

SAHO Update on Talks with the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan

April 30, 2009

Progress on Collective Bargaining

SAHO and HSAS exchanged proposal packages on April 3. Meetings to begin face-to-face negotiations between SAHO and HSAS were scheduled for April 22 to 24. SAHO was prepared to explain the employer proposals and expected that HSAS would take the opportunity to provide an overview of its proposals.

As with any proposal package, SAHO included the covering statement, “*SAHO reserves the right to add, delete or amend any proposals during the period of negotiations.*” The statement is supplied to allow for the flexibility to modify, change or add proposals as negotiations progress. This has been considered a normal part of the collective bargaining process. HSAS included a similar statement in its proposal package in 2007, but did not include it this year.

During the first day of talks, HSAS raised objections to the covering statement. SAHO responded that its expectation is that the union has the same flexibility to modify, change or add proposals. When SAHO refused to relinquish this right, HSAS left the room and canceled the remaining meetings for the week.

SAHO has been and continues to be committed to negotiating in good faith. SAHO plans to return to scheduled meetings on May 20 – 22 and June 15 – 17 with the objective of concluding a collective agreement.

How do Essential Services Agreements fit into the process?

The Public Services Essential Services Act requires that in order to prevent danger to life, health or safety during collective bargaining, employers and unions negotiate essential services agreements to be implemented in the event of a labour disruption.

The legislation requires that the employer notify the union of the intent to negotiate an essential services agreement 90 days prior to the expiration of the contract. There is no requirement to conclude an essential services agreement prior to the expiration of the contract, and the determination of what essential services are necessary is not required unless and until the union threatens job action.

Employers notified HSAS of their intent to negotiate essential services agreements in December 2008. Late in February, employers provided HSAS with detailed draft proposals of services, classifications, numbers and names of employees that employers determined essential to preventing danger to life, health or safety of residents, patients and clients. Employers invited HSAS to discuss the draft proposals, with the expectation that the union would fulfill its legal obligation to commence the negotiation of an agreement. The contract with HSAS expired March 31, 2009.

HSAS has responded that the number of employees proposed by the employers as essential in the event of job action is too low. The employers are waiting for HSAS to meet to discuss what the union would propose, and are committed to ensuring that essential services are provided to their clients, patients, and residents.