



Young People Lose Services Due to Health Care Layoff in Saskatoon

Saskatoon (January 10, 2012) – Young people needing help to deal with addictions problems will face longer waiting lists due to an ill-advised plan by *Saskatoon Health Region* to layoff one of only three full-time Addictions Counsellors at Saskatoon's Mental Health and Youth Addictions Centre near City Hospital, Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan President Karen Wasylenko said Tuesday.

"*Saskatoon Health Region* has confirmed plans to layoff a full-time Addictions Counsellor effective February 2. Since Saskatoon children and youths between the ages of thirteen and twenty are already waiting **more than a month** for their first meeting with an Addictions Counsellor, and there is only one other full-time position dedicated to serving Saskatoon young people through this program [another full-time position is dedicated to serving young people in the health region's rural communities], it is obvious that the waiting list for Saskatoon children and youths seeking assistance will double overnight. How is this kind of health care layoff putting patients first?" Wasylenko asked.

"At a recent formal meeting, the health region claimed that it had "no choice" but to proceed with the layoff due to "fiscal and operational considerations". This makes absolutely no sense! The waiting lists for youth addiction services are already long, and will only grow longer due to this health care layoff. The health region has also been advertising for a number of vacant Addictions Counsellor positions in the weeks since it first raised the possibility of this layoff. So the layoff makes no sense from an operational or service point of view. The health region also can't argue that it doesn't have the money to maintain this position, as it ran a surplus of more than \$4 Million in its last fiscal year, and this fiscal year received a 6.5% *increase* in its base operating budget from the province [\$54 Million]. The health region's story that it has "no choice" doesn't add up," Wasylenko charged.

"*Saskatoon Health Region* had numerous options, but once again has decided to reduce its budget on the backs of the very people it is supposed to serve – in this case, at risk youth," Wasylenko concluded.

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Health Sciences is the union which represents more than three-thousand specialized health care professionals from more than thirty health care professions. 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.