PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association Welcomes Patients First Health Care Plan and Highlights Physiotherapists' Role in Expanding Access to Care

Saskatoon, SK –March 12, 2026 The Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association (SPA) welcomes the Government of Saskatchewan's newly released *Patients First Health Care Plan* and the province's commitment to expanding access to timely, high-quality care for all residents. Premier Scott Moe announced the plan this week identifying key actions to deliver the plan including **increasing the number of health professionals and expanding the scope of practice for all health care professionals.**

SPA strongly supports this direction and affirms that **physiotherapists are well-positioned to help deliver on these goals.**

Physiotherapists Are Primary Care Practitioners

Physiotherapists in Saskatchewan are **primary care providers**, trained to assess, diagnose within the practice of physiotherapy, and manage a wide range of musculoskeletal, neurological, and cardiorespiratory conditions. Physiotherapists can be accessed **directly—without a physician referral**—in community clinics across the province.

Many insurance plans **no longer require a physician referral** for coverage, and the SPA encourages patients to check their individual plan details.

"Physiotherapists are often a patient's first point of contact when pain or injury occurs," said Michelle Donald, President of the Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association. "Direct access to physiotherapists reduces delays, keeps people active and working, and ensures patients receive the right care at the right time."

Optimizing Scope Will Reduce Wait Times and Ease Pressure on Physicians

Saskatchewan is experiencing significant strain on family physicians, walk-in clinics, and emergency departments. Physiotherapists can help alleviate this pressure—especially for the large number of residents seeking care for pain, sprains, strains, arthritis, workplace injuries, and other musculoskeletal issues.

SPA is working collaboratively with:

- **The Saskatchewan College of Physical Therapists (SCPT)**

- **The Ministry of Health**
- **Health system partners**

to modernize physiotherapy scope of practice in alignment with other provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. These jurisdictions already allow physiotherapists who complete additional training to perform additional acts such as:

- **Order diagnostic imaging** (e.g., X-rays, ultrasound, MRI)
- **Refer directly to physician specialists** for consultation

The provinces of Ontario and British Columbia are in the process of implementing these changes as well. These changes have demonstrated improvements in system efficiency, reduced wait times, and improved patient outcomes.

“Allowing physiotherapists to order imaging or refer directly to specialists eliminates unnecessary extra visits and administrative steps,” said Michelle Donald, President of SPA. “Patients get answers sooner, physicians avoid being burdened with paperwork for conditions physiotherapists already manage, and the overall system runs more efficiently.”

Evidence Shows the Benefits of Scope Modernization

Across Canada and internationally, studies have shown that enabling physiotherapists to work to their full scope:

- **Improves diagnostic accuracy** for musculoskeletal conditions
- **Reduces wait times** for both imaging and specialist consultation
- **Lowers health system costs** by eliminating duplicate appointments
- **Supports faster return to work and daily function**
- **Improves patient satisfaction and continuity of care**

Physiotherapists already possess advanced expertise in musculoskeletal assessment and other specialties. Across Saskatchewan, physiotherapists routinely direct patients to appropriate physician specialists, though this often occurs outside the formal processes of the Ministry of Health’s Medical Services Branch. Updating these processes will improve communications and strengthen these referral pathways province-wide.

SPA's Commitment to Patients and the Health System

SPA will continue working with the Government of Saskatchewan and SCPT to support implementation strategies that:

- Expand access to high-quality, evidence-based physiotherapy services
- Modernize scope of practice to reflect current training and competency
- Ensure safe, effective, and patient-centred models of care
- Strengthen primary care capacity across the province

"Our province is at an important turning point," said **Michelle Donald**. "Physiotherapists stand ready to help the government deliver on its Patients First vision by improving access, reducing wait times, and ensuring Saskatchewan people receive timely care close to home."

About the Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association

The Saskatchewan Physiotherapy Association (SPA) is the professional association representing physiotherapists across the province. SPA advocates for high-quality, accessible, and evidence-based physiotherapy services and supports innovation to enhance the health and well-being of all Saskatchewan residents. Members of the public can find out more about physiotherapy services in their community at https://saskphysio.org/for-the-public/find-a-physiotherapist/

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