in a timely manner or the equipment is aging and will require replacement.

Today, I am pleased to announce that a single request for proposals will be issued for new

diagnostic imaging equipment in the province, including a new MRI at the Moncton Hospital to replace the existing one; a new MRI at the Saint John Regional Hospital to replace the existing unit; a new, fixed MRI at the Edmundston Regional Hospital; and a new, fixed MRI at the Chaleur Regional Hospital, in Bathurst.

A single MRI can cost an estimated $2 million to $3 million. Therefore, this announcement

represents one of the largest single purchases of new diagnostic imaging equipment in our province’s history. It is a multimillion-dollar investment.

Typically, when new MRIs and other diagnostic imaging equipment were required, regional

health authorities issued requests for proposals to purchase these devices on an individual basis. Today, we have a more streamlined health care system, with two regional health authorities and the expertise of FacilicorpNB, which enables a single request for proposals to be issued, thus maximizing the potential for cost savings.

The investments we are making in 2010-11 will ensure that we continue to make our health care stronger.

I would like to take a brief moment to recognize all the staff at the Department of Health and our partners within the health care system, whether employed at the regional health authorities, Ambulance New Brunswick, or FacilicorpNB. Successes that have been achieved are due to the hard work, dedication, and commitment of these hardworking personnel, who make a difference in the lives of provincial residents each and every day.

I am proud of the progress our government has made since 2006 to support the delivery of high quality and sustainable health care. Some of our biggest accomplishments since 2006 include the addition of 153 net new doctors, the addition of 357 net new nurses, over 50 nurse practitioners working in the province, the reconstruction of the regional health authorities, the creation and continuing enhancements of Ambulance New Brunswick, the establishment of FacilicorpNB and the New Brunswick Health Council, and the coordination and delivery of the H1N1 vaccine to over 65% of the population, which is well above the national average. Clearly, significant progress has been made, and challenges such as those posed by the emergence of pandemic influenza have been met with coordinated and decisive action.

Nonetheless, work must continue to ensure that the New Brunswick health care system will be sustainable over the long term. As Minister of Health, I have full confidence in saying that the investments within the 2010-11 budget will position us well on the path to self-sufficiency.

Thank you.