



March 26, 2008

Ms. Rosalee Longmoore
President
Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN)
2330 - 2nd Avenue
Regina, SK S4R 1A6

Dear Ms Longmoore:

We write to advise you of the views of the Health Labour Relations Council (HLRC) regarding the status of negotiations between Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) and Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). As you know, the HLRC is composed of senior regional health authority and health ministry officials, and is mandated by government to oversee bargaining activity in the health sector and to provide strategic guidance to the collective bargaining process. SAHO is the representative employer organization for the regional health authorities and other health sector employers.

SUN's characterization, in the public media, of SAHO's current position as ".... refusing to commit to retention and recruitment initiatives...." is a serious misrepresentation of SAHO's position. SUN frequently characterizes the RHAs as indifferent to nursing recruitment and retention. Nothing could be further from the truth – RHA's primary purpose is to provide health care services to the public; retention and recruitment of professional staff to provide that service is the RHA's highest priority.

We think the facts speak for themselves. RHAs spend millions of dollars each year recruiting to nursing vacancies. The attachment to this letter indicates the scale and scope of these activities and those of Saskatchewan Health on behalf of all regions. The Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association reports that our nursing numbers have increased by 2% to a ten year high. The Canadian Institute of Health Information reports that Saskatchewan has the second highest number of nurses per capita in Canada.

By the time the next Saskatchewan nursing class graduates and is working in Saskatchewan, the RHAs will have recruited 900 nurses over the previous 18 months.

There are two issues on which the parties cannot agree at this point:

1. SUN's position that undertakings made by government in the SUN-Government Partnership Agreement must be duplicated in the collective bargaining agreement; and
2. SUN's pre-condition to begin bargaining a new CBA that SAHO agree to negotiate to a conclusion the recruitment and retention items that are contained in the SUN proposal package.

First, the Partnership Agreement states government's recognition of, and commitment to, nursing recruitment and retention as a priority item. The parties engaged Dr. Marlene Smadu to take the Agreement to the next steps.

This agreement is a stand-alone document and does not need to be duplicated in the CBA. The Minister of Health has said that he views the two agreements as separate documents. Where there are goals and targets flowing from the Partnership Agreement that require regional health authority action, the Minister will hold the RHAs accountable through the existing Ministry/RHA accountability document.

The Ministry of Health website describes the accountability document as follows:

“The Accountability Document sets out the department's expectations of regions for the funding that is provided. It contains both high-level organization (governance and directional) expectations and program-specific expectations for the regions. The Accountability Document is also intended to clarify Saskatchewan Health's organization, program and service expectations for regional health authorities. These expectations are complementary to those articulated in legislation, regulation, policy, and directives subject to amendments and additions/deletions made by the Ministers and/or Saskatchewan Health.

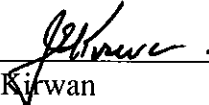
Additionally, information in the Accountability Document is intended to clarify the ways that Saskatchewan Health will evaluate compliance with these expectations. Wherever possible, indicators or measures by which achievements of expectations will be assessed are shown side-by-side with expectations.”

Second, SUN has set as a pre-condition to the commencement of bargaining that recruitment and retention items in the SUN bargaining proposal package be negotiated to conclusion before the financial implications of other proposals are considered.

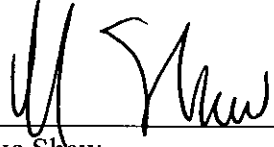
SUN should know that in order to properly represent the interests of its principals, SAHO must have a complete review of the financial costs of the SUN proposal package before making decisions. To force conclusion on one item in isolation of the whole package would be similar to asking a prospective home buyer to commit to buying a portion of a house which the buyer has not seen nor whose full price is known.

SAHO has said "YES" to bargaining. We are asking SUN to table its proposal package and ask the parties to get down to constructive bargaining.

Yours truly,



Joe Kirwan
Co-Chair, HLRC
CEO, Sunrise RHA



Mike Shaw
Co-Chair, HLRC
ADM, Saskatchewan Health

Attachments

CC: Susan Antosh, CEO - SAHO
CEO's Regional Health Authorities