

BARGAINING COMMUNIQUE #5

December 13, 2004

After 18 days at the bargaining table we find ourselves still facing many of the same proposals that we consider to be *takeaways*. We are frustrated by the sometimes conflicting information we receive from SAHO with regards to the costing of the proposal package to the government mandate.

The Bargaining Committee continues to deliver the message that front line service providers deserve equality and respect. We talked of the importance of dignity and respect and of the need for an enhanced recognition of the role of the Union. We have expressed to SAHO that these issues continue to be a priority for our membership in this round of bargaining.

Our Bargaining Committee presented a thorough analysis of the effects of health care restructuring and regionalization as it relates to the role of the union and barriers the union faces in administering the collective agreement.

The Committee also made a very informative presentation on the Occupational Health and Safety components of our proposal package. The Committee emphasized the importance of the language, as it is a tool to create awareness and to educate both employees and managers regarding their duties and responsibilities under the Act. The Committee provided startling statistics compiled through the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards in Canada and it is our hope that SAHO will see the benefits of working towards prevention of injury in a committed way. With Saskatchewan having the second worst injury frequency per 100 employees in the country, millions of dollars in cost savings to the employer could be realized through prevention.

SAHO still remains wishy-washy on their commitment to the concept of a publicly funded, publicly delivered health care system through their refusal to accept language that will prevent privatization and contracting out. We find this approach unconscionable in the province where medicare was born.

We also question the authority of SAHO's bargaining committee as they seem unable to deal with issues that are brought forth at the table without going back and checking with the powers that be to see if it is achievable or not, only to return with more takeaways.

We are now faced with the uncertainty of our benefits being discontinued on February 15th, 2005. On Friday, December 3, 2004, SAHO again issued another ultimatum:

If health provider unions (CUPE, SEIU, SGEU and RWDSU) have not secured additional funding by February 15, 2005, SAHO will unilaterally cut benefits to Union members.

To date, there have been three meetings of the Tripartite Union Committee, and despite willingness of unions to address plan inefficiencies and other cost saving measures, and despite Government assurances that funding would be available to maintain the plans until the end of March 2005, SAHO plans to cut our benefits effective Feb. 15, 2005.

With the season of giving upon us SAHO does not seem to be in the spirit of giving as what they have offered so far is less than a lump of coal.

