



Government's refusal to address shortages of health science professionals leads to supply crisis for Interior Health Authority

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BC's Interior Health Authority is paying thousands of dollars in additional costs to recruit ultrasound technologists from private, for-profit clinics to work in IHA hospitals because the government has refused to address a critical shortage of ultrasound technologists in BC, Reid Johnson, President of the Health Sciences Association of BC said today.

-The government's failure to have an effective recruitment and retention strategy has resulted in a crisis that IHA is now scrambling to find a fix for."

-The solution is simple. Train the health science professionals you need to deliver the services required in a modern health care system, and pay them a competitive wage to attract and keep them working where they are needed," Johnson said.

HSA represents ultrasound technologists working in public health care facilities throughout the province. Johnson said the union has been warning the provincial government for years that a long-standing shortage of ultrasound technologists was approaching critical levels.

BC ultrasound technologists are among the lowest paid in Canada. For example, the starting wage for an entry-level ultrasound technologist is more than \$6 an hour lower in BC than in Alberta.

-We're constantly hearing from members in IHA that when their hospital is finally able to find a new ultrasound technologist, that person leaves after a short time because they discover the wages and working conditions are so much better in Alberta."

-We have been urging the Ministries of Health and Advanced Education for several years to work together to increase the number of training spaces in BC for ultrasound technologists," says Johnson. BCIT is currently the only location in the province that trains these health professionals.

-BCIT recently changed their program from a 1-year to a 2-year program," says Johnson. "That means there are no new graduates for a 1-year period, and that will make the current crisis even worse. BC needs to establish another ultrasound training program immediately."

HSA has been successful in convincing government to establish new training programs for other health science professions that are in short supply, such as medical laboratory technologists and x-ray technologists.

-These programs have been established outside of the Lower Mainland to increase the number of new grads who'll stay to practice in underserved areas of the province, like the Interior and the North," says Johnson. - This is what's needed for ultrasound as well. And to retain these new BC grads, and recruit ultrasound technologists from other provinces, BC must offer competitive wages and working conditions."

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