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Thank you for your email regarding staffing in health-care system. I appreciate being informed of your support for health-care providers.

Our government recognizes the health human resource challenges experienced prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. We value the contributions and dedication of all health-care workers and are thankful for their commitment to patients and residents, especially during these unprecedented times of COVID-19.

In partnership with stakeholders across the sector a number of strategies are being used. Government and the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) have engaged to adapt and adjust approaches to respond to the ever-changing COVID-19 environment. As you are aware, these strategies previously included the redeployment of staff to support COVID surge needs, contracting staff from external agencies, and recruiting new staff. The SHA has implemented recruitment strategies, including targeted social media campaigns, rural and remote recruitment strategies, and offering part-time staff the opportunity to increase hours of work to meet service demands. In addition, the government and the SHA have partnered to provide recruitment and retention bursaries for hard to recruit positions and increased the number of training spaces in critical care specialties and hard to recruit professions.

The Ministry of Health provides funding to the SHA and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) for bursaries for hard to recruit positions in nursing (Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Nurse Practitioners) and allied health professions (e.g., Medical Laboratory Technologists, Medical Laboratory Assistants, and Combined Laboratory X-ray Technicians). Bursaries are provided to those who agree to work at the SHA or the SCA in designated positions or rural and remote locations. Students apply directly to the SHA or SCA for these bursaries.

... 2

The Ministry also provides clinical placement bursaries to nursing and allied health discipline students. Priority is given to providers who are willing to go to rural and northern communities and make a return in service commitment.

In the 2021-22 Budget, our Government dedicated \$6 million in new funding to fulfill an \$18 million Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) commitment to add 90 full-time equivalent (FTEs) CCAs to long-term care this year. As of November 8, 2021, the equivalent of 85 full-time CCA positions have been filled while recruitment efforts continue. Additionally, the SHA has staffed the equivalent of 10 full-time CCAs to work in home care and is working toward adding the equivalent of eight FTEs in this area.

On November 25, 2021, Government announced a Hard-To-Fill Skills Pilot which enables Saskatchewan employers to recruit workers into numerous sectors, including the health sector through overseas missions and other international recruitment activities. This pilot will contribute to recruitment efforts for health-care positions in Saskatchewan.

I am aware that the SHA remains committed to providing safe and healthy workplaces which includes encouraging staff to take time to rest and access the various mental health tools available including the Employee and Family Assistance Program and the mental health and resilience resources online.

Sincerely,



Paul Merriman  
Minister of Health