MEDIA RELEASE

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To speak to a representative, please call:
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SUN CALLS FOR CONCILIATOR TO BREAK NEGOTIATIONS DEADLOCK

<<REGINA>> The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) has requested that a conciliator be appointed in order to break a deadlock in negotiations between SUN and the Saskatchewan Association of Healthcare Organizations (SAHO).

According to SUN President Rosalee Longmoore, “the SUN negotiating committee made the decision to apply for conciliation services because after seven days of negotiations, Regional Health Authorities have refused to commit to any of the retention and recruitment initiatives contained in the SUN/Government partnership, refused to discuss the retention and recruitment proposals SUN submitted, and refused to table any proposals of their own.”

While SAHO argues that implementation of retention and recruitment is a management right, SUN maintains that most of the SUN/Government Partnership provisions must be in the collective agreement to ensure the targets and strict funding requirements are met by employers.

“The previous government provided a financial incentive to health regions to shrink the nursing workforce, allowing them to take the surplus nursing budgets and spend it on buildings, equipment, or executive salaries. That is outrageous. It is cheating the public out of services they need and have paid for, and balancing budgets on the backs of overworked nurses.” said Longmoore.

“Regional Health Authorities are attempting to avoid being responsible for meeting the retention and recruitment targets set by the Ministry, even though they are responsible for creating the worst nursing shortage in Canada. These health employers are still stuck in the “we better not set targets because we might not meet them” mindset and don’t want to be held accountable for their failure to maintain appropriate staffing to ensure patient safety,” said Longmoore.

Continued Longmoore, “Here we have the Minister of Health travelling to Alberta to encourage nurses to come to Saskatchewan, providing funding and strategic direction for Regional Health Authorities to negotiate retention and recruitment initiatives, yet Regional Health Authorities are refusing, in effect telling Saskatchewan nurses “if you don’t like it here, just leave.” If that’s not dysfunctional, I don’t know what is.”

The SUN/SAHO collective agreement expires on March 31/08. According to SUN, negotiations will resume as soon as the conciliation officer is appointed and brings both parties together.

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