

CUPE COMMUNIQUE

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

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Shareholders are the winners, patients the losers:

Number of surgeries down in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region

Regina: Surgical data on a government website show fewer surgeries are being performed now in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region than before the Saskatchewan government began paying a private-profit clinic to perform surgeries in the city.

According to information on the Saskatchewan Surgical website, 11,019 surgeries were performed in the health region between October 2010 and March 2011, a drop of 478 surgeries from the same period a year earlier.* (See note on backgrounder.)

"The government claimed privatizing surgical services would increase the volume of surgeries in the region, but the data show fewer surgeries are being performed since Omni Surgery Centre started operating at the taxpayers' expense," said Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council.

"Clearly, the shareholders of Omni are the winners and Regina patients are the losers in the government's experiment with private health care delivery," said Campbell.

The union's allegation comes two days after the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region announced plans to expand private surgeries, awarding a multi-year contract to a Calgary-based clinic.

Campbell said the government and the health region should restore funding for the public surgical centre in Regina and stop privatizing health care services.

The Wall government cancelled plans to build a public day surgery centre in Regina last year, stating it preferred to invest public health care dollars in private-for-profit surgical clinics in Regina and Saskatoon. Health Minister McMorris said the privatization move would free up space in Regina's hospital operating rooms to perform more complicated surgeries.

"That hasn't happened," Campbell said. "Instead of expanding capacity, the health region transferred public hospital services to a profit-making clinic, which is charging more and doing less."

Michael McBane of the Canadian Health Coalition agreed. "Saskatchewan residents want their public health care system improved, not undermined."

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