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SAHO makes additional move to conclude agreement with health care provider unions

The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) invited the health care provider unions, CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU to meet to discuss the language proposed in the final offer tabled in January. To facilitate the conclusion of a collective agreement, SAHO has provided amendments to the final offer which clarify the intent of the language proposals in the final offer, and application of the proposals in the work place. In some cases the language has been changed or withdrawn to respond to concerns raised.

“We have been receiving feedback from a number of health care employees. It became apparent that either the intent of the proposals in the final offer was not clear, or there was misinformation circulating, and we determined that clarification was needed,” stated Susan Antosh, President and CEO of SAHO. “We have provided an addendum to that end, and are asking the unions to give it serious consideration, and allow the employees to vote on the final offer.”

The addendum to the final offer includes:

- Clarification for how positions within multi-site work places would be addressed
- Additional language for flexibility in bumping rights
- Withdrawal of proposed language related to home care hours of work
- Withdrawal of other proposals specific to CUPE and SEIU-West contracts

“While SAHO and the employers believe that the proposed changes to home care hours of work would have benefited both the employees and the clients using the home care program, we have withdrawn those changes and are proposing that the language remains the same as in the last collective agreement”, explained Antosh.

SAHO has indicated to the unions that the employers would also consider a proposal by the unions to reallocate a portion of the general wage increase to shift differential, weekend premium and/or professional fees if the unions believe it will better meet the wishes of the employees. SAHO’s final offer proposed higher general wage increases rather than allocating funds to items such as shift differential and weekend premium. The SAHO proposal compensates all staff and increases pension benefits payable upon retirement, while maintaining current shift differential and weekend premium rates that are competitive in the western Canadian health care market.

The addendum represents an additional move by SAHO to conclude a collective agreement. The provider group employees are currently working at 2007-2008 wage rates as retroactive pay ceased to accrue effective April 1, 2010. For full time employees, this is an average of \$250 for every month without a contract after April, 2010. Upon signing the collective agreement, the final offer

.....page 2

May 3, 2010

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proposes employees would be eligible for retro pay for hours worked between April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2010, and a general wage increase of about 7.5% would be applied toward the four year agreement of 9.5% (4%-2%-1.5%-2%).

SAHO maintains that the final offer and addendum provide competitive wages for similar work in the western Canadian health care sector. Recently British Columbia settled a 2 year agreement with the same workers for a 0% general wage increase. The final offer assists in recruitment and retention of the health care provider group and assists in the ability to operate more effectively and efficiently. This results in a better quality workplace for employees and a better quality health system for patients, clients and residents.

Details of the final offer, the addendum, and supporting documents are available on the web site at www.working-together.info.

-30-

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

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