

**For Immediate Release**

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## **CUPE health care workers prepared to strike for fair contract**

**Regina:** More than 12,000 CUPE workers employed in five health regions have backed their priority issues at the bargaining table with a strike mandate, to 'motivate' the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations to conclude a fair settlement.

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of CUPE health care workers voted in support of taking strike action at union meetings this week throughout the five health regions: Regina Qu'Appelle, Sun Country, Sunrise, Prince Albert Parkland and Prairie North. They work throughout the health care system in a range of jobs, including special care aides, licensed practical nurses, dietary aides, clerical staff, technologists and technicians, activity and maintenance workers.

"This strike vote reflects our membership's frustration with the slow, slow pace of contract negotiations," says Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council.

"We have been engaged in contract negotiations with SAHO for more than 14 months, but we are still discussing non-monetary issues. The employer just hasn't been motivated to deal with the issues and settle this contract," he says. "We hope the strike mandate spurs SAHO to take action on our priority issues."

Campbell says CUPE members want parity with other health care unions in areas such as shift/weekend premiums, standby pay, vacation entitlements and professional fees. They also need "hassle-free" family leave, respectful workplaces, and better contract language to deal with the crushing workloads in health care.

CUPE and the two other unions representing workers in the Health Providers Group – Service Employees International Union and the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees Union - are anxious to move to a "common table" to settle the monetary issues. Campbell says that could happen by December, if SAHO comes to the table prepared to bargain.

Members from both SEIU and SGEU also have voted to take strike action to conclude fair contract settlements. CUPE health workers have been without a new agreement since April 1, 2004.

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