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March 12, 2021

Sent Via Email

Mr. Scott Livingstone
President & Chief Executive Officer
Saskatchewan Health Authority
Email Address: Scott.Livingstone@saskhealthauthority.ca

Dear Sir:

RE: One Year Later - Respect Us, Protect Us & Pay Us!

We write to you today on behalf of our 12,000 members who work in the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA). With the one year mark fast approaching we are certain that all members of the health care team would welcome the opportunity to pause and reflect upon the remarkable changes to our lives, our work and our world as a result of the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, far too many remain overwhelmed with no opportunity for a real break.

While it may be unfathomable for those who are able to work from the safety of home, we understand the ongoing stress experienced by health care providers and the courage and sacrifice displayed by so many over the last 12 months.

We note with thanks your regards extended to the entire health care work force in SHA communications dated February 24, 2021:

Chief Executive Officer's report: Health care workers are the core of the pandemic response

SHA's CEO Scott Livingstone provided a report reflecting on the past year and the unprecedented scale of what our health care work force has taken on in the fight against COVID-19. As the pandemic nears its one year mark, the report notes that it is critical that we acknowledge the heavy burden our health care workers continue to take on and express our gratitude for their efforts.

While we are unable to review your entire report as it was not shared with us, we know that our members provide a vital role within the dedicated

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health care team you describe above, whether they work in the community, acute care, long term care or public health. We also appreciate the varied roles they play: from hands-on care providers such as CCAs and LPNs to diagnostics provided by technologists to support provided by environmental services, activity personnel, security officers, laundry staff, food services workers and administration to maintenance services.

We encourage you to examine what has been most challenging in the last year for SEIU-West members employed in SHA. While our members have contributed positively to the outcomes that are described by SHA leaders as *'Unbelievable, Extraordinary, Relentless, and Humbling'* they have been witness to decision-making that, at best, can be described as questionable, and at worst, demoralizing, disrespectful and inequitable.

In particular, the divisiveness in the vaccine sequencing plan of SHA – we are certain that you cannot imagine how those members feel, those who are left to wait for the offer of a vaccine as a result of the politics of health care and yet they are still put in considerable peril because of their role in health care. Ironically, many of these same members were left out of the Saskatchewan Temporary Wage Supplement Program as well. Although we are keenly aware that the federal funds of \$56 million have not yet been apportioned to essential workers in the health care sector, we ask you to inquire about leveling the playing field for all health care providers to ensure that rewards for their service during the pandemic are allotted equally whether the provider works in long term care, acute care or community. To date, all employees within acute care have been excluded.

We trust you are aware of the research (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-prioritization-initial-doses-covid-19-vaccines.html> - see recommendations). It is clear that vaccine sequencing should prioritize all essential workers in the health care sector not the mere 60% that are prioritized in the Saskatchewan vaccine sequencing plan. We trust that you share our view that all health care providers are vital. However, the current Saskatchewan vaccine plan involves a fragmentation that is not evidence-based nor does it reconcile with general operations within our health care system.

These decisions do not demonstrate any true recognition of value that our members bring to the team. Rather, it resonates that some are important and valued while others are disposable. We implore you to engage with the Ministry of Health in an effort to resolve the obvious disregard for select members of the team. While your words of praise are appreciated – your action is needed. We have received many inquiries from health care providers who are seeking assistance to appeal their lack of priority in the vaccine roll-out plan. It should not be left with them – as the employer, you should be doing all that you can to keep everyone who is working in the health care system safe.

Our members need you to make a difference. We ask that you advocate on behalf of all health care providers to end their frustration and anxiety. Give your staff the peace of mind to be able to trust their employer has their backs and not only recognizes their value, but will fight for them too.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Cape". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "B".

Barbara Cape
President of SEIU-West

cc. SEIU-West Executive Board