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Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations

NEWS Release

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SAHO tables final offer to health care provider unions

The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) has tabled its final offer to the provider group of unions (CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU), and requested that the unions take the offer to their membership for a vote.

SAHO and the unions have been working with a conciliator to facilitate a collective agreement. SAHO was optimistic earlier this month entering conciliation that the unions were ready to make meaningful changes to their demands in an effort to conclude a collective agreement. Last week it became apparent that the gap between the expectations of the unions and the market competitive objectives of SAHO was too wide. Accordingly, SAHO determined that continuing conciliation would not be productive.

"We have concluded that the parties are too far apart with no prospect of settlement. It is in the best interests of everyone to conclude an agreement without further delay, particularly for the employees who have been without a contract for almost two years. We have therefore presented a final offer package and asked the unions to take it to their membership for consideration," explained Susan Antosh, President and CEO of SAHO.

The final offer tabled by SAHO is a four year contract including general wage increases of 4% - 2% - 1.5% and 2%, maintaining market competitive wages relative to western Canadian provinces; provisions for retroactive pay; and market adjusted rates for specific classifications, such as medical radiation technologists, and medical lab technologists to address market related recruitment and retention concerns. Further details of the final offer are included on SAHO's web site at www.working-together.info.

Antosh stated, "SAHO has been committed to achieving a collective agreement that will work for everyone – putting patients first, addressing recruitment and retention concerns and capitalizing on opportunities for more effective and efficient operations. We believe the final offer achieves those goals."

The regional health authorities are expected to ratify the final offer over the next few weeks during regularly scheduled board meetings.

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

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Understanding the Final Offer

Health care employers value all health care workers and the contribution they make to direct and indirect patient care. SAHO and the employers are committed to competitive wages as one way to assist in recruitment and retention of quality employees. Streamlining and reducing time spent on administrative tasks results in more time that can be focused on patient, client and resident care and ultimately this benefits the users of the health care services and creates a more effective health care system. SAHO has worked toward a collective agreement that works for everyone – putting patients first, addressing recruitment and retention concerns and capitalizing on opportunities for more effective and efficient operations. The final offer achieves these goals.

SAHO's Final Offer	*SAHO Objectives*
• General wage increases of 4% - 2% - 1.5% and 2%	• After researching similar classifications for health care workers in the other western Canadian provinces, SAHO proposed wage increases that are competitive within the appropriate comparable market.
• Retroactive pay	• Each employee will receive a one-time retroactive payment of about 10% of their wages for the period April 1, 2008 to the present. For full time employees this is approximately $2,500 – $10,000. Accumulation of retroactive pay ends on March 31, 2010. Retirees are eligible upon application.
• Market adjusted wage rates for eight classifications	• A market adjusted wage rate is offered to specific classifications where two criteria were met – positions that the employers identified as having difficulty recruiting; and wages, as perceived by the employers, were not comparable to appropriate comparator markets in western Canada.
• Expedite the Joint Job Evaluation (JJE) process to reclassify Licenced Practical Nurses (LPNs)	• Increased educational requirements for LPNs will mean a reclassification to pay band 15 (from pay band 14) resulting in higher pay. LPNs will receive that pay increase when the JJE process is completed after the collective agreements are ratified. If not expedited, it could be up to 2 years before LPNs receive the pay increase.
• Streamline the Joint Job Evaluation (JJE) processes	• More efficient and effective processes will result in quicker responses for reviews that are currently in the queue and for future requests for reviews that may impact moves to higher pay bands. All pay equity principles remain in place and the process remains a joint Union/Management process. In addition, overpayments made to employees when the JJE process was implemented will not be collected.
• Letter of Understanding for LPNs	• The letter of understanding commits employers to enable LPNs to perform the full scope of their duties based on the model of care being provided.
• Extended Health and Enhanced Dental Benefits Plan	• Employers have committed that the current level of benefits provided by the Extended Health and Enhanced Dental Benefits Plan will continue at no cost to the employee until March 31, 2012.
• Other language changes	• The employers have proposed language in the collective agreements that will require less administrative time, allowing for more time to be focused on direct or indirect patient care.