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NEWS RELEASE

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Management at Sask Polytech lay off campus nursing staff in Prince Albert, Moose Jaw

SGEU is calling on leadership at Saskatchewan Polytechnic to reverse a potentially dangerous decision to lay off two full-time campus nurse positions at its Prince Albert and Moose Jaw campuses.

Campus nurses at Sask Polytech are registered nurses who provide a wide range of on-site services including first aid, diagnosing and treating illness, health information, promotion and counselling, and referrals to other health professionals. Campus nurses also ensure that students in a variety of health-related programming have all the required immunizations to ensure the safety of the student, patient and public while they are on clinical placement.

SGEU's Professional Services Bargaining Unit, which represents non-academic staff at Sask Polytech, were recently informed by management that two full-time campus nurse positions would be eliminated effective June 30.

The positions are scheduled to be replaced by two part-time positions instead. Before the announcement, each campus had one full-time on-site campus nurse. There are approximately 9,000 students and staff combined at the two campuses.

"These positions are critical to the health and wellbeing of our students. We have no idea which days or which hours nursing services will be provided in the fall," said Bonnie Bond, chair of the Professional Services unit.

"Who knows what will happen now if there's an outbreak, or injury and no nurse is available immediately," added Bond.

The Professional Services unit has continually raised concerns with Sask Polytech's leadership about the decrease of staff in recent years, coupled with the massive increase in managerial positions at the institute.

“This appears to be just another way the leadership at Sask Polytech is reducing services for students in order to afford a top-heavy institute overflowing with management,” said Bond. “We are disappointed with what appears to be a skewed priority towards upper management over front line staff providing key services for the students that we are here to serve,” she added.

“Students don’t know in advance when they may need mental health assistance, or when they will get hurt, or if they will have high blood pressure or breathing problems, abdominal pain, drug overdose or sexual health issues on any given day or time.

“These are all services that will now be reduced in Prince Albert and Moose Jaw thanks to this careless decision,” said Bond. “Our campus nurses provide services to a diverse clientele. These are also the campus locations with the highest number of Indigenous and international students respectively, who historically have the least access to health services already. Eroding these essential supports sends a mixed message to our students,” said Bond.

SGEU is calling for the reversal of the decision to reduce nursing hours at the campuses to ensure students will continue to have more immediate and convenient access to competent health professionals.

“We find it ironic to see an educational institute such as Sask Polytech, which offers a variety of nursing and health care programs to current and future students, is devaluing the very services nursing staff provide with this decision,” said Bond. “It’s sends a very poor message to students.”

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