

Sask. Party and SAHO to blame

BY SUZANNE POSYNIAK, THE LEADER-POST JUNE 1, 2010

Contrary to what Susan Antosh states (May 28 Leader-Post), it is the Saskatchewan Party Government and SAHO that are to blame for the delay in reaching collective agreements with CUPE, SGEU and SEIU-West. The government and SAHO are using essential services legislation to their full advantage in this contract dispute. Absent the threat of a strike, they demand major concessions, refuse to bargain and instead push a "final offer" in costly advertising. It's this cynical strategy that is responsible for delaying the health-care agreements for more than two years. Health-care workers deserve better treatment.

Now SAHO is pressuring these workers with public statements about employees not accruing retroactive pay. Such statements are misleading. The SAHO final offer does indeed include a condition that would stop the accrual of retroactive pay but, for clarification, this is SAHO's bargaining position. It does not become fact until it is agreed to. So it can be said that by asking health-care workers to vote on its final offer, SAHO is asking them to agree to a deal that cuts off their own retroactive pay.

Recently, CUPE, SGEU and SEIU-West presented SAHO, the government and health employers with a fair and reasonable offer to reach collective agreements. This pared-down package includes the acceptance of the 9.5% wage increase and a short list of parity proposals which are critical to restoring fair treatment for our members. These parity items would be phased in late in the life of the agreement as a way to minimize their cost. The union's package also offers compromises to some of SAHO's concession demands with the expectation that SAHO withdraw the rest.

It is time that the government and SAHO showed some genuine concern for health-care workers.

Paid advertisements don't cut it. Try negotiating a fair agreement instead.

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