



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## BARGAINING IS OVER – SAHO PROVIDES A FINAL OFFER

<<Regina>>The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has received a final offer from SAHO and the health regions.

According to SUN, the key elements in the offer are:

- A four-year agreement that provides near parity with Alberta nurses in years one and two in wages and premiums less the cost of living. This includes a market adjustment of 5% and a general wage increase of 5% in the first year, and annual increases of 5% in each of the remaining three years.
- Addition of a sixth salary step for Nurse A and B classifications effective April 1, 2008.
- 2% Long Service premiums for nurses with 20 years of service in the bargaining unit.
- Provincial service recognition premiums in 2011 and 2012.
- A special premium for Nurse Practitioners.
- All overtime paid at double time.
- Up to eight hours annually of paid professional development, pro-rated for OTFT.
- An increase in weekend, shift differential and standby premiums that are closer to those in effect in Alberta.
- Special Northern Leave of Absence and increased Northern allowance.
- Improved Maternity/Paternity Adoption Leave and supplemental employment benefit.
- New language that gives RNs and RPNs at the point of care more input into decisions regarding safe patient care.

SUN claims that health regions' resistance to implementation of key retention and recruitment initiatives from the SUN/Government Partnership, and Government's unwillingness to require health regions to fully comply with the Partnership, means there are serious omissions from the offer, reducing the likelihood that the province's hiring targets can be met.

Longmoore says, *"Essentially, health regions have offered nurses a big wage and premium increase, but refused to budge on almost every important staffing and patient safety issue - even though we said over and over - this is not about money. Being competitive with*

*Alberta is very important obviously - but that is only one leg of the stool. The other two legs are improved staffing and improved patient safety - and both of those are basically missing, with only minor improvements. And that means we are unlikely to meet the hiring targets the Government set."*

Longmoore says this round of negotiations has revealed a systemic problem that she believes is largely responsible for creating the nursing shortage in the first place - employers who do not value or respect RNs and RPNs.

*"Government signaled very clearly that they valued and respected nurses when they signed the SUN/Government Partnership. We expected that SAHO and the health regions would follow Government's lead and welcome our offer to set aside the adversarial relationship and collaborate to implement the retention and recruitment initiatives in the SUN/Government Partnership. Instead, they tabled the most regressive proposals in SUN's history. It took a strike vote, and months of frustrating negotiations, just to get back to the current contract language. In the process, they've angered thousands of nurses and alarmed the public. Fix that attitude, and you'll fix the nursing shortage," says Longmoore.*

Longmoore says the union's Negotiating Committee decided to make no recommendation to members - regarding acceptance or rejection of the offer - because of its shortcomings. *"Through a ratification vote, our members will decide whether the final offer is sufficient. We believe we have reached the limits of what can be achieved without a withdrawal of services. We can't force employers to value and respect nurses as professionals, and we can't force government to require health regions to implement the SUN/Government Partnership.*

*"I am genuinely saddened by the fact that Government and the health regions have missed this critical window of opportunity to address the root causes of the nursing shortage in Saskatchewan."*

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