



For Immediate Release:

September 22, 2009

SAHO's monetary offer "insulting"

Saskatchewan: The Saskatchewan Government & General Employees' Union (SGEU), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Service Employees International Union West (SEIUWEST) who represent 25,000 health care providers in Saskatchewan are extremely disappointed that the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) was not prepared to present a reasonable monetary offer at their common bargaining table today. Instead, SAHO tabled an offer of less than ten per cent over four years. It falls short of other public sector settlements in the province.

"It's hard to believe we've waited so long for so little," says Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council. "This type of second-class treatment is deeply insulting to our members."

SAHO's wage offer consists of 2.75 per cent on April 1, 2008, 2 per cent in 2009, 2.25 per cent in 2010 and 2.25 per cent in 2011.

"It's a real kick in the teeth to be offered less than every other group of public sector workers in the province," says Barb Cape, President of SEIUWEST. "It's difficult to imagine that SAHO and the SaskParty government thought this offer would lead to a contract settlement."

"Our members have waited 17 months to see a reasonable monetary offer from SAHO – and following today's bargaining meeting, they're still waiting," says Bonnie Erickson, Negotiating Committee Chair for SGEU. "It's very discouraging."

In addition to a paltry wage increase, SAHO continues to insist health care providers accept concessions. The three unions have worked diligently in prior sets of negotiations to expand opportunities to members who are entering a workforce characterized by too many casual and part-time jobs. Now SAHO has tabled rollbacks which would eliminate or reduce such expanded opportunities.

The province's health care provider unions continue to point out that employees who are well-rested and working in safe, healthy work environments and who are engaged in full-time, meaningful job opportunities will be able to provide quality and timely health care services. SAHO and the SaskParty government have confirmed, in this offer, that there is no respect for the vital services provided by health care providers and that there is no shared value in addressing wait list issues through the attraction and retention of health care providers.

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The CUPE Health Care Council received a strong strike mandate (88 per cent) from its membership in June over SAHO's continued demands for concessions. SEIUWEST and SGEU have not yet taken a strike vote.

The province's health care providers include special care aides, licensed practical nurses, food services workers, laundry, housekeeping and activity personnel, maintenance, administrative, clerical, therapeutic and recreational workers, and medical technologists and technicians.

SEIU represents 11,000 health care providers in four health regions. SGEU represents 2,000 health care providers in three health regions. CUPE Health Care Council represents 12,600 health care providers in five health regions.