



**News Release**  
**March 13, 2023**

## **Saskatchewan Cancer Patient Making Strides for Multiple Myeloma Awareness**

The Government of Saskatchewan has officially proclaimed March to be Multiple Myeloma Awareness Month in the province for the second year in a row.

“Our government is pleased to join provinces across the country in raising awareness about Multiple Myeloma and promoting education about this rare and incurable blood cancer,” Health Minister Paul Merriman said. “Our hope is that increased awareness will lead to earlier diagnosis and, therefore, improved outcomes for patients.”

This monthly proclamation was initiated in Saskatchewan, in large part, because of the national patient organization—Myeloma Canada and the steadfast efforts and leadership of Saskatchewan resident and Multiple Myeloma patient, Trevor Ives.

Ives was diagnosed with the rare blood cancer at the age of 53, after nearly two years of undergoing multiple tests in an effort to find the cause of his unexplained anemia—a common, but often overlooked symptom of Multiple Myeloma.

“It was very scary for me and my family when I was diagnosed with a cancer that none of us had ever heard of before,” said Ives. “One of the worst parts for us was fearing the many unknowns, which is why it is so important that we raise awareness and promote proper education about Multiple Myeloma and its many possible symptoms, treatments and outcomes.”

Multiple myeloma is a blood cancer that begins in plasma cells—white blood cells that help maintain a healthy immune system. Plasma cells are mainly found in the bone marrow, but also some other tissues and organs. Eventually, the cancer cells crowd out normal cells and make it harder for your body to fight infection. Symptoms include anemia and bleeding, bone damage and pain, bruising, kidney problems, feeling very tired and weak, and getting fevers and infections more often. This cancer can also weaken and form tumors in the bone or other areas.

Ives was referred to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency in May 2019 after an irregular full body X-ray and bone marrow biopsy. Malignant Hematologist at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre, Dr. Julie Stakiw, informed him of his diagnosis and treatment options.

He decided immediately to treat his cancer as aggressively as possible and Dr. Stakiw made that happen. The very next day, Ives began treatment, which included 16 weeks of chemotherapy and a successful bone marrow transplant in September 2019.

“As soon as I was healthy enough, I applied to join Myeloma Canada’s Board of Directors so that I could do my part to help build awareness about this largely unknown cancer,” Ives said. “Hopefully the special proclamations made in Saskatchewan and across the country will help other patients receive earlier diagnosis and treatment and gain more years with their loved ones.”

“It is absolutely heartwarming to see what one patient can do to raise the profile of the disease that I have spent much of my life studying and treating,” Dr. Stakiw said. “I am confident that his passion and dedication to helping others will help improve outcomes for patients and, ultimately, save lives.”

Myeloma Canada estimates that approximately 4,000 people were diagnosed with myeloma in 2022. About 80 new cases are diagnosed in Saskatchewan every year.

Myeloma that is not causing symptoms may not need treatment right away. Treatment options include radiation therapy, surgery, and medicines, such as targeted therapy, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy. Stem cell transplants may also be used.

Increased government funding in the past few decades has allowed for more research, which has led to more treatment and drug options for patients.

“When I first started working with myeloma patients in 2004, it was heartbreaking to tell them that they only had a year to live, or maybe two years with a stem cell transplant,” Dr. Stakiw said. “Now we are telling patients—depending on their age and overall health—that they have 10 or more years with their families.

With increased awareness, education and further research, we hope that one day we can give patients the good news that this cancer is curable.”

## **About the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency**

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (Cancer Agency) is a provincial healthcare organization with a legislated mandate to provide compassionate cancer care for the people of Saskatchewan. Their dedicated teams provide safe and supportive patient and family-centered care at their two cancer centres in Regina and Saskatoon (Allan Blair Cancer Centre and Saskatoon Cancer Centre), as well as in rural communities in partnership with hospitals through the Community Oncology Program of Saskatchewan (COPS). The Cancer Agency also operates two patient lodges in Regina and Saskatoon to provide a home away from home for rural patients, so they do not have to travel long distances for treatment.

The Cancer Agency operates prevention and early detection programs, including screening programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers. Their Breast Screening Bus provides more than 8,000 mammograms annually to women in rural and northern Saskatchewan.

The Cancer Agency is proud to conduct innovative research performed by world-class scientists and researchers who provide laboratory, epidemiological and clinical research, including clinical trials.

Their more than 900 employees are passionate about caring for patients and ensuring that they, and their families, feel as comfortable and supported as possible, every step of the way.

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