



# NEWS RELEASE

## Private clinics helped Saskatchewan reduce median medical wait times by nearly 50%

May 30, 2024

For immediate release

**VANCOUVER**— Private clinics were a key component in the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative (SSI), which reduced waiting times by 47 per cent between 2010 and 2014, finds a new study published today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“The success of the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative offers valuable lessons for policymakers across Canada—and hope for patients—that the unacceptably long waits that plague health care systems nationwide can be reduced meaningfully with sensible reform,” said Nadeem Esmail, Fraser Institute senior fellow and co-author of *10 Years On—Revisiting the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative*.

In 2010, the Saskatchewan government launched the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative (SSI) to tackle medical wait times for non-emergency but necessary surgical procedures, including knee and hip replacements. The SSI included pooling referrals province-wide to better match patients with available specialists, and the use of private clinics to perform publicly-funded procedures.

The study finds that during the five-year period (2010 to 2014) during which the SSI was in place, the median medical wait time from when a patient is referred by their family doctor to a specialist to when the treatment was completed fell by 47 per cent to 14.2 weeks. This reduction moved Saskatchewan from having some of the longest wait times for medical care in Canada to some of the shortest.

Notably, wait times elsewhere in Canada during that time did not fall.

“Saskatchewan’s experience with the SSI suggests that publicly-funded surgeries outsourced to private clinics can serve as a beneficial first step on the road to reform,” Esmail said.

“The benefit of replicating this approach, if not adopting an enhanced and bolder version of it, would be more timely access to care for patients with better value provided for taxpayer dollars.”

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