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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sun Country's essential services plan "seriously flawed"

Sun Country: The health region's second attempt at developing an essential services plan for CUPE health care providers is "seriously flawed" and fails to meet the requirements of the legislation, says Sandra Seitz, Acting CUPE Local 5999 President.

The union wrote the health region last week, requesting it provide all of the information required under the Public Service Essential Services Act.

It's the second time the health region has tried to produce an essential services plan for the 1,400 CUPE health care providers in the region. Following its first attempt last November – where virtually every CUPE support worker was deemed essential – Sun Country and other health regions were instructed to "be reasonable" and redo their plans.

But Seitz says the revised plan, which CUPE received on February 25, does not pass the "reasonable test" or good common sense.

"Our union always has ensured members remain on the job to provide services that are truly essential during a strike," says Seitz. "But the employer's revised essential services lists go far beyond what most reasonable people would consider 'essential,'" Seitz says.

"Sun Country has deemed 81% of our support workers as essential. That means only 265 of our 1,417 members would be allowed to participate in job action across the region. Clearly, the purpose of this plan is to destroy our collective bargaining rights, not provide essential services," Seitz says.

CUPE's review of Sun Country's plan found many errors and omissions, including:

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- The employer has listed many CUPE members as essential in more than one classification. In one facility, an employee is listed as essential in four classifications.
- Lampman's Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) are normally utilized on a call in basis; the employer has not deemed this service essential in its plan, but it has deemed 9 out of 12 employees as essential.
- The employer has altered shifts – created shifts and rotations that are not currently part of the collective agreement (e.g. a 10.5 hour shift in a facility where no agreement exists). The employer also has created new three and four hour shifts – a violation of the collective agreement.
- Sun Country has deemed 100% of the payroll clerks and 100% of the payroll/benefit officers as essential. Other health regions have not.
- The employer has deemed the storeperson as essential with no reduction in the normal hours of work.

Seitz says the government's essential services legislation continues to negatively impact contract negotiations for CUPE's 12,600 health care providers, including the 1,400 members in Sun Country.

"The essential services plans are consuming a tremendous amount of time away from bargaining – and are not workable or reasonable," says Seitz.

Seitz says the government and SAHO should set the legislation aside – as they did for members of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses – and focus on concluding a fair collective agreement with the CUPE health care providers.

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