

SEIU-West Calls for a Long Term Care Overhaul

Saskatoon – In the wake of the disturbing COVID-19 mortality rates coming out of Extendicare Parkside, SEIU-West is renewing their calls for a full-scale overhaul of the Saskatchewan long-term care system. The SEIU-West campaign to #EndUnderstaffing evolved as a consequence of the last decade with budget-driven resources eroding the quality of care for our seniors.

“With respect to Extendicare Parkside, we should all recognize and appreciate the skill and compassion of those on the front line who have made personal sacrifices to provide the best quality care possible. They have worked in an environment plagued with unsafe staffing levels and infrastructure needs; and the emotional impact of a devastating loss of residents,” says Barb Cape, President of SEIU-West. “Our biggest challenge in this sector is that we need people to do the work and to spend the time to give quality, compassionate, respectful care.”

For years, SEIU-West has been linking the need for quality staffing with better health outcomes for our seniors and vulnerable populations in long term care. For the last decade, there has been a real decrease in the amount of staff available while the workload intensifies and number of residents rises.

“The problem is that there is no organizational or political will to ensure adequate staffing levels and pay fair wages that take into account the real physical and emotional intensity of these jobs. Long-term care sector funding is based on budgets, not resident needs,” Cape adds.

For real systemic improvements within the long-term care sector, Saskatchewan needs stronger oversight and regulation under occupational health provisions; safe staffing regulations to ensure minimum standards of care; and legislation changes within the *Personal Care Homes Act* that will provide a quality living environment to seniors and vulnerable populations. The need for these quality care standards is across all health care facilities: private, public, non-profit; and we need our government to step up to lead this systemic change now.

“This was a problem that existed before the pandemic and government inaction has laid bare the failings of the current guidelines that long-term care residents experience daily – it’s a deprivation of care,” continues Cape. “The reality is we need a comprehensive review in all long-term care facilities in the province by an independent authority and the introduction of real minimum care standards that are enforceable by law.”

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 to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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