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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saskatchewan celebrates Medicare's 50th birthday

Saskatchewan: Saskatchewan residents are not only marking Canada Day on July 1, they are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the first public health care program in North America.

"It's an important achievement, particularly since Medicare did not have an easy birth and continues to face challenges as it ages," says Tom Graham, President of CUPE Saskatchewan, which has helped to organize events to mark the anniversary.

Although the 1960 Saskatchewan election gave the Tommy Douglas government the mandate to implement the Medical Care Insurance Plan, Saskatchewan doctors – supported by the media – fiercely opposed the plan. More than 600 doctors greeted Medicare's arrival on July 1, 1962, by walking off the job. Their strike lasted 23 days.

Saskatchewan's Medicare baby, however, proved popular and was eventually adopted by every province and the federal government.

"Citizens of this province are proud that their vision and commitment to build a better society resulted in the establishment of such an important social program," says Marlene Brown, past president of the Saskatchewan Health Coalition. The Saskatchewan Health Coalition and several health care unions have posted billboards at Saskatchewan borders welcoming tourists to [Saskatchewan – the birthplace of Medicare](#).

Brown is pleased the Saskatchewan government and a growing list of communities – Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Weyburn, Yorkton and Birch Hills – agreed to the Coalition's request to proclaim July as Medicare Month.

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