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Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

NEWS RELEASE

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Strike mandate given to Regina Mobile Crisis Services Negotiating Committee

SGEU members of Regina Mobile Crisis Services have given their Negotiating Committee a strike mandate. The vote took place Feb. 1.

The collective agreement covering 38 workers expired March 31, 2015. Negotiations stalled over the issue of working alone in high risk situations, putting client and worker safety at risk.

"Our members have real concerns about their safety and health . . . and the safety of their clients . . . as a result of poor management decisions around staff scheduling," said SGEU President Bob Bymo.

Crisis Workers at Regina Mobile Crisis Services provide emergency care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for individuals and families in need of crisis intervention services. They respond to domestic violence calls, engage in suicide intervention, ensure children's safety in the midst of a violent family crisis, and much more.

Since the spring of 2013, Regina Mobile Crisis Services has scheduled only one daytime worker per shift on weekdays, resulting in only one crisis worker available during a 7.5 hour period. As a result of working alone, crisis workers are experiencing mental exhaustion, ethical dilemmas, safety concerns, dropped calls and delays in providing services . . . putting client safety at risk.

"Frontline crisis workers deal with high risk situations and need to have backup staff," said Bymo. "Two workers should be scheduled at all times to allow our members to assist one another in emergency situations and protect people who are vulnerable."

Despite a 22% increase in calls since 2012/13, there has also been a recent cut to weekend and statutory holiday coverage, further compromising crisis workers' ability to provide services when they are needed.

Management has not been willing to address their workers' concerns, said Bymoer. We hope they are willing to now and will come to the table ready to bargain a collective agreement.

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