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Canadian Union of Public Employees **CUPE.ca**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Media Release: CUPE Local 5430 demands action on short staffing**

**REGINA:** Front line health care workers from CUPE Local 5430 attended Thursday's session of the Legislature to call attention to the chronic staffing issues in Saskatchewan's health care system.

"Short staffing was an issue before COVID-19, but the pandemic has made the situation much worse for health care workers," said Bashir Jalloh, president of CUPE Local 5430 and a Nuclear Medicine Technician at the Pasqua Hospital. "Staffing shortages have an impact on patients and residents. We have seen a shortage of cooks result in weeks of soup and sandwiches for long-term care residents. We have seen patients in Prince Albert denied home care – even though they qualify and are facing medical needs."

On top of the slow downs in surgeries, therapies, and other services due to COVID-19 redeployment, rural communities are facing temporary closures and shutdowns because of recruitment and retention issues - Canora Hospital Emergency Services, Redvers Emergency and Acute Care Services, and Broadview Emergency and Acute Care Services just to name a few.

"Our members are working shorthanded almost every shift. In some cases continuing care assistants are so short, the existing staff are working eighty hours of overtime in a month to ensure residents get the care they need," added Jalloh.

Recruitment and retention issues also mean that our health care workers are consistently working short, being denied holidays, and repeatedly called to come into work on days off.

"We know that the stress of working through the pandemic, and the challenges with the vaccine rollout have made many health care workers think about switching careers or early retirement, but we cannot ignore the rise of precarious work in health care as the primary reason we are facing a recruitment challenge," said Jalloh.

A look through the government health care postings found that of the 1,400 jobs posted across classifications only 180 were permanent full-time jobs. In classifications where there are ongoing chronic staffing shortages, like cooks, CCAs and medical technicians and technologists the difference is even more stark.

Out of the 59 postings for medical technicians only 15 are permanent full time. For cooks, there are two full time positions out of 51 postings. And for CCA postings – an area that the government has touted its commitments to hire more staff, only four of the 127 current postings are full time permanent.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority continues to react to short staffing by implementing short term measures such as amalgamating departments so they can move staff around, redeployment, and relying on external overtime Letters of Understanding.

“We know how to solve the crisis in health care staffing, and the government of Saskatchewan has the tools: market supplements, better wages, and full-time permanent jobs,” said Jalloh.

CUPE Local 5430 represents over 13,000 front line health care providers across Saskatchewan.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:  
Tria Donaldson, CUPE communications representative at 306.531.6247.

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