



Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **SGEU welcomes BC Supreme Court decision protecting public health care**

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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU) applauds the decision of the British Columbia Supreme Court to protect Canada's universal public health care system in *Cambie Surgeries Corporation v. British Columbia*. The case sought to overturn the ban on for-profit health care and allow for a US-style medical system in Canada.

"The ruling is an important win for universally accessible, public health care in Canada," says SGEU President Bob Bymoen. "It underscores a value held dear by the vast majority of Canadians – health care is a right and not something to be auctioned off to the highest bidder."

"In Saskatchewan, this decision is especially timely and important as we head into a fall election campaign," adds Bymoen. "The SaskParty government has already taken us down a slippery slope of privatized, for-profit health care, most recently in the area of MRIs. This ruling should send a clear message to anyone who wants to form government that health care must be based on need rather than the ability to pay."

"The challenges faced by our health care system are best addressed through collaborative problem solving that involves a wide range of stakeholders including those who work on the front lines providing care to patients, residents and clients who access health services. Turning over parts of the health care system to for-profit enterprises has not proven to be successful and, in fact, has led to even higher wait times. Allowing private health care creates a two-tier system which is unfair and drains funding and human resources from the public system."

The court case was launched by Dr. Brian Day, CEO of Cambie Surgeries Corporation who was found guilty in 2012 of overcharging patients in his private clinic. Dr. Day challenged his conviction and filed a Charter challenge, claiming his freedoms had been violated by the Canada Health Act and provincial legislation that restricts private, for-profit health care.

Over the last ten years or more, several provincial governments have moved toward allowing private, for-profit health care options such as orthopedic and cataract surgeries, and MRIs. Recently, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney introduced legislation

that would allow an even further move toward private health services in that province, a move that could embolden other premiers to potentially follow that same path. However, the BC Supreme Court decision should serve to stop any further action to privatize health care.

SGEU represents over 20,000 members working across the province in Health, Education, Community Services, Crowns, Public Liquor Stores including Liquor Warehousing and Distribution, and the provincial Public Service.

- 30 -

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