



For Immediate Release

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Health employers present disgraceful offer and cancel conciliation

Saskatchewan: Conciliation talks on behalf of 25,000 health care providers in the province collapsed this afternoon after the Saskatchewan government and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) presented a “take it or leave it offer” to conciliator Doug Forseth, cancelled bargaining dates and then contacted the media.

Representatives of the three health care provider unions were bitterly disappointed by the employers’ actions, saying it showed a tremendous disrespect to health care providers. “Can you imagine them treating teachers or registered nurses this way?” asked Gordon Campbell, President of the Health Care Council.

Last Thursday, the health care provider unions presented a new offer of settlement to conciliator Doug Forseth. SAHO and the health employers said they would respond today – a week later.

Instead of receiving a response, however, the employers produced a final offer – one that increases the wage offer by a paltry 0.1 per cent (to 9.5 per cent over four years) and is loaded with concessions.

“It was a charade. The Saskatchewan government and SAHO only came to these talks to make an appearance,” says Campbell. “They had no interest in resolving the outstanding issues to achieve a settlement.”

Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West, says the Saskatchewan government must be held accountable for the fact that health care providers still don’t have a resolution to staff recruitment and retention issues that impact the delivery of a ‘Patient First’ model of health care, after 17 months of contract negotiations.

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"The Sask Party government ensured that our sisters and brothers in the Sask Union of Nurses, who we work side by side with, had a generous offer after two months of negotiations. Yet they continue to insist that our members accept an insulting monetary package and major concessions," she says.

The 25,000 health care providers in the province have been without new collective agreements for almost two years. They include special care aides, licensed practical nurses, food services workers, laundry, housekeeping and activity personnel, maintenance, administrative, clerical, emergency medical personnel, therapeutic and diagnostic technologists, and recreational workers.

Bonnie Erickson, Negotiating Committee Chair of SGEU, blames the government's essential services legislation for the employers' arrogant attitude. "The legislation has given all the power to the employers so they have little interest in addressing our workplace concerns."

All three unions, which have strong strike mandates, plan to hold membership meetings in the coming weeks to discuss ways to achieve fair contract settlements.

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

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