

Anne Simonot: Multi-site workplaces unsafe, inefficient and unfair
February 25, 2010

As a CUPE health care provider, I logged on to SAHO's website to see the full content of their "final offer". Remember that SAHO broke off negotiations, asked for a conciliator, then presented us with a "final offer" and refused to use the conciliator to work for any meaningful changes or consensus. Now negotiations have been broken off again. It's "final offer" time for SAHO - accept all or nothing, no negotiations allowed.

The offer glowingly mentions things like retroactive pay as if they are a big bonus. Retro pay is a right, particularly after two years without any increase in pay. We are entitled to it. It's not a present SAHO is giving us. Tucked into this clause is also a little item - or should we say threat? - that "accumulation of retroactive pay ends on March 31, 2010". Is this even legal? Is SAHO truly allowed to stop counting the hours we work after this date and not bother paying us the retro pay which we are owed?

Nowhere does SAHO's website mention the huge concessions they are insisting on - which they misleadingly call "efficiencies". Do Saskatchewan residents realize that one of these is multi-site workplaces? In other words, a health care provider might come to work one morning and then be sent off, that day, or any day, to ANY site within the particular health district. An LPN, lab tech, or SCA who works in P.A. might be sent off at the employer's whim to Leask, Canwood, Shellbrook, or Birch Hills. Our unions have asked if we will be getting orientation ahead of time to all these other facilities. SAHO has no answer.

Think about receiving care from a staff member whose first time working in that facility is that day - when you are seeing them. They don't know where anything is. They have no idea what the particular protocols, routines, or practices are in that facility. Does this sound efficient to you? Does this sound safe? Oh, and we're expected to do this, mainly, at our own expense and our own time. That's right - after the first day, it's no mileage and no pay for travel time. Now, many people choose to commute from one community to another for work. But the operative word is "choice". They choose to absorb that time and expense for various reasons. It's not something that's been thrust upon them. Imagine being sent all over a particular health region, never knowing from one day to the next where you will be working, probably without decent orientation, and no remuneration for travel time or expenses, and you have a permanent full-time position at one facility. And it took you years to achieve that PFT position. Try arranging your life around that. Does this sound fair, safe, or efficient to you?

If it doesn't, call your MLA and your local health board, and start voicing your opinion, or this will be just one facet of the Saskatchewan Party's new reality for health care in this province.

Sincerely,

Prince Albert, Sask.