

Re-Open Sask Means Added Risk for Health Care Workers

Saskatoon – SEIU-West leaders and members are put off by Premier Moe’s announcement yesterday of the plan to re-open Saskatchewan. The potential increase in COVID-19 cases as a result of lifting restrictions presents a serious risk to Saskatchewan’s front line health care providers, who have been working hard to provide care for patients, clients and residents during the pandemic.

“For several weeks now, we’ve been meeting regularly with the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Ministry of Health about COVID-19. We keep emphasizing in these meetings how the health system depends on the health and safety of our members, who are on the front lines of COVID response. But we were not consulted at all about the Re-Open Sask plan,” said Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. “We’re well aware that the lockdown has been especially hard on certain businesses and sectors of the Saskatchewan economy—the plan reflects that. We ask the government to show the same concern for the economic and psychological well-being of front line care workers and the patients, residents and clients they care for.”

Despite the government’s promises of a phased approach to reopening the province, it is clear that this announcement will immediately result in more people leaving their homes daily. Recent global experience shows that premature lifting of restrictions leads to a surge of additional COVID-19 cases. This surge will be borne by front-line health workers, whose hard work has been key to bending the curve of COVID -19 infection in Saskatchewan, and who are already facing the stressful prospect of being redeployed away from their home community.

“Before talking about reopening, we need a plan that addresses the human issues of both cohorting and redeployment within health care during this crisis,” continued Cape.

SEIU-West is in agreement that our members are essential to the health care team through this pandemic and we know that providers will remain dedicated to providing quality care to the citizens of the province, however, we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is the responsibility of everyone in the community to show their support by staying at home and improving safety for our front line heroes.

SEIU-West has set up a page dedicated to information about the coronavirus for their members (https://www.seiuwest.ca/covid_19_coronavirus).

Service Employees International Union West (SEIU-West) represents over 13,000 people across Saskatchewan. They include people who work in health care, education, municipalities, community-based organizations, retirement homes and other sectors. They are joined by one colour – purple – and one union – SEIU-West. Visit [PurpleWorks.ca](https://www.purpleworks.ca) to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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