

Envision Counselling Gets A Boost With Budget

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Christa Daku Executive Director of Envision Counselling

In the 2019-20 Provincial Budget, it will include a strong focus on mental health. Funding for targeted mental health and addictions initiatives is increasing by nearly \$30 million in this budget to a total of nearly \$402 million. This represents the largest commitment ever to mental health services in Saskatchewan, and it includes funding for more than 140 new beds for mental health and addictions treatment.

Envision Counselling has just found out they will be receiving a small percentage of that, Christa Daku Executive Director, "Well, I am really grateful this year, we have been under a funding freeze for several years with all of our programmings. This year we are going to be receiving a 1% increase from the Ministry of Justice, so that's our interpersonal violence and abuse program, as well as our children exposed to violence program. In addition to that, we have received an interpersonal violence and abuse position to deal with additional domestic abuse and sexual assault in our service area. And that position is going to be spread out between Estevan, Oxbow, and Carlyle. That's a huge benefit to us in this area of the province. So kudos to the Ministry of Justice."

"As far as supports we will also be receiving an increase from the Minister of Social Services, I met

with them last Thursday, and we don't know the monetary amount yet, but I put in some funding pressure proposals last year in regards to where we were running short continually and its in the budget process. So that's exciting for us."

Funding will launch 18 new mental health walk-n counseling clinics across Saskatchewan through Family Services and Daku on how it will effect Envision, "I think the most exciting part is the \$1.2 million that the Ministry of Health is putting towards mental health and addictions. They are going to be funding Family Services Saskatchewan and Envision is a part of that collaboration. I've been on that board for 5 years and its really exciting as a provincial initiative to be able to take part of something that I believe is going to impact our province as a whole. Initially, we are going to start those clinics in Estevan and Weyburn, to start with at Salvation Army and we are going to be launching that May 1st once we have everything in place. And moving forward we are definitely going to be keeping an eye on expanding that. We have funding to offer 4 different clinics within our service area so we are going to start with 2 and hopefully grow from there."

"We are excited about the expansion, and with expanding comes more cost as well, but being able to expand with the funding that's what's huge. We don't have to reach into our reserves and look at deficit budgets anymore for now anyway. Right now I really feel like the government is heading in the right direction looking at what the people need. All of our programming with human services backgrounds have received a little bit of an increase, or significant increase, so that allows us to meet the need of our communities."

Daku goes on to share her final thoughts on the budget, "Its a positive direction for Human services, I did hear about different areas of the budget and not everyone is going to be satisfied, but I really believe if we have healthy people we have a healthy province. So our heart and soul goes out to the communities that we serve and we hope to just enhance from here."