



St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Six Saskatchewan hospital foundations join in first-time partnership with Suncrest College to help deliver new Diagnostic Sonography Program

August 29, 2024, Regina, Sask. – Six hospital foundations, The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan in Yorkton, Hospitals of Regina Foundation, St. Paul's Hospital Foundation in Saskatoon, Boreal Healthcare Foundation in Prince Albert, Lloydminster Region Health Foundation and St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation in Esterhazy, have partnered to provide the majority of the capital costs needed to start the new Diagnostic Sonography Program at Suncrest College, in Yorkton, in September 2024. The technology and equipment required to start the program will cost approximately \$500,000, including the cost of ultrasound equipment and the various transducers and attachments required.

This is the first time a number of hospital foundations from across the province have come together to jointly lobby for and fund a specific clinical education program. While most foundations fund staff education programs in their respective hospitals, the support for the new Diagnostic Sonography Program is a unique case for the foundations. Typically, hospital foundations do not fund equipment for college programs, but in this instance the foundations determined the new program will help their hospitals deliver better health care in their respective communities. The program will help provide ultrasound technicians, who have been in high demand for 20 years, to hospitals throughout Saskatchewan. This program is a significant step towards addressing the issue.

The new Diagnostic Sonography Program, at Suncrest College, was announced by the Government of Saskatchewan in February, 2024. Students in Saskatchewan who want to train to provide ultrasound services can now, for the first time, do so closer to home through this new provincial Diagnostic Medical Sonography Advanced Diploma program.

"This new sonography program is another important step for our government to deliver on a key pillar in our Health Human Resources Action Plan to Recruit, Train, Incentivize and Retain", Health Minister

Everett Hindley says. "Thanks to this new partnership with six of our hospital foundations, I look forward to newly trained sonographers joining our health care workforce and building a rewarding career in Saskatchewan."

Diagnostic medical sonographers provide ultrasound tests for patients and are in high demand in communities across the province. Saskatchewan residents who want to become sonographers currently access training seats in Alberta that are reserved for Saskatchewan students, who complete the clinical component of their training in Saskatchewan if they choose to return to the province.

"Our government is committed to increasing training capacity for high demand health professions, and giving our students more opportunities for rewarding careers", Advanced Education Minister Colleen Young says. "We are thankful to our hospital foundations for supporting this new program at Suncrest College, which will attract students from across Saskatchewan, help meet the demand for diagnostic services and ultimately speed up treatment for our residents."

The new 28-month program's first annual intake starts in September 2024. The program is offered in partnership with Manitoba's Red River College Polytechnic, which will provide program support and instruction delivered by expert faculty. Hands on learning will take place in Suncrest's new on-campus imaging lab. Clinical placements will be provided in hospitals across the province through the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan, located in Yorkton where the program will be delivered by Suncrest College, coordinated the fundraising for this program and invited other hospital foundations to participate. Of the \$500,000 needed to purchase equipment for the program, \$220,000 plus an existing ultrasound machine was provided by The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan. Additionally, \$100,000 was provided by Hospitals of Regina Foundation, \$25,000 each by St. Paul's Hospital Foundation in Saskatoon and the Boreal Foundation in Prince Albert, and \$15,000 each by St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation in Esterhazy and the Lloydminster Region Health Foundation.

"The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan strives to expand the quality of health care and medical services in east central Saskatchewan", Foundation Executive Director Ross Fisher says.

"Through this training partnership with Suncrest College and our fellow foundations, we hope to address sonography to revitalize our local health care services."

The new partnership, developed to move this program forward, holds a lot of potential for the future. There are many challenges in the health care system, including the lack of qualified staff in certain positions. By coming together to offer solutions to some of these challenges, the six foundations have opened the door to non-traditional ways of looking at those issues and offering innovative solutions.

"Joining this partnership is a no-brainer for us", says Dino Sophocleous, President & CEO of Hospitals of Regina Foundation. "The lack of ultrasound technicians delays the provision of care to our southern

Saskatchewan community. Educating these clinical technicians locally will add capacity to our system and improve the care our hospitals provide to our patients”.

Training sonography technicians in the province means that the students will reside here, will take their practicums in local health care facilities and are very likely to live and work in Saskatchewan after they graduate.

“A part of St. Paul’s Hospital Foundation’s mission is a commitment to creative collaborations; by working together we acknowledge we can do so much more. The launch of a sonography training program out of Suncrest College is a unique and impactful partnership that will serve the province of Saskatchewan well. Local education opportunities lead to higher retention rates which lead to more accessible care for our communities. We applaud the visionary leadership of The Health Foundation of East Central Saskatchewan in bringing this important program home”, says Lecina Hicke, CEO, St. Paul’s Hospital Foundation.

Cody Barnett, CEO, Boreal Healthcare Foundation adds, "The Boreal Healthcare Foundation is proud to support the new Sonography Program at Suncrest College, a crucial step in addressing the shortage of skilled sonographers in Saskatchewan, especially in northern regions where access to diagnostic services is limited. By investing in local health care education, we are enhancing care quality and ensuring our health care system remains resilient and responsive to all residents, including Indigenous communities. This partnership reflects our commitment to advancing health care in northern Saskatchewan, and we are excited about the positive impact this program will have on patient care."

This partnership and the level of cooperation between hospital foundations, Suncrest College, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Immigration and Career Training and the Ministry of Advanced Education is a new endeavor and holds a lot of potential.

“The Lloydminster Region Health Foundation in collaboration with various other foundations across our province, is proud to be able to bring this invaluable education to the residents of Saskatchewan. A first of its kind within the province, this training will help alleviate the shortage of sonographers throughout our province and allow students to experience practicums in various communities. The new Sonography Program will greatly enhance the care available to patients from across Saskatchewan, including patients right here in Lloydminster and the surrounding region. Ultrasound is a key diagnostic tool medical teams use to diagnose and treat many conditions, including many that are potentially lifesaving. We are honored to be a part of the inaugural program for the residents of Saskatchewan”, says Stephanie Munro, CEO, Lloydminster Region Health Foundation

Suncrest College and the Ministries of Advanced Education and Immigration and Career Training are responsible for program delivery.

"Suncrest College is excited to introduce this program to both our institution and the province of Saskatchewan", says Alison Dubreuil, President & CEO of Suncrest College. "This innovative and

specialized training program reflects our dedication to excellence and reinforces our role in developing Saskatchewan's health care workforce. We sincerely appreciate the support of our government and foundation partners in making this initiative possible.”

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