

## **Government Must Respect Patients and Front Line Workers While Transitioning to One Provincial Health Authority**

(Regina) Saskatchewan’s three health care provider unions, CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU, have been working collaboratively to present a proposal to government that would mitigate the impacts on patient, client and resident care while government transitions to one provincial health authority. This proposal calls for a formal bargaining council structure to help stabilize labour relations and negotiate with the new authority.

“We believe that going this route will minimize disruptions in service and ease anxiety that is being felt by health care providers across the province,” said Barbara Cape, President of SEIU-West. “We already do negotiate at a common bargaining table for many elements of our contracts.”

This proposal is not unique, as other health care employers and governments in Canada are in place such as multi-union bargaining councils in British Columbia (since 1998) and in Nova Scotia (since 2015) where health care unions and government agreed to a similar structure.

Under the current structure, people accessing health care services have witnessed the results of short staffing in acute, long-term and home care situations. Health care providers have been calling on the government to reinstate safe staffing levels for a decade. No one is confident that moving to one provincial health authority will ease health care providers’ workload or stress.

“We want to work together to ensure that front line workers, the services they provide, and the people they care for are not negatively affected during the transition to one massive health region,” said Bob Bymoan, President of SGEU. “We hope that our government shares this view and will work with our proposal to ensure this is a seamless transition for everyone.”

Since the provincial government released its budget on March 22, many questions regarding health care funding remain. How will the actual changes to health care funding, and the additional funds from the federal government, improve the delivery of valuable public health services in Saskatchewan?

“We want the government to respect our members and their current collective agreements and rights,” said Gordon Campbell, President of CUPE Health Care Council. “Recognizing the existing union jurisdictions will lend to balance within labour relations, which supports continuity of care provision within the new health region structure.”

-30-

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