

## ***Health Care Providers are #DoneWaiting for Fairness***

**Saskatoon** – Due to the lack of any meaningful good faith offer from the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO), the SEIU-West bargaining team has served notice of impasse to the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety. SEIU-West members working for the SHA have been without a contract since March 31, 2017.

In May 2020, SAHO shut out the SEIU-West bargaining team from an on-line meeting but later denied that they were walking away from the bargaining table. SEIU-West requested a Special Mediator following this incident as there was considerable lack of trust that any meaningful discussions would occur. The Minister of Labour Relations & Workplace Safety, Don Morgan, appointed the Executive Director, Labour Relations and Conciliation Services, to assist the parties in moving forward. Since this time, SEIU-West has been trying to achieve progress. A deadline was set for SAHO to respond to the Union's last offer. Rather than doing so, SAHO indicated that they will not respond to the latest union proposal to resolve all collective bargaining issues due to the election.

"After over three years of negotiations and with ample evidence to confirm that understaffing has become critical in the health sector within a variety of classifications, you would think there would be an appetite to resolve the outstanding issues," continues Cape. "Instead, SAHO seems intent upon moving the parties further apart from any potential success at the table and the government will not authorize them to improve the stale mandate that was rejected by our members in 2019. This does not put health care in a strong position to recruit or retain skilled professionals who are much needed in health care. We already see members leaving the sector entirely, or leaving the province to work where their profession is valued."

"The Sask Party can't hide behind SAHO or the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) - we have made it known to decision-makers that there is a chronic shortage of Continuing-Care Assistants (CCAs), Lab Disciplines, Licensed Practical Nurses, Cooks, Security Officers, the list is extensive and growing" says Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. "We need families, patients, clients and residents to speak out and demand improvements as the care environment is seriously compromised due to staff shortages daily. We know that working at 2016 rates of pay will not entice our members to stay nor will it invite people to want to work in this sector."

SEIU-West members know that MLAs have received increases to match the cost of living; an MLA in 2006 earned an annual salary of less than \$60,000. As of 2020, they have surpassed an annual salary of \$100,000.

"Our members have waited over 1,200 days for a fair contract offer from this government – that's much too long," says Cape. "While the Minister of Health and Premier have approved their own cost of living increases, their inaction on the health provider file demonstrates that they do not value the essential work our members do for the people of Saskatchewan, not even in the midst of a pandemic."

SEIU-West members want to have the resources to provide quality health care that is timely, compassionate, thoughtful and professional, but in order for them to be able to do so our health care system must be well resourced and its staff adequately compensated but this is not our government's plan.

"We are challenged by the strict requirements under the collective bargaining and essential services processes, but want to assure our patients, clients and residents, that we will negotiate a fair essential services agreement. However there may be some non-essential services that may have to be reduced in the future should the situation continue to escalate," adds Barbara Cape. "The



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additional challenge of this situation is that it occurs during a pandemic, but we trust that families, patients, clients and residents understand that as we advocate for an improvement for staff, it is to provide improvements for you.”

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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