



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

December 6, 2023

Association of Allied Health Professionals Demands Government Recognize the Value of its Members as Union Begins Conciliation Process and Readies for Possible Job Action.

St. John's - The Association of Allied Health Professionals (AAHP) is calling on Government to finally treat its members fairly and recognize the vital role allied health professionals play in holding the province's healthcare system together. Representing over 800 healthcare professionals, the AAHP walked away from the bargaining table in early October after a year of negotiations. It was clear that Government was unwilling to take meaningful action to address significant recruitment and retention challenges and AAHP Members' top priority of equal pay for work of equal value.

"Our members are highly skilled and specialized healthcare professionals that patients and their families critically rely upon every day, throughout all of their healthcare challenges." said Gord Piercey, President of AAHP. "Our members are feeling more frustrated, disrespected, and undervalued by their employer than at any point in our 48-year history. Like other public healthcare professionals, our members struggle daily to provide the care they know their patients need in the face of untenable workloads and working conditions that continue to deteriorate. We all know our healthcare system is in crisis. Our members see and feel the impacts firsthand for patient care, and for themselves, on a daily basis. They know how critical the current situation is and that change can't wait any longer."

Piercey notes "AAHP Members have never wavered in their commitment to provide the best quality healthcare to the people of this province, including during the pandemic. This is despite their working conditions and being among some of the lowest paid allied healthcare professionals in the country." He says "Our Members will not relent in their commitment to their patients. They are ready to fight for the changes they know we need right now, not only for themselves but also for the future of public healthcare in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our members aren't asking for much... just equality."

The AAHP President says "With an overall vacancy rate of 14% for the whole of the AAHP membership, the negative impacts for patient care and waitlists are clear". Mr. Piercey says the vacancy rates within some of the allied health care professions have grown to critical levels in some areas. "The vacancy rate for the Psychologists we represent in the public healthcare system has grown to 51%, while vacancy rates for groups like our hospital Pharmacists, Social Workers, Dietitians, Physiotherapists and Respiratory Therapists have also increased since last year."



“Retention is key and until allied health professionals receive equal pay for work of equal value, we will continue to lose them,” added Mr. Piercey. “It’s important to understand the broad range of services being jeopardized. We have children who need access to speech pathologists; and seniors who rely on physiotherapy/occupational therapy to help prevent or treat falls. We have respiratory therapists spread far too thin in acute and critical care and families are lost in the system without the support of social workers. We have people who are struggling and in dire need of mental health support but are met with extreme wait lists and no other options in the public system. These are just a few examples of how vital our members are to an already broken healthcare system.”

The AAHP is also very concerned about the “creeping in” of private healthcare services as being a major threat to the public healthcare system, making access to healthcare services more of a privilege than a right for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Piercey fears the unfair compensation model for public sector allied health professionals will continue to draw more and more allied health professionals towards the private sector - if they aren’t leaving the province altogether. The union encourages everyone to question government’s intentions when it comes to supporting private healthcare instead of doing more to protect the public system, to ask more questions about wait lists and push back on private healthcare becoming the only option.

With conciliation set to begin today, December 6, the AAHP is demanding that government step up and make positive changes for allied health professionals and for the people of NL. The Union is hopeful the process will lead to a positive outcome but is also preparing for the possibility of job action if necessary.

Mr. Piercey says, “Our Members are ready to fight for the critical changes needed right now for themselves and for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, for fair treatment and fair access to quality public health care we all need.”

Gordon Piercey,
AAHP President

Media Contact:

Erin Curran, Lupine Communications
709-325-7193 | Erin@lupinecommunications.com

Additional Background:

The AAHP is a public sector bargaining unit representing more than 800 highly skilled health professionals who collectively provide a range of preventative, diagnostic, technical and therapeutic health-care and clinical support services across the lifespan and care continuum and in virtually all program areas within the health care system. They contribute specialized expertise, education, research and leadership, and often work as integral members of collaborative health-care teams to improve the health and well-being of Newfoundland and Labradorians.

Our Membership represent over 22 different health care disciplines comprised mainly of regulated, community, clinical and therapeutic professions. Members of the allied health workforce deliver, support, or inform direct patient care and have completed occupation-specific post-secondary education or training. They include anesthesia assistants, audiologists, auditory verbal therapists, dietitians, medical flight specialists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, sexologists, genetic counsellors, hyperbaric technologists, creative arts therapists, kinesiologists, orthoptists, pastoral care clinicians, prosthetists, orthotists, psychometrists, respiratory therapists, social workers, and speech language pathologists.