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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Release: Health provider unions call on government to provide better leadership in fight against COVID-19

(SASKATCHEWAN) The unions representing health care providers in Saskatchewan are concerned by the government's failure to do everything necessary to protect health care workers and patients, clients and residents in the health care system.

"Requiring health care workers to either be vaccinated or present a recent negative COVID-19 test is one tool to prevent COVID-19 infections, but it is not enough on its own," said Sandra Seitz, President, CUPE Local 5430. "The province must follow the advice of medical professionals and do everything in its power to keep people safe."

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and all three unions are encouraging everyone who can be vaccinated to do so as soon as possible.

"Vaccinations alone will not hold back this fourth wave," said Neil Colmin, Vice-President, SEIU-West. "The province needs to return to public health orders including indoor masking, mandatory self-isolation, physical distancing, and enhanced cleaning. We can't fight rising case counts of COVID-19 without a combination of safety measures."

While there is a minority of health care workers who are either unable or unwilling to be vaccinated, the unions are encouraged to see that those members can continue to work so long as they produce a negative COVID-19 test result.

"Health care workers have been on the front lines of this pandemic for a year and a half," said Tanya Schmidt, Acting Chair of the SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee. "To see the government refuse to implement sensible measures that we know are effective is an insult to all those who work so hard to sustain the health care system."

Long-term care homes have been of particular concern. Visitors have not been required to wear masks in LTC facilities since provincial health orders were lifted on July 11, despite the fact that residents in those homes are one of the populations most vulnerable to COVID.



Together, SGEU, SEIU-West and CUPE represent approximately 30,000 health care providers working in acute care, home care and long-term care across Saskatchewan.

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