



Saskatchewan Association
of Health Organizations

News Release

For immediate release, Monday, May 12, 2008

SAHO offers SUN enhanced bargaining proposal

The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses are meeting this week to resume negotiations for a new collective agreement. Today SAHO presented the Union with a revised proposal package, including an enhanced wage proposal in order to encourage the union to settle the collective agreement at the bargaining table without exercising a work disruption.

SAHO has offered a 5% general wage increase in each of the next four years, and a market related wage adjustment of an additional 5% in the first year, in exchange for a four year agreement. This also closes the gap in comparison to wages of Alberta nurses. In addition, it offered premium rates equivalent to Alberta less the Consumer Price Index, which more than doubles the current rate in some cases. As well, SAHO has offered a long service retention adjustment of 2% for nurses with 20 or more years experience and overtime pay at double the regular rate.

SAHO has removed many of its management proposals and wants to discuss and consider options on a number of others. "We have offered a four year agreement which will provide greater stability within the nursing workforce. It includes a competitive economic adjustment and a market related adjustment, which speaks to our commitment to recruitment and retention for a longer term strategy," said Susan Antosh, President and CEO of SAHO.

The management proposals that SAHO would like to discuss with the Union include those dealing with job turnover, language on influenza vaccination, rationalizing the transportation allowance, and administrative language that does not negatively affect individual nurses.

Susan Antosh, President and CEO of SAHO, explained "The best way to conclude a new collective agreement is to work together at the bargaining table. In order to encourage SUN to return to negotiations, we have revised our proposal package to remove many of what we understand are contentious employer proposals." Several weeks ago SAHO offered a signed agreement to align with the Government/SUN Partnership Agreement, and last month SAHO removed its proposal to eliminate the independent assessment and nursing advisory committees. The collective agreement contains the strongest language around professional standards in the country.

Meetings are scheduled for the remainder of this week.

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SAHO represents more than 40 health care employers in the province.

SAHO is a non-profit, non-government association that provides leadership, advocacy, support and programs for member health agencies throughout the province.

For more information, contact:

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Note: 2 page background attached

BACKGROUND TO ENHANCED PROPOSALS FROM SAHO

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- SAHO has offered a competitive economic adjustment of 5% per year and a one time market related adjustment of 5% in the first year to close the gap with nurses' wages in Alberta, in exchange for a 4 year collective agreement. This translates into an additional \$6400/year in year 1 for a full time general duty nurse at the top of the range. At the end of the 4 year agreement, a full time general duty nurse will make \$17,600 more per year than today. (\$81,791/year compared to current salary of \$64,232/year)
- SAHO has offered premium rates equivalent to Alberta less CPI – this includes rates for in charge pay, regular standby, special standby, weekend and shift work.
- SAHO has addressed SUN's publicly stated recruitment and retention issues with:
 - Paid education leave for mentors and those being mentored
 - Paid education leave for preceptors
 - Overtime pay at 2 times the regular rate
 - Long service retention adjustment of 2% for nurses with 20 years or more experience
 - Increased moving and transportation expenses for new employees in the north
 - Increased northern allowances
 - Increased northern retention payment
- SAHO offered a partnership agreement in alignment with the Partnership Agreement between the Government and SUN. This could include discussion of minimum staffing, retention of late career nurses, programming related to nurse practitioners and health promotion, and an alternate professional standards reporting process.

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BACKGROUND TO ENHANCED PROPOSALS FROM SAHO

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

- SAHO has removed many of its management proposals that were perceived to be contentious by the Union, including withdrawal of changes to overtime in emergent circumstances. SAHO earlier removed proposals related to elimination of the Independent Assessment Committee (IAC) and the Nursing Advisory Committee (NAC). This leaves Saskatchewan with the strongest language in the country in the collective agreement dealing with professional standards.

- SAHO would like to discuss:
 - Job turnover – a number of provisions are affected but the proposals have been modified from their original form
 - Influenza vaccine language
 - Rationalize transportation allowance
 - Administrative language such as adding Family Day to list of statutory holidays, change vacation year to match fiscal year, and changes to amount reimbursed to employer for union leave.