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For immediate release

Civic union takes councillors to task over sick leave Increased workload to blame, not bad workers

EDMONTON - The union representing 2,000 'outside' employees of the City of Edmonton is upset at remarks made by two councillors about the sick time taken by city employees.

Last week, Edmonton City Councillors Mike Nickel and Ron Hayter said city managers have to clamp down on sick leave. Hayter claimed there was an increase of 'weekend sickness' even though administration admitted there was no evidence of staff taking more sick days on Fridays or Mondays.

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 30 President Dennis Mol took exception to the councillors' remarks.

"The increase in sick time is because the City is working some of its staff into the ground," said Mol. "The labour shortage, city growth and demands on services along with a cold and snowy winter, has meant longer hours, greater fatigue, more injuries, and an increase in sickness."

Mol pointed out that the City has an attendance management policy, and has the power to crack down on employees who abuse sick time.

"Part time employees are given three sick incidents, if they exceed this they are not re-hired next year," said Mol.

"These councillors are looking to pick a fight with the unions to score political points," said Mol. "But the truth is that our members are working harder than ever in a tough situation to serve the people of Edmonton."

"Their behaviour is shameful. They should be thanking their employees, instead of using them as scapegoats."

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