

Overview of Employer bargaining proposal package

The key goal of health care employers is to provide quality patient focused care that meets the needs of the residents of Saskatchewan. In order to achieve this, SAHO's bargaining proposals have been framed within the Employers' four major strategic goals.

1. Patient focused care;
2. Retention and recruitment;
3. Effective and efficient operations - so that funds/work can be reallocated towards more patient focused care; and
4. Quality workplaces.

The union's stated key objective is to address recruitment and retention. The union appears to be trying to achieve this through a variety of means including a partnership with government and significant specific proposals through collective bargaining.

Health care employers are concerned with recruitment and retention as a key component of ensuring the broader goal of ensuring patient care. Health care employers have, over the past 18 months, demonstrated their commitment to this objective in many ways and the outcome has been extremely positive.

In addition, SAHO has agreed, at the union's request, to discuss recruitment and retention issues as the first topic of collective bargaining. In accordance with this agreement, SAHO presented its full proposal package to SUN on April 3, 2008. As part of the proposal exchange, SAHO also

provided a list of proposed article changes to the contract that have an impact on recruitment and retention.

Strategic Goal of Recruitment and Retention:

In a departure from traditional bargaining, SAHO offered a wage increase of 5% on April 1, 2008 with a further 5% on April 1, 2009 to reflect its commitment to providing relative market competitive wages for nurses, which is a key recruitment and retention strategy. The traditional approach to collective bargaining has been to exchange proposal packages, separate the proposals into non-monetary and monetary items and begin discussions with the non-monetary proposals. Historically management has not made monetary proposals in the initial proposal package. Once monetary bargaining begins the parties have tended to discuss the monetary proposals of the union, with management making amendments to union proposals and introducing counterproposals. SAHO has indicated to the union that there are additional resources available to directly address additional recruitment and retention initiatives, however, the proposed 5% and 5% wage increase represents a substantial amount of the resources available for bargaining. This approach demonstrates a significant commitment by employers to retain and recruit nurses and may assist in expediting the bargaining process.

SAHO is prepared to discuss a number of options to address and enhance recruitment and retention and address the most severe impacts of any nursing shortages. Some of these possibilities are:

- 1) Negotiating retention pay for existing nurses
- 2) Addressing the frequency of turnover/churn in the system

- 3) Maximizing of hours
- 4) Changes to the call in process – (seniority disadvantages new nurses to the system)

SAHO identified a number of collective agreement articles where it has made proposals that impact retention and recruitment.

Strategic Goal of Patient Focused Care:

SAHO and the Employers are seeking a number of language changes to ensure nursing resources are available to provide quality patient focused care. Many of these items also have an impact on other employer strategic goals.

A number of the language changes are designed to reduce employee churn within the system.

These include:

- changes to the Probationary Period whereby probationary employees are eligible to apply for other positions only if it results in an increase in hours, a change in status, or a change in classification
- a new article allowing Employers to offer additional hours of work to regular part time (RPT) employees wanting to increase their hours in the unit, prior to posting the vacated positions.
- language committing employees to complete temporary positions and upon completion, return to their permanent position for a minimum time period before applying for another temporary position in the same classification or status, unless otherwise mutually agreed
- language requiring employees to remain in a position for a minimum of 24 months prior to being eligible to apply for another position in the same classification, unless the

application involves an increase in the employee's letter of appointment hours, or a change in status, or unless otherwise mutually agreed.

Other patient focused care proposals include:

- Selection criteria (Article 27) – for Nurse B or Nurse C positions, SAHO has proposed that the selection criteria be based on relative ability rather than sufficient ability. As these are not general duty nurse positions and may require specific skills and/or training, it is desirable to select the most qualified candidate available.
- Call in of casual nurses (Article 37) – call in of casual nurses based on criteria other than seniority only.
- Leaves (Article 17) – Employers are seeking to have most leaves of absence subject to operational considerations.
- Elimination of the Independent Assessment Committee (Article 58) – Health care is provided through a team approach. The Independent Assessment Committee cannot effectively address the team concept as it deals only with a single profession in isolation from the other needs of the institution and services delivered.

Strategic Goal of Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency:

A number of proposed language changes would improve effectiveness and efficiency, and permit redirection of resources into direct patient care or initiatives that would encourage or permit more direct patient care.

- Shift Options (Article 7.20) – there are currently a number of restrictions on what shift options can be created; SAHO has proposed language giving Employers greater flexibility to post shift options to meet patient care needs
- Re-employment list (Article 28) - Employees who secure permanent employment will be removed from Re-employment list

- Casual list (Article 37) - Casual nurses will be removed from casual list if they do not work for 60 days
- Professional fees (Article 40) – Professional fees paid by the employer will be capped at the current rate and pro rated for other than full time (OTFT) nurses who work less than 500 hours/year.
- Weekends (Article 7.02 and 7.04) – SAHO’s proposal is to change the definition of “weekend” to Saturday and Sunday only; and to indicate that premium pay for consecutive weekend shifts resets the consecutive weekend trigger dates.
- Probationary Period (Article 22) – an increase to the probationary period to allow managers more time to ensure competency; and language that would *limit the ability* to move to new positions while on probation.
- Duty to Accommodate (Article 19) – clarify that it is the responsibility of the employee to provide evidence of restrictions.
- Overtime in Emergency Circumstances (Article 8) – Currently the employer may require overtime in the emergency circumstances. Due to the potential patient impacts and workload for nurses, SAHO has proposed the inclusion of an unanticipated lack of staff as an emergency.
- Transportation (Article 13) – Currently full-time SUN nurses whose job requires a vehicle, are paid \$185/month for car allowance, irrespective of actual use in that month. SAHO has proposed that the car allowance should be based on a daily rate when the employee utilizes her vehicle.
- Field hour changes (Article 7.26) – language to ensure the assignment of hours is based on client needs and employer operations; core hours may be changed by mutual agreement

- Time frame for posting vacancies (Article 27) –language permitting simultaneous posting of vacancies regionally and provincially; first preference for selection of employees would remain within the Regional Health Authority.
- Notification of successful applicant (Article 27) – change process of notification of successful applicant such that the name of the successful applicant is posted on union boards, and letters are not sent to all applicants.

Strategic Goal of Quality Workplaces:

A number of discussion items supporting the other strategic goals would also have an impact in enhancing quality workplaces. These include:

- addressing the frequency of job churn
- changes to call-in for casual nurses
- changes to the duty to accommodate language (clear evidence of restrictions will allow employers to better accommodate employees)
- changes to the overtime in emergency circumstances language

The SAHO bargaining team wishes to work together with the union to negotiate a collective agreement which most effectively uses the available funds to meet the goals of employees and employers.