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| Saskatchewan | 21e | 3e | Discours sur la santé | 21 août 1989 | George McLeod | Minister of Health | Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan |

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’m pleased to introduce a group of officials that are here to assist us and assist the committee in the consideration of the Health estimates. On my immediate right is Mr. Stan Sojonky, the deputy minister of Health; just behind Mr. Sojonky is Mr. George Loewen, an associate deputy minister; directly behind me is Mr. Mike Shaw, an associate deputy minister; just to my left is Dr. Roy West, who is an associate deputy minister as well; and behind Dr. West is David Babiuk, an associate deputy minister of Health. There are other officials who will come into the House or into assistance here as time goes on, as we go through the details of the estimates, and I could introduce them at that time, if that’s appropriate.

Mr. Chairman, just at the outset of these estimates, I think it’s . . . I was just indicated to my critic and to the member opposite that I would just take a few minutes, and I will try not to be overly long in this, to put these estimates into some perspective, or what I believe to be some perspective in any case.

Mr. Chairman, these officials that I’ve introduced and many other people who work in the Department of Health, in fact the whole of the Department of Health, have a mission and a mission statement which they’ve developed, and it’s one that I think they’re very proud of and one that they work to adhere to as each day goes by. And the results of that have shows themselves in the last year, in the last couple of years, as they work to continue to develop this department in some difficult times. It’s a mission that we believe is shared by everyone in this province.

Our mission is to work together for the health and the well-being of Saskatchewan people. We in the Department of Health and we in the government have a vision as well, and it’s also one that I believe is shared by everybody in the province, including everybody in this Chamber, and that is one of, as it relates to health care, a vision of prevention, of protection, and one of consultation.

As it relates to prevention, a healthier population better equipped to take responsibility for their health and their well-being - that’s a goal that we find that we work toward in each day. Under protection, we believe we need a comprehensive health care system. We have one and we need to continue to protect it. Health care system dedicated to providing services that people need. And as it relates to consultation, we want this province to be one where communities and health care providers and government work together to compassionately and effectively meet the needs of all out people. Working together for health and well being, this is the mission statement of Saskatchewan Health, Mr. Chairman. These few words sum up our goal and how we are reaching it.

It has been said, Mr. Chairman, that the next 10 years promise to bring as much change to this society as we’ve seen in the last hundred. How we approach the challenges of the ‘90s and beyond will determine our children’s future. The commitment of Saskatchewan people to meet the challenge of the future is as strong today as it has ever been in the past, and we know that commitment and the history of our province has been very strong. Since 1982-82 we have virtually doubled funding for health care, from $741 million to this year’s record $1.4 billion budget that we’re considering today. This is an increase of $133 million over last year’s budget - almost 11 per cent.

Mr. Chairman, our commitment to the people of this province is unwavering and unshakeable, and the best way to respond to challenges is though consultation and through working together, another part of our mission statement, Mr. Chairman. Our government believes in consultation. We hard that, in fact, we’ve heard that from colleagues of mine here in the House, as we developed the Estimates of other departments, but it’s not something that we say often enough, frankly, and it’s not something that we get enough recognition for. We do believe in consultation. We do believe in bringing all the players together. We believe consultation is the best way to define needs and efficiently meet them.

We’re working together with the nursing professions. Example, the extensive consultations, very extensive consultations that went into the major legislative changes that took place last year. We’re working together with physicians. We consulted with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to revise and update The Medical Profession Act, (1981), other Acts that are before the House now, and I won’t go into them now. The member opposite may want to later. We’ve worked together over a couple of years and certainly in the past year with pharmacists, with ambulance operators, new funding systems for ambulances, new legislation - all of those things - certainly with pharmacists, the new drug plan and the delivery of that drug plan through the card system, and so on.

These and other professionals on a number of advisory committees including our health promotion advisory committee, all of those are ways in which we’ve been working together with people in the health care sector across the province. In fact, Mr. Chairman, our Premier appointed the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care so every Saskatchewan individual and organization would have the opportunity to be heard. Their report will be instrumental in drawing up the blueprint for future health care in our province.

Mr. Chairman, the people of Saskatchewan care deeply about health care all across the province. We’ve said that before. I’ve said that before, members opposite have said it, and it’s very true, about our citizens that we all come here to serve. They share our commitment to maintain and strengthen their first-class system. Saskatchewan people cared enough to make over 500 submissions to the health care commission. They welcomed the opportunity to have a say in the future of our great system and they’re not afraid of facing the challenges of the future. We welcome their observations and all of their comments.

We’ve recently seen how strongly the people of this province support our emphasis on prevention, Mr. Chairman. Over the last couple of months I can personally attest to that. We’ve had in the tens of thousands of responses, response cards and letters from people, men and women from all parts of our province, and they’re telling us that we re on track in that initiative or prevention. They share our enthusiasm and our commitment to working together for the health and well-being of all the citizens in this province.

Mr. Chairman, our government’s top priority is to both protect and improve our health care system. When we formed the government in 1982, we took a long look at health care across the province. We were deeply disturbed by some of the things that we say. Hospitals were sadly neglected, and that can’t be denied, Mr. Chairman. Special care homes had been put on hold, no long-term plan or vision, and I’m proud to say that we’ve turned that around, and I’m sure we’ll be into some of those discussions later.

Some people, including a number of people across the way and others in the province who have had their own political agendas, I would suggest, continually claim that our health care system is being eroded. And we’ve heard that here in the House, more so here in the House than any place else frankly. Mr. Chairman, this is just not true. Our health care system, as has been the case for many years, is envied around the world and continues to be. And that’s been the case for many years, for a long time before we were in government administration. Certainly that’s the case; I concede that. But the people of Saskatchewan, all of us in this province who have our roots deeply in this province have something to be very proud of there.

The Saskatchewan system is a model that many jurisdictions follow, has been the case, and still is the case. We are committed to strengthening that system and to working together to make it even better. And we don’t just mouth those platitudes, Mr. Chairman, we act and this budget indicates some of the areas in which that action is taking place. Out accomplishments are many. Over 2,400 new and replacement special care beds have been approved - Canwood, Lumsden, Tisdale, Big River, Saltcoats, Wawota. I mean I could give a long list; those are some of the locations.

One thousand three hundred thirty-six new and replacement hospital beds have been built. In the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre, very close to this building here in Regina is one; Lloydminster, Watson, Hudson Bay, Regina General regeneration. There are many other example of that, obviously and we’ll get into some of those.

Twenty-three integrated facilities built or approved in rural areas. Integrated facilities are an innovative way to keep our rural hospitals viable and our elderly close to their homes - places like Kyle and Leoville and Theodore, and many others, Mr. Chairman.

This year we have budgeted $64 million for construction. This includes in hospitals - in Saskatoon, St. Paul’s for example; pediatric wing at Regina’s Pasqua Hospital; integrated facilities at Craik, Eatonia, Midale, Edam, Imperial, Lafleche, Oxbow, all of those in this year’s budget. And special care homes at Elrose, Nipawin, Wadena to name a few.

Our health care system is more than bricks and mortar, however, Mr. Chairman. It’s people helping people. Saskatchewan has over 30,000 men and women who work together to deliver the health care to all of the citizens across the province; 30,000 people work in this sector. Throughout the 1980s, Mr. Chairman, we’ve consistently added to this tremendous team of health care providers. Through the ‘80s we’ve added 1,116 new nursing department positions to hospitals, including 370 new positions in this budget; added 580 new staff positions for existing special care homes including about 90 new positions in this budget.

We are keeping up with the changing technology and high-tech equipment. This year we’re introducing a new equipment funding formula which better reflects the program needs of our hospitals.

Mr. Chairman, this budget provides for more construction, it provides for more staffing, it provides for more equipment. This budget places the health and well-being of Saskatchewan people at the very top of our list of priorities. I’m happy to report to the Chamber here, Mr. Chairman, and to you, that because of our initiatives the number of Saskatchewan people waiting for surgery in Saskatoon has been reduced by 30 per cent.

More importantly, and what is always the case in this discussion of waiting lists, the waiting time for surgery has been shortened significantly. We’ll continue to work closely with the hospitals to shorten waiting times even more. This budget contains an additional $1.5 million specifically for that purpose.

Mr. Chairman, we believe a good health system must be accessible. Some services are best delivered in our local communities. Throughout the 1980s, we have expanded community therapy programs. This year we are funding new physiotherapy and occupational therapy services so that over 100 communities have access to these services. We’ve increased home care funding for 109 per cent. We’ve budgeted 27.8 million for home care this year - a 12 per cent increase over last year. And we’ve developed community support programs for families of those with mental illness and chemical dependency, especially our youth.

And of course, Mr. Chairman, our integrated facilities provides special care for seniors close to their own homes. Mr. Chairman, I’ve outlined how we have almost doubled our funding for health care since 1982, or throughout the ‘80s here. We’ve protected our health care system within a frame work of consultation. We’ve made health services and all government services more accessible, and we’ve done this as responsible and prudent managers.

Mr. Chairman, the people of this province deserve a government with a vision for the future. They deserve a government with a strength and courage of its convictions and that’s an important point - strength and courage of convictions. We’ve demonstrated that here in the Department of Health. They deserve a government that manages their tax dollars wisely, and, Mr. Chairman, this budget confirms again and as one looks at this $1.4 billion budget, this budget confirms that we on this side are that government.

As responsible managers, Mr. Chairman, we focus on the challenges of today and also on the opportunities of tomorrow. We are seizing those opportunities now. We’ve developed an innovative state of the art computerized prescription drug plan that meets our needs effectively and efficiently. We’re helping others keep pace with the changing times with our high-tech advisory committee. We’ve developed a computerized health services card with the potential to streamline much our system’s administration - a key point and I hope we’ll have more discussion on it.

We’ve dedicated increase funding to health research. We’ve developed community care, a new approach to health care that puts more of the decision making in the hands of those who use the services. We’ve put an emphasis on preventive health care, a move that will have dramatic long-term benefits. Saskatchewan people are living longer, Mr. Chairman; we are helping them to live better.

A major step to a better life-style is through preventative health care. We are taking a dynamic approach which is leading the way not only here in Saskatchewan, but across Canada. Thousands of people in many health care organization; the Registered Nurses’ Association, Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan Safety Council, the heart foundation, and many other organizations are telling me this approach is right. They’re saying we’re on the right track.

Mr. Chairman, our innovative health promotion program Everyone Wins, as it’s widely known across the province and is becoming more widely known, is leading the way in that area. This budget provides more money to better inform people about nutrition, about physical fitness, about stress and stress management, about accident prevention, about alcohol and drug abuse, about smoking, about communicable diseases.

Mr. Chairman, keeping our families safe from the ravages of drug and alcohol abuse is a priority and has been for a number of years in this department. Funding for alcohol and drug treatment has tripled in the 1980s, Mr. Chairman, with an emphasis on rehabilitation services and preventative education at the community level. We are participating with other government departments to help fight drugs and fight crime related to those drugs. We’re building on a strong foundation of prevention and treatment programs that are already in place, including the Whitespruce Youth Treatment Centre at Yorkton, the first of its kind in Canada dealing with youth, and the new Calder Centre recently opened in Saskatoon.

Our aggressive detection and preventive programs include, Mr. Chairman: a breast cancer screening program for women in high-risk groups; in this year’s budget $3.3 million for health research, including one and a half million to health research board; 120,000 for the Centre for Agricultural Medicine; 569,000 to cancer research; 250,000 to health status research. This includes over $1 million of new money in this year’s budget for research in the health care area.

Mr. Chairman, a computerized health services card that helps detect possible drug abuse is another way in which we’re emphasizing prevention.

This health budget mirrors our government’s commitment to keep Saskatchewan safe and to keep Saskatchewan healthy. I believe our province is the best place in the world to live and to raise a family. Families are important in Saskatchewan; they’re important to each of us in this House, I know, and they’re important to each of our citizens. Maintaining and strengthening them is and should be a high priority for all of us who accept positions of responsibility here or elsewhere throughout the system.

Mr. Chairman, this budget supports our commitment to Saskatchewan families through several things, through $500,000 in new funding for community support for families dealing with mental illness and disabilities. It supports that commitment through establishment of a provincial organ donor and education program, and it supports that commitment through $3.4 million new funding for home care.

Mr. Chairman, as a government, we recognize that the health and well-being of Saskatchewan people is directly related to other things that are part of the global budget that we have been discussing here for a number of weeks, let’s say, a number of months, or whatever it is. But certainly areas like the environment, areas like housing, areas like education and other social programs, all have an impact on the health and well-being of our citizens, and we in Health are very aware of that.

I see many elements of healthy public policy in this 1989-90 budget that was presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance. Environmental safeguards and protections are included, ensuring affordable, quality housing with our home improvement program; a mortgage protection plan is included; an increase in the education budget with a continuing focus on literacy and drop-out prevention - all areas that are related to healthy public policy and of great concern to us in the Department of Health.

Mr. Chairman, as Minister of Health I’m very proud of this budget, this health budget this year. I’m pleased with it. I believe it demonstrates our deep commitment to the health and the well-being of our people across the province. One mark of success is the ability to adapt to changing conditions, Mr. Chairman. I believe our health care system has not only adapted, but has strengthened in spite of conditions beyond our control.

By working together, we have and will continue to contribute greatly to the health and well-being of Saskatchewan and all its citizens. We can meet and we will meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.