

Bargaining Bulletin No. 3

Canadian Blood Services

Date: January 12, 2021

Location: Saskatoon

Greeting Sisters and Brothers,

It has been some time since we last provided an update and we apologize for that. Although the pandemic has caused a considerable interruption in many of our normal operations we have not been idle and we have been working to represent the members of SEIU-West employed at Canadian Blood Services (CBS).

In our last update we advised that the Union and the Employer had reached an impasse at bargaining and sought the assistance of the department of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety to provide conciliation to try to reach an agreement. As we reported on October 24 of 2019, that proved to be a waste of time. The Employer declined to table anything new or to change their position in any way. The Employer was adamant in their position that they would only offer to match whatever was agreed at provincial Health Care Bargaining. The Union insisted that the offer was not enough and that it was also unfair because it isn't bargaining with the members at CBS.

After that breakdown in bargaining the Union held a vote for job action which was overwhelmingly supported by the members. We also filed an Unfair Labour Practice (ULP) complaint against the Employer in which we asserted that CBS is refusing to bargain with the members employed at Canadian Blood Services. The Employer asserted that the Essential Services provisions of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act (SEA)* apply to CBS and stated that no strike action could take place until SEIU-West negotiated an essential services agreement with the Employer which would severely limit any strike action. The Union responded that we don't agree that Essential Services applies to this employer. They responded by filing a ULP complaint against us asserting that we had violated the *SEA* by refusing to negotiate an essential services agreement. The hearings for both complaints were originally scheduled for the spring of 2020 but, unfortunately, due to the pandemic and other factors beyond anyone's control they have been postponed several times and now won't proceed until June of 2021.

Although the Union proceeded to start a campaign to pressure the Employer to come back to the table and negotiate for fair agreement we could not take the risk of starting any real strike action until we had a ruling from the Labour Relations Board (LRB). There could be substantial fines to the Union and to individual member for any strike action that was deemed to be illegal. However the Union did post billboards and use other public actions and communication to pressure the Employer. Unfortunately, the public health orders issued as a result of the pandemic stopped any visible public actions like picketing and



If you have any questions or concerns about your workplace or your collective agreement, please call the Member Resource Centre (MRC) at 1-888-999-7348 ext. 2298. The MRC Officers are able to answer your questions and, if necessary, will forward your concerns to your workplace Union Representative.

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made us reconsider implementing a public campaign at least until the pandemic is under control.

In the meantime the Union has been in contact with the Employer (President Barbara Cape has written to the Federal Minister of Health and the CEO of CBS and other contacts have been made) to try and bring them back to the bargaining table with an agreement that they will at least negotiate directly and offer something other than just whatever gets agreed at provincial health care bargaining. Although the Employer has been receptive to a discussion we have not yet been able to agree to come back to the table with a different mandate.

The Union has also been closely monitoring the Employer's conduct during the pandemic to ensure the safety of our members and we have met with and challenged the Employer on many issues pertaining to the safety of staff and the public. We continue to work to resolve issues surrounding meal breaks, hours of work, staffing levels and the provision of regular pay during the pandemic either through discussions with the Employer or through the grievance process when necessary.

The SEIU-West members serving on the bargaining committee have been in regular contact with SEIU-West staff to relay members concerns and to provide assistance in resolving issues that arise in the workplace.

Although the resolution of the disputes that are going to hearings is a long way off we will continue to work to find a way back to the bargaining table to secure a fair agreement for the members at CBS. We remain hopeful that we can find a way without having to wait too long, although we are ready to be patient if that's what it takes, and we are hopeful that as the pandemic eases we will be able to restart our campaign to persuade the Employer to reach an agreement that's fair and that's negotiated directly with the members at CBS.

The Union and the bargaining committee members thank you for your patience and congratulate everyone for continuing to provide valuable services to the public through this challenging time.

Your SEIU-West bargaining committee:

SEIU-West members: Heather Dyck (Unit Chair, CBS Saskatoon); Leona Woykin (Unit Vice-Chair – retired/CBS Saskatoon); Kristie Pearton (Unit Vice-Chair, CBS Saskatoon); Jason Coombs (Unit Chair, CBS Regina); Nicole Bork (Unit Vice-Chair, CBS Regina); • **SEIU-West staff:** Cam McConnell (Negotiations Officer); Cheryl Champagne (Union Representative) and Shelley Johnson (Union Representative).