



Health Sciences Members give Negotiators 88% Strike Mandate

Regina (February 22, 2011) – Members of Saskatchewan Health Sciences have strongly rejected a contract offer from SAHO and the provincial government, giving their Negotiating Committee an **88%** strike mandate, Health Sciences President Cathy Dickson announced.

“Our members have spoken with a clear and forceful voice – they find the SAHO contract offer totally unacceptable. When negotiations resume tomorrow, SAHO will need to move off this proposal, and be prepared to bargain in good faith going forward,” Dickson said.

“Our province is growing. Both new arrivals and life-long residents have a right to expect quality health care services to grow as well. That can only happen if we recruit and retain specialized health care professionals like the members of Saskatchewan Health Sciences. However, recruitment and retention has become increasingly difficult with the average wage rate of our members being **25% less** than their counterparts in neighbouring Alberta,” Dickson noted.

“Our members are also upset with the **double standard** being displayed in these negotiations by SAHO and the government. Days before presenting us with a totally unacceptable contract offer, SAHO and the government gave health care managers wage increases of up to 37% and numerous new benefits, including maternity leave benefits of up to 90% of salary for up to 17 weeks,” Dickson noted.

“Then they turned around and offered our members – the professionals who actually serve patients – a wage increase below the cost of living, no improvements to workplace benefits, a series of contract take-aways, and even a threat to eliminate retroactive pay unless our members accepted the offer before March 31st. Our members have called this an “insult” and a “slap in the face”. It has backfired badly for SAHO and the government,” Dickson said.

“Accepting such an insulting contract offer would only make it more difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals, and would give employers the freedom to continue to under-staff our positions, balancing their budgets at the expense of quality patient services,” Dickson said.

“SAHO and the government now have to prove to our members and the public that they actually care about the quality of health care services being provided to Saskatchewan patients, and that they are committed to maintain an adequate level of specialized health care professionals to serve these patients,” Dickson concluded.

Health Sciences is the union which represents more than three-thousand specialized health care professionals from more than thirty health care professions. Members include: Emergency care workers like Paramedics; Acute care workers like Hospital Pharmacists, Perfusionists, and Respiratory Therapists; Rehab professionals like Physical Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists; and Community-based professionals like Public Health Inspectors, Psychologists and Social Workers.

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