



Physical Therapist Vacancies High; Waiting Lists Grow

Saskatoon (November 3, 2011) – Within weeks of signing a new contract with Saskatchewan’s specialized health care professions, health regions have filed information admitting that they have been unable to retain and recruit enough physical therapists this year to provide adequate service levels for the public, Health Sciences President Karen Wasylenko said.

“The recent report of the *Market Supplement Review Committee* says Saskatchewan health regions have long waiting lists for physical therapist services, while four health regions in particular report that they can provide **only the most basic service levels**, due to a lack of physical therapists,” Wasylenko noted.

“The report, prepared by health care employers, shows that as of September there were fifteen full-time, and six part-time, physical therapist positions sitting vacant in health regions, for an overall vacancy rate of more than seven per cent. Vacancy rates for full-time positions were exceptionally high in four rural health regions: Kelsey Trail (25%), Sun Country (25%), Sunrise (30%) and Heartland (50%). In many health regions, patients with chronic conditions are forced to **wait as long as a year** for treatment from a physical therapist,” Wasylenko added.

“Earlier this year, health care employers denied that they are unable to retain and recruit enough specialized health care professionals liked physical therapists to properly serve the public. However, within weeks of signing a new contract, employers are now admitting to the recruitment and retention problems that the *Health Sciences Association* tried to bring to the public’s attention throughout more than two years of collective bargaining,” Wasylenko said.

“The concerns raised by the *Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan*, which represents more than three-thousand specialized health care professionals in more than thirty professions, were also confirmed recently by new Canada-wide statistics on physical therapists, released by the *Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)*. These new statistics confirm that once again in 2010, Saskatchewan had the **fewest physical therapists** per capita in Western Canada,” Wasylenko noted.

“Another part of the problem is a lack of provincial funding for the additional health care positions needed to meet the demands of a growing population. The Market Supplement Review Committee noted: “*many health regions report insufficient budgeted resources to meet the growing demand for physical therapy services*”. As we have said many times, the chronic understaffing of our professions, and the failure to deal with recruitment and retention problems for many of our specialized health care professions, has resulted in growing waiting lists for many important health care services and unsafe access to others,” Wasylenko concluded.

Health Sciences members include: Emergency care workers like Paramedics; Acute care workers like Hospital Pharmacists, Perfusionists, and Respiratory Therapists; Rehab professionals like Physical Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists; and Community-based professionals like Public Health Inspectors, Psychologists and Social Workers.

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