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SAHO proposes a conciliator for negotiations to continue

The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) today proposed the services of a conciliator to continue negotiations with the health care provider unions (CUPE, SEIU-West, and SGEU). The unions today paid for advertising to misrepresent comments made by the employers' negotiating committee. Based on the unions' actions, SAHO believes there is little purpose to putting the committee at further risk of misrepresentation. SAHO has concluded that the unions' efforts to mislead the public are hindering efforts to move towards concluding a collective agreement. In proposing a conciliator, SAHO hopes that meaningful and professional negotiations can be facilitated.

"The behaviour of the provider group unions indicates to us that the unions appear to be unwilling to engage in productive negotiations. They have continued to demand more from the employers and have removed very few of their proposals. In fact, they indicated last week that they have more monetary proposals to add," explained Susan Antosh, President and CEO of SAHO. "They are misleading the public by providing inaccurate or incomplete information and we feel that meaningful negotiations are at an impasse."

Accordingly, SAHO has requested the assistance of a conciliator to move the process along. SAHO has made significant movement throughout bargaining and has proposed two enhanced packages since the initial wage offer was presented in September. The unions took several weeks to provide their wage demands and still have a number of language proposals that would more than double the cost of what they are asking for in their wage demand.

SAHO believes its most recent 4 year proposal provides incentives for recruitment and retention issues which have been identified by the employers and allows for a general wage increase that puts our health care workers in a competitive position with appropriate health care markets in western Canada. "What the unions are demanding for wage increases, and additional financial costs to the system, is unrealistic in the competitive environment," said Antosh.

SAHO is committed to concluding a collective agreement in a timely manner and is committed to negotiating competitive wages for all health care workers. "The general wage increase and market related adjustments we have tabled will ensure the health care provider

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group has competitive wages within the appropriate comparator markets," stated Antosh. SAHO and the employers have consistently maintained that all health care workers are valued and demonstrated that by:

- proposing competitive wages and proposing market adjustments where necessary;
- proposing to change the JJE process to streamline the process for those classifications who have been waiting for decisions
- proposing language changes that would allow increased patient focus while maintaining competitive wages and a quality workplace.

The latest offer tabled by SAHO includes a general wage increase of 2.75% - 2% - 2.25% - 2.4% and market adjusted rates for specific classifications identified by employers as hard to recruit. This includes Combined Lab and X-Ray Technicians which could realize an approximate increase of 22% over the four years.

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

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