



Strong Economy
Bright Future

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Cheryl Koehn, President
Arthritis Consumer Experts
koehn@jointhehealth.org

Dear Cheryl Koehn,

Thank you for an opportunity to tell you about the Saskatchewan Party's plan to keep our **economy strong and our future bright.**

1. What will your government do to provide high quality, accessible, evidence-based models of care, such as team-based care, for Saskatchewan residents living with arthritis?

Strengthening the important health care services that Saskatchewan people rely on is a high priority for the Saskatchewan Party, and we have been working to address this issue by providing the facilities, staffing, and financial resources that our health care system needs. This year's budget invests a record \$7.6 billion in health care.

A re-elected Saskatchewan Party will continue to hire more doctors, nurses and health care workers to deliver on Saskatchewan's Health Human Resources Action Plan. The Health Human Resources Action Plan includes initiatives to recruit, train, incentivize and retain more health care providers in Saskatchewan and grow Saskatchewan's health care workforce.

A stable and growing healthcare workforce ensures patients get the right care, at the right time, from the right health care provider, as close to home as possible. Health Networks are collaborative teams of health professionals, including physicians and community partners, working to provide integrated services to meet the health needs of individuals and communities. Our goal is to provide care that is accessible, coordinated, timely and centered on the needs of the patient by adapting to the needs of the specific population for that geographic area. For example, in Warman, Saskatchewan, the Primary Health Center is employing three full-time nurse practitioners and two clinical assistants. This clinic significantly enhances the Saskatchewan Health Authority's ability to deliver team-based collaborative primary health care.

The Saskatchewan Party government also recently announced the development of a new made-in-Saskatchewan family physician payment model based on blended capitation. This payment model will allow physicians to work collaboratively with a team of health care professionals, ensuring greater access and quality of care for patients, and better distribution of responsibilities among team members. This model will help Saskatchewan recruit and retain more family doctors.

A re-elected Saskatchewan Party government will continue to support innovative models to ensure Saskatchewan people get high quality health services.

2. Will your government introduce culturally appropriate, patient-centered policies to help Indigenous Peoples navigate the healthcare system and receive coordinated care within their community to manage their arthritis?

The Saskatchewan Party government is committed to reconciliation. The Saskatchewan Health Authority goal is to provide optimal health and well-being for First Nations and Métis individuals, families, communities, and nations. We understand that addressing the issues facing First Nations and Métis communities requires a respectful and cooperative partnership between the community, its leadership and those trusted to provide health care.

The First Nations and Métis Health Services (FNMHS) is holistic and focuses on the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual. Support is provided to patients and their families from admission to discharge by working with a range of health professionals and departments.

3. Will your government commit to reinvesting biosimilars savings to increase accessibility to new medicines and expand coverage for existing medicines for people living with inflammatory arthritis?

Saskatchewan has one of the most comprehensive drug plans in the country. The Saskatchewan Party government is providing \$395.8 million for the Drug Plan in 2024-25, an increase of more than \$170 million since 2007.

The Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative was announced to improve the uptake of biosimilar drugs. As you are aware, biosimilars present a significant opportunity for cost savings and health system sustainability while providing safe and effective medication options. The Biosimilars Initiative supports patient access to public drug coverage and new drug benefits.

In 2023-24 the province saved approximately \$30 million and anticipate these saving to increase in the future as new biosimilars are approved. These savings will be reinvested to cover more medications for Saskatchewan residents, including those with arthritis.

4. Will your government take steps to ensure timely, specialized care for Saskatchewan residents struggling with osteoarthritis, including joint replacement surgery wait times that are within medically recommended guidelines?

The Saskatchewan Party government has made record investments in human resources to increase capacity in our surgical systems and address wait times. More than 95,700 surgeries were performed between April 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, the highest annual surgical volume ever recorded,

The Saskatchewan Party government surgical initiative is also helping to reduce wait lists and wait times overall and, in the case of hip and knee replacements, providing access to the next available surgeon more quickly, while providing patients more choice in making decisions that work for them alongside their surgical team. Today, the number of people waiting for surgery is shorter than it was under 2006, despite the province growing by over 250,000 people.

A re-elected Saskatchewan Party government will continue to hire more doctors, nurses and specialists to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan receive the services they need when and where they need them.

5. What will your government do to ensure the continuation, improvement, and expansion of virtual care for Saskatchewan residents – both patients and health care professionals – and ensure access is equitable to all?



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The Saskatchewan Party supports initiatives that provides individuals with easier access to care, such as the Virtual Health Hub (VHH), the first in Canada, which is a Remote Presence Technology (RPT) initiative. The VHH will initially support delivery of virtual health services for up to 30 First Nation and rural communities.

A re-elected Saskatchewan Party looks forward to advancing future initiatives like the VHH that ensure residents are receiving the care they need as close to home as possible.