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November 26, 2020

Sent via E-mail

Honourable Minister of Finance
Donna Harpauer
Room 312, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

BARBARA CAPE
President

NEIL COLMIN
Vice-President

JANICE PLATZKE
Treasurer

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CLC

MEMBER RESOURCE
CENTRE (MRC)
1.888.999.7348

Saskatoon Office:
200 – 747 46th Street West
Saskatoon, SK S7L 6A1
Phone 306.652.1011
Fax: 306.652.1392

Moose Jaw Office:
39 Athabasca Street West
Moose Jaw, SK S6H 2B6
Phone 306.693.7922
Fax: 306.692.2807

Swift Current Office:
333 Central Avenue North
Swift Current, SK S9H 0L5
Phone 306.773.2536
Fax: 306.773.7535

Dear Minister Harpauer:

RE: Sask. Temporary Wage Supplement Program (STWSP) Phase 2

I write to you today on behalf of the many SEIU-West members who have been excluded from access to the above-noted supplement based on your eligibility criteria. It is unfortunate that the criteria established did not take into account the interconnectedness of our health care system. Rather, it appears that, once again, the designation of employees who qualify is arbitrary.

The program information provided by the Ministry of Finance sets out that facilities impacted by the suspension of visitation effective November 20, 2020, for long-term care facilities and personal care homes are included in Phase Two. Other facility types, while providing valuable assistance to citizens through the COVID-19 pandemic, are not included in this phase.

We would ask that you consider the consequences of this rationale.

In essence, there are those who work in long term care and specific personal care homes and those who work in integrated facilities that qualify. The remainder – from the CBO sector, acute care and community care including public health and mental health services need not apply.

This reasoning does not reconcile with how our health care is delivered. Perhaps a few examples will best illuminate our submission:

1. For example, if you are a CLXT (Combined Lab & X-ray Tech) working at the Rosthern Hospital – you are not eligible to receive the supplement, however, if you are a CLXT working at the Central Butte Regency Hospital (by virtue of it being designated an integrated facility) – you are automatically eligible to receive the supplement. Both CLXT have their terms/conditions including their rate of pay under the terms of the SEIU-West/SAHO collective

agreement and both of these positions are put in a position of providing an intense level of care and service required during this pandemic;

2. Another example: if you are a CCA (Continuing Care Assistant) or a LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) who works in either acute care (including those at Saskatoon City Hospital in the Transition Care Unit (8700) – working with seniors awaiting a bed in long term care) – you are not eligible to receive the supplement, however if you are a CCA or a LPN working in long term care – you are automatically eligible to receive the supplement. Once again, in all sectors the CCAs and the LPNs have their terms/conditions including their rate of pay under the terms of the SEIU-West/SAHO collective agreement;

3. If you are currently working in a COVID-19 testing site or an assessment centre – irrespective of where you have been re-deployed from, you are not eligible to receive the supplement.

4. We should note that the impact of cohorting has not been considered either. We have members who (prior to COVID) are employed in both long term care/home care and acute care. When they were cohorted, the employer had the final direction as to where each employee was needed and that is the location that they have been cohorted to. So if the employer selected acute care as the location for the specific employee to be cohorted, this decision would mean that the employee would not be eligible to receive the supplement.

5. In respect to schedulers, it is not the functions being performed rather the worksite that determines whether a scheduler is eligible for the supplement. For example, home care schedulers who worksite is Prairie View health centre in Mankota are eligible, however, home care schedulers within the former Saskatoon Health Region are *not* eligible. Yet these schedulers perform the same duties, have their terms/conditions including their rate of pay under the terms of the SEIU-West/SAHO collective agreement.

6. A final example, if you are a direct care worker for Luther Care Communities you are eligible to receive the supplement, however, if you do this valuable work at Cheshire Homes or Elmwood Group homes you are not eligible to receive the supplement.

We would like to emphasize that other provinces that have offered the wage supplement on an equitable basis to all who are deemed as ‘essential workers’ it should be acknowledged the issues presented by COVID affect everyone who is working in these sectors irrespective of the roles they perform or the particular setting that they work in.

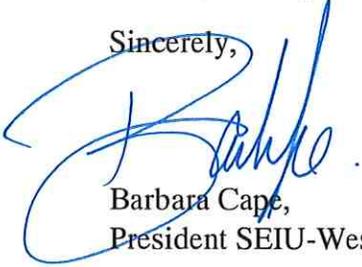
It is confounding that health care leaders are aware of the enormous burden being placed on so many in the acute care setting given the second surge we are presently facing and yet the Government of Saskatchewan appears to not understand what is happening. As predicted, we have surpassed capacity limits in COVID testing/assessment sites, ICU’s and COVID units and our provincial lab services are stuck with constant overtime demands due to crushing workloads, yet there is no recognition of the pressure and demand that has been put on our healthcare system since March. Now you are excluding a large portion of the healthcare worker population from the benefit of this program as well.

Please help us to understand the rationale of our decision-makers in government. At this point, it seems this plan was either not well thought out or it was purposely designed to be divisive.

It is our request that you reconsider the eligibility criteria so as to include coverage for the many members who are asking why they are being left out of some much-needed assistance during these difficult times. We are also aware that the federal government has continued to stand ready to provide further assistance, we would encourage you to avail yourself of this for the people of this province.

Thank you for your reply.

Sincerely,



Barbara Cape,
President SEIU-West

BC/jl USW 5917

CC: Executive Board, SEIU-West
Honourable Paul Merriman, Minister of Health
Honourable Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan
Honourable Everett Hindley, Minister of Rural and Remote Health