

## ***Lax Reopen Plan Escalates COVID Risk in Health Care***

**Saskatoon** – SEIU-West members are extremely concerned about recent policy changes made in health care facilities as part of the government’s Reopen Saskatchewan plan.

Under changes announced in early July, residents, clients, and patients at health care facilities are able to name up to two people as visitors.

“Thousands of our members work in the health care system,” says Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. “They’ve seen firsthand how hard it’s been for residents, clients, patients, and their families who weren’t allowed to see each other because of COVID. But these members have also been on the front lines of the fight against COVID, and they don’t want all the work and sacrifices we’ve all made to go to waste.”

Relaxing of restrictions on visitors poses increased risks for patients, clients, residents, and front line health care providers in our province.

“We hope everyone in our communities remains vigilant and continues their new personal safety practices which keep us all safe and can help our health care providers keep defending us from the kind of outbreaks that occurred in Ontario and Quebec,” adds Cape. “We wish to remind our government, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, and the general public that our members are the very people whose work was key to bending the curve of COVID-19 infection in Saskatchewan and now is not the time to be complacent about the requirements under the public health orders.”

The public health orders that identify continuous masking, cohorting of staff, and the need for the public to self-isolate/monitor have not been lifted neither has the Government of Saskatchewan’s State of Emergency. Front line staff working in Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities, hospitals, home care, group homes, personal care homes, and retirement facilities continue to need exceptional infection control measures to be in place and ongoing access to adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

“The incredible diligence of our members and their personal sacrifice has shielded those who are vulnerable, particularly our seniors and with those with additional health requirements, but we need more staff in all facilities and sectors in order to continue to provide care to our patients, clients, and residents,” continues Cape. “We also appreciate everyone’s patience while we ensure that the new visitor guidelines are safely managed.”

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://PurpleWorks.ca) to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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