

Hey Moe... Where's Our Dough?

Saskatoon – SEIU-West members who work in hospitals, community-based organizations, and for employers such as Canadian Blood Services are still being left out of the province's Temporary Wage Supplement (TWS) program. In many other provinces these crucial workers have received a wage supplement.

"The work that our members do in hospitals, child care, group homes, crisis intervention, and blood collection puts them in close contact with the general public on a daily basis – they can't do their work from home. These workers are at as much risk as our members who work in Long-Term Care and Home Care setting. All of them should be included in the wage top up," says Barb Cape, President of SEIU-West.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, SEIU-West members who work as Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLTs), Continuing Care Assistants (CCAs), Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), Environmental Service Workers (ESWs), Patient/Client Intake, Direct Care workers, and Security Officers, to name a few, have been coming into their workplaces every day facing steady interactions with people in the public.

"I'm not sure if the public knows that people who are processing COVID tests aren't getting the TWS," continues Cape. "And that the people who clean hospitals are on the first line of defense against the spread of viruses aren't receiving the top up. These are two of the many classifications in the health care team that are key in fighting this deadly disease."

The government is not being honest on the reason for not issuing the Temporary Wage Supplement broadly for all front line workers who work in close proximity to people and are exposed to bodily fluids. The Minister of Finance's office have given different reasons to different members. Ultimately, if this is intended to keep people working, then all front line health care staff, allied health, and community-based workers should be eligible; the Premier and his Minister of Finance shouldn't be picking winners and losers.

When it was launched, the first phase of the TWS was for people who worked in Long-Term Care homes and completely left out both Hospital and Home Care workers. While phase two of the program now includes home care workers, it still leaves out many vital workers who are in a position of high risk.

"The public should be aware that this government is being selective about whose contribution to our public services are more valuable," adds Cape. "I do not believe that this government actually understands the impact of this pandemic on front line staff and values saving lives, particularly when the focus is open keeping Saskatchewan open, rather than keeping us safe."

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 united by one colour – purple – and one union – SEIU-West. Visit PurpleWorks.ca to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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