

April 30, 2013

Why is Business in Health so Important?

In a Saskatchewan that is not used to thinking about health as a business, many people really must wonder what the answer to the question posed above might be.

First, we should note that there are already many business in health. We just don't think of them that way. Consider the companies providing private nursing or personal care to people in their homes or in long term care facilities. How about businesses that provide goods to the health regions such as pharmacies, medical suppliers, disposal services? What about the companies that provide, launder and replace the rugs in the various hospital and health region facilities? What about the companies that provide alternate health goods and services directly to individuals? Once you start to think about all the ways that companies provide health-related goods and services to people in Saskatchewan, you can start to see the economic activity in health and the eco-system that supports it.

Now, think about the payrolls those companies have. They pay employees who in turn purchase goods and services from all of the other businesses in our city. As a former owner of a company that provided nursing and personal care services to individuals and families, I can say that, at our busiest, we had as many as 150 workers on our roster, many of whom worked in every pay period. So, not only did we provide a quality and much-needed service to our clients, we contributed a significant amount to our communities through payroll. Those workers would spend their money in the community and pay taxes on their earnings. All of this was done without violating the *Canada Health Act*. And that's just one business.

Consider MD Ambulance, serving our community for 37 years, operating with over 150 staff and a \$15M operating budget. They have an Internationally Accredited, State of the Art Dispatch Centre. Their business is saving lives and they have saved 11 lives alone with their AED program with over 625 automatic defibrillators in Saskatoon and area.

Multiply that by the many, many companies in our city also working across the value chain in the health field and you will begin to see the economic impact of business in health care. Now think about the many companies that can add their expertise and talent to our community should they decide to locate or start a business here. That's excellent health care added to our government funded system.

Now, think about all of those workers who are earning a living through these companies. By earning a living, they are able to purchase healthy food, appropriate housing and have access to all of the benefits that come with employment, such as the ability to afford a more active and healthy life style. This improves their over all health and improves the productivity in the work force, as well as reduces the toll on our health system.

Now take that even bigger and ask yourself this question: **What is the economic impact of the Mayo Clinic on the city of Rochester? (\$9.6B on Minnesota's economy, see link below)**

What if we were able to attract a business (or even build institutes and clinics) like the Mayo Clinic to Saskatoon? (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/news2010-rst/5621.html>) Do you think the quality of life here would improve by bringing in hundreds more jobs? More people to purchase houses, spend money in our grocery stores, clothing stores and restaurants? What would the impact be on our health system if we had more citizens earning good salaries? Would there be more taxes available to cover the costs in our health system? What about a healthier community if we had world class health facilities right here in Saskatoon? Food for thought!

These are some of the questions we'll be asking, and answering at our 2020 Health Visions Conference in November. The theme of the conference is: Health Care Innovation. We Mean Business!

Watch for information on the website and in your in-box.

Article provided by Debby Criddle, FCMA
Former partner in The Nightingale Nursing Group,
current member of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber
of Commerce Board of Directors and co-chair of the
Chamber's Health Opportunities Committee