

# RHAs promote health care services across Manitoba

Submitted by Manitoba Health

Providing Manitobans with access to sustainable, quality health care, no matter where they live in the province, continues to be one of the Manitoba government's guiding principles.

The recent Throne Speech reaffirmed the government's commitment to making further progress in health care, building on existing programs and services to respond most effectively to the expressed needs of the communities they serve.

To achieve that worthy goal, the Manitoba government plans further increases in the training and recruitment of health professionals and added measures to shorten wait times. Community health options and prevention programs will be expanded. Investments in health facilities will continue to be made in every part of the province, with a special focus on emergency rooms, dialysis treatment and elder care.

Regional health authorities (RHAs) are working hard to provide health care services in tune with the specific needs of their communities. Their many successes to date are helping to build a stronger, more responsive health care system across the province.

Many of the success stories were inspired

by monitoring the needs of the service area and responding in creative and practical ways.

## Listening to Manitobans

The *Winnipeg Regional Health Authority* continues to receive valuable public feedback from board-appointed Community Health Advisory Groups that provide ongoing opportunities for the community members to have input into the planning of health services in their communities. Over the past five years, more than 200 community members have volunteered their time and committed to sharing their unique perspectives and suggestions to address important health issues.

The *Assiniboine Regional Health Authority* holds twice-annual stakeholder meetings with community leaders to promote information sharing and open discussion. These meetings have been instrumental in establishing proactive relationships with community leaders.

## Promoting healthy living

A milliliter of prevention is worth a kilogram of cure, so chronic disease prevention initiatives (CDPI) are thriving across Mani-

toba. Sandy Bay First Nation, part of *RHA Central*, belongs to a group with the highest premature mortality rate in Manitoba. Diabetes is epidemic, with diagnosis being seen at increasingly younger patients. The CDP program in Sandy Bay continues to build an environment that supports healthy choices. It is also moving toward organizational practices that will ensure sustainability of these changes. For example, the local walking club, with an average of 10 participants and 24 active members, meets about two days per week to develop better fitness through regular walks. The school walking challenge, introduced in May 2006, prompted 80 students to complete the Walk Across Canada Challenge, a health promotion project that requires participants to combine their walking distances, over a specified time period, to equal the distance across Canada.

Promoting healthy living among youth was also the catalyst behind the *Burntwood Regional Health Public Health Team's* Annual Health Circus in Thompson. The goal of the fun-filled, family-friendly event is to give families of children entering kindergarten an opportunity to have their children's vaccinations updated, undergo a development assessment, along with vision, hearing and dental screening. By conducting the screening in May, children who require intervention can be referred and treated before school begins.

Manitoba *in motion* programs around the province further encourage Manitobans of all ages to make physical activity a regular part of their lives to promote better health and well being.

## Offering quality care closer to home

Improving access to health services remains a priority and progress toward that goal continues to be made around the province. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in The Pas were bolstered with a new EMS facility that houses three ambulance, a training room and office space, a service centre benefiting all residents in the *NOR-MAN Regional Health Authority*. A similar facility was also opened by the *Interlake Regional Health Authority* to better serve residents of East St. Paul, West St. Paul, St. Andrews and St. Clements.

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The Burntwood RHA collaborated with Manitoba Health on a \$3.2 million dialysis redevelopment project at Thompson General Hospital. The new facility means less travel for local residents who need care, allowing them to receive this life-saving treatment close to home. In Dauphin, a \$7.4 million community health services building, providing one-stop services for residents in the *Parkland RHA*, now houses public health, community mental health and home care services under one roof.

Plans to make Brandon a regional centre for cancer care excellence moved forward

earlier this year when details of a new facility to house a new linear accelerator and supporting cancer treatment services were announced. This innovation was made possible by a collaboration between the *Brandon RHA* and CancerCare Manitoba. Community cancer care projects have also been established in Deloraine and Pinawa.

As part of the provincial government's long-term care strategy, the residents of Thompson recently officially opened their first personal care home. The \$9-million, 35-bed facility allows more area residents to stay in the community, close to their fami-

lies, in an energy-efficient, state-of-the-art care environment.

Technology is key, but people still make it happen in delivering quality health care. The provincial government continues to meet the demand for qualified health care professionals by expanding to 100 the University of Manitoba's faculty of medicine class, adding 25 spaces for the licensing program for international medical graduates, adding 50 new technologists training seats and supporting 3,000 nurses in training.

Together, we're building a stronger health care delivery system for all Manitobans.

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