



September 1, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Release: Health care provider unions concerned about new health care recruitment Crown: more red tape is not the answer

REGINA: The unions representing health care providers in Saskatchewan are questioning the creation of the Saskatchewan Health Care Recruitment Agency.

“This is just another layer of bureaucratic smoke and mirrors. The government is under pressure to do something – but instead of implementing actual programs they created this Crown corporation,” said Bashir Jalloh, President of CUPE 5430. “The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) already has resources and a robust out-of-scope workforce, some of whom are dedicated to workforce planning and human resources. They are funded by and directed by the Ministry of Health. Why do they need another structure to do the job of recruitment and retention?”

This entity is “new”, but the people assigned as Chair and Vice-Chair are Tracey Smith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Andrew Will, CEO of the SHA. This does not seem independent of the parties that should be charged with recruiting and retaining health care workers.

“Over the past number of years, our unions have consistently tried to discuss recruitment and retention strategies, but the Government of Saskatchewan didn’t listen to us,” said Tracey Sauer, SGEU President. “Adding more seats in education programs, increasing compensation, and ensuring vacation time and work-life balance is honoured are ways to add and keep staff. A new agency isn’t going to help if we don’t address the issues at hand.”

Further, this new Crown corporation has in its mandate to do their recruitment and retention work in “collaboration and coordination with provincial and local stakeholders such as local foundations, local health committees, and municipal leaders.” It does not appear that health care professionals and unions are going to be part of the collaboration.

“Health care professionals know how to solve this crisis,” said Neil Colmin, SEIU-West Vice-President. “The health care provider unions have been calling for recruitment and retention initiatives and have provided ideas for better, more stable staffing, all of which has fallen on deaf ears. Every suggestion in the past eight years has been rejected.”

The provider unions have been calling for more full-time permanent work, education and certification opportunities in rural communities, representative workforce initiatives, and using the provisions of the collective agreement like market supplements and market adjustments to attract workers.

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