

Plans finalized for the new provincial healthcare linen system

The province is one step closer to implementing a new provincial linen service for Saskatchewan's healthcare system. 3sHealth announced on December 13, 2013 that it has successfully completed contract negotiations with K-Bro Linen Systems to provide linen services for the province. As part of the contract, K-Bro will own and operate a new state-of-the-art plant in Regina. 3sHealth will administer the contract with K-Bro on behalf of the Saskatchewan health system. The term of the contract is for 10 years with two optional three-year terms.



Andrew Will, CEO of 3sHealth signs the contract with K-Bro Linen Systems with Mark Anderson, VP of Business Development (left) and Jim Crawford, Director of Provincial Linen Services (right) looking on.

The new provincial linen service will significantly improve quality for patients and residents. The processing plant will ensure the highest standard of infection prevention and control, improve the quality of linen and linen service, and improve employee safety. It is estimated that the health system will save approximately \$97 million over the next ten years through lower operating expenses and capital cost avoidance.

"Our role at 3sHealth is to identify new opportunities for shared services that improve quality and create efficiencies in the health care system," states Jim Rhode, 3sHealth Board Chair. "Sharing services like linen processing between health regions (RHAs) allows us to leverage economies of scale and skill. The regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) are then able to focus on direct care initiatives for the patients, residents and families they serve."

In May, 2013, 3sHealth announced that the existing laundry services located in Regina, Prince Albert, Weyburn, Yorkton and Moose Jaw would be closed and replaced by the new modern linen processing plant in Regina. Saskatoon's plant was closed in November, 2011 due to a structural failure. Several million dollars in capital expenditures would be required to improve all of the other facilities. In addition, the laundry serving the Five Hills Health Region is slated for closure as part of the staged closure of Valley View Centre in Moose Jaw.

"The decision to partner with an experienced third party contractor to provide linen services to our health care system provided the greatest benefit for patients," explained Andrew Will, 3sHealth CEO. "We worked with our partners in the health regions to conduct a diligent analysis of all the options and determined that this was the best solution for a high quality and efficient service."

The new plant in Regina is a significant component of the new provincial linen services. But other linen service improvements will contribute to a sustainable and effective publicly-funded system. Over the next two years, 3sHealth and the RHAs will be implementing changes that will improve the patient experience, establish standards for infection prevention and control, improve inventory control and eliminate waste. Several changes are already being rolled out in the regions including higher quality terry and bedding products, improved methods for transporting soiled linen, and improved inventory control methods. Once these standards are in place, they will be implemented and monitored on an on-going basis as part of the contract with K-Bro.

Other highlights of the contract with K-Bro include:

- Detailed financial reporting that allows 3sHealth to compare actual costs to industry best practices;
- Quality audits, agreed upon service levels and penalties for non-compliance that do not exist in the current system; and
- A menu of services and cost levels will be available to health regions and facilities to meet current and future service requirements.
- The new plant will operate 7 days a week/365 days a year ensuring that linen services are provided consistently to patients and residents.
- Orders are guaranteed to be filled correctly 98% of the time.

3sHealth, the RHAs and the SCA are already working together to ensure a smooth transition period. The regional health authorities and North Sask Laundry are meeting with unions and staff to develop mitigation strategies to reduce the impacts on staff. The transition to the new system is expected to be completed by December, 2015.