

Minister of Health

Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

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Tabled by ChairDate May 2, 2017

Honourable Jane Philpott
Minister of Health
Brooke Claxton Building, 16th Floor
Tunney's Pasture
OTTAWA ON K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Philpott:

I am writing you to seek clarity on recent statements in the media, attributed to the federal government, with respect to the provincial policy on private payment for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services.

As you are no doubt aware the recent bi-lateral agreement on health care funding included the following language with respect to this issue:

*"Over the next year, the federal and Saskatchewan governments agree to discuss the issue of patient payment for publicly insured health services, before the federal government considers any compliance action required by the *Canada Health Act*"*

It is my understanding that the spirit and intent of this section is to allow for meaningful discussion between our two governments on the Saskatchewan "2-for-1" MRI policy. This reprieve would allow our government the opportunity to demonstrate the value of this approach for both the public health system as a whole, and for Saskatchewan patients.

However, reports in the media suggest that the federal government is not open to this type of discussion, and intends to continue to work towards ending Saskatchewan's innovative 2-for-1 MRI policy. If these reports are accurate, I am very disappointed, as it demonstrates unwillingness on the part of the federal government to approach the issue with an open mind, and is contrary to the bilateral agreement.

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I am also surprised that, while private MRI services have been available in Canada for well over twenty years, there seems to be some haste on the part of the federal government to move against Saskatchewan.

It raises the question of equity on this matter, and why other jurisdictions have been able to have private MRIs in their health systems for many years with no action being taken by the federal government – regardless of political party.

I would encourage Health Canada to continue to work cooperatively with Finance Canada to fulfill the terms of the recent bilateral agreement on health care funding. My ministry looks forward to discussing with the federal government our innovative 2-for-1 policy on MRI services as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Honourable Jim Reiter
Minister of Health