

Respect Us & Protect Us

Saskatoon – SEIU-West leaders are alarmed with the recent public comments made by Health Minister Paul Merriman regarding the provincial vaccine roll out plan for Saskatchewan.

“It appears that our Health Minister is largely unaware of what is going on in the health sector otherwise he would not be inferring that long-term care staff and residents have all been vaccinated. While long term care staff and residents are in Phase 1, these vaccinations are not complete. In some locations, these have not been offered at all,” says Barb Cape, President of SEIU-West.

Mr. Merriman has indicated that the provincial roll-out plan will be done based on age sequencing; this model was chosen because they “looked at other provinces” and it’s “fastest.”

Cape indicates, “It’s ironic that he acknowledges a review of other jurisdictions when other locations are making health care and emergency personnel a priority for the vaccine. Why is it that only in Saskatchewan we select certain health care workers for the vaccine, rather than offering it out to all? Our Health Minister refers to “forward-facing” health care workers as being in Phase 1. It is obvious that he has no idea about the team of health care workers that we have in working in Saskatchewan. They are all ‘forward facing’ in the drive to reduce the infection rates of COVID-19.”

SEIU-West has sent an [open letter to the Premier and the Minister of Health](#) setting out clear examples of why all essential and front line workers in the health and community-based sectors need to be offered the vaccine prior to implementing the proposed age sequencing model. No reply has been received to date.

Cape adds, “It’s ironic that the Minister has stated that they have spoken to the different associations about their priorities. He certainly has undertaken no meaningful consultation with us. I don’t believe that the Minister appreciates the level of disrespect felt by our members who are faced with the daily burdens and risks of COVID. They need access to proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and the vaccine. It’s simply unconscionable to refuse our members who work at the Children’s Hospital, for example, access to the vaccine as a priority. We should be planning to reduce the number of outbreaks in our health care facilities by creating a model which complies with the National Advisory Committee on Immunization rather than increasing the risk to our front line heroes. It’s disrespectful and unsafe!”

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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