



WORKING
TOGETHER FOR
SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

February 7, 2017

www.sgeu.org

1011 Devonshire Drive North
Regina, SK S4X 2X4
(p) 522.8571
1.800.667.5221
(f) 352.1969

1114-22nd Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7M 0S5
(p) 652.1811
1.800.667.9791
(f) 664.7134

33-11th Street West
Prince Albert, SK S6V 3A8
(p) 764.5201
1.800.667.9355
(f) 763.4763

Government's plan to cut 4,900 health care workers threatens patient safety

The provincial government's plan to cut 4,900 health care workers in order to pay for the ballooning deficit that it created is reckless and will jeopardize patient care and safety, according to SGEU.

"There is no way that this government can afford to terminate 4,900 health care workers in Saskatchewan without it deeply affecting quality of care and patient services," says SGEU President Bob Bymoan. "Health care workers are already overworked as a result of staff shortages. Cutting more people will cause even more stress and exhaustion for workers, and will further reduce the quality of care they can provide to patients."

With roughly 40,000 unionized health care workers currently in the provincial health system, a reduction of 4,900 jobs would mean a staggering reduction in the health care workforce.

"Is this what 'transformational change' has meant all along?" asks Bymoan. "Clearly this government has co-opted this term and made it synonymous with cuts to the public service. Transformational change requires vision and making improvements. Cuts are the opposite of this; they're harmful to Saskatchewan people."

Since current staffing levels in the health care system are so low, health facilities often cannot provide coverage for sick or vacationing workers. A transformative change to the health care system, according to SGEU, would be to review patient-to-worker ratios in all types of health facilities, rather than significantly cutting the workforce.

"This government is making ideological cuts which, in many cases, just make the issues worse," says Bymoan. "As we saw with the cuts to the Lighthouse shelter in Saskatoon, demand increased for service at the ER because vulnerable people had nowhere else to go. The government needs to make changes that won't just trigger a crisis in another service area."

Government's plan to cut 4,900 health care workers threatens patient safety

February 7, 2017

Page 2 of 2

“It’s time for this government to leave core public services alone, and start looking seriously at cutting its own pet projects,” says Bymoer. “We need to revisit whether we are getting value for our dollar in P3 agreements; we could cut the three unnecessary new MLAs; we could dramatically scale back the practice of hiring expensive consultants. We could reverse the decision to privatize public liquor sales, and use that revenue for our health and education system instead of handing it over to private interests.”

-30-

For more information contact:

Bob Bymoer
President, SGEU
306.539.0030