



For Immediate Release:

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## Health care provider unions willing to consider conciliation

*Attention media: The union presidents will hold a media scrum in Saskatoon at TCU Place, Salon C (upstairs), at 12 noon today.*

**Saskatchewan:** The three unions representing 25,000 health care providers in Saskatchewan are willing to consider mutually agreed to options such as conciliation in an effort to move contract negotiations forward.

Yesterday, the government's 29-member bargaining committee broke-off contract talks, stating negotiations had reached an impasse. They requested the labour minister appoint a conciliator.

The employer's actions surprised the health care provider unions, as the parties have only met eight times at a common bargaining table to discuss monetary issues.

"We feel the employer's request for conciliation is premature, as there are a large number of issues on the table that we have not had the opportunity to discuss," says Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council. "But if this process helps to get the employer back to the bargaining table, we are prepared to consider it."

None of the three health care provider unions – the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Service Employees International Union West (SEIU-West) and the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU) – shares the employer's view that bargaining is at an impasse. However, they are frustrated by the employer's persistent demands for concessions and the government's refusal to table an equitable monetary package.

"It is hard to believe bargaining has reached an impasse at the common table, when the parties only have spent a total of about four hours in face-to-face discussions," says Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. "After waiting more than a year to see the employer's initial wage offer, we are disappointed the employer is forcing another delay

in discussions about client safety, staff recruitment and retention issues and other workplace concerns.”

Bonnie Erickson, Negotiating Committee Chair for SGEU, says health care providers have been “patient beyond endurance” in contract negotiations with the government and health employers.

“It has been almost two years without a contract and we were hoping to conclude a fair contract settlement as soon as possible. If an alternative option can help us achieve that goal, we certainly are willing to look at it,” she says.

The province’s health care providers include special care aides, licensed practical nurses, food services workers, laundry, housekeeping and activity personnel, maintenance, administrative, clerical, emergency medical personnel, 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.

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