

# **Bargaining Bulletin #1**

## **SEIU-West and Haven Kids' House**

**Date:** *November 25, 2022*

**Location:** *Saskatoon*

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Dear members:

Much has happened since we met with you in February to prepare for bargaining. This bulletin is to update you on where we are and how we got there, and to encourage you to attend a membership meeting we are holding on Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.

In brief, the Employer's actions have put negotiations at an impasse, and we have formally requested the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety to appoint a conciliator to help the parties reach a deal.

We first met with the Employer in March and exchanged proposals. Our proposal was based on the discussions we had with you in February. The two sides were far apart, even without talking about wages. The Employer tabled numerous proposals: some were minor and others would have drastically changed the workplace. All of them, the Employer said, are urgently needed. In our view, however, many of these proposals were not related to any real issue or problem, and those that did address an actual issue would not have solved it effectively. For example, to solve problems with call in, the Employer proposed to delete it. This would have allowed the Employer to make up new rules every day. We pointed out that the current language isn't even being used, so "just get rid of it" doesn't seem like a good first step.

The Union's proposal was smaller and focused on changing a few things in the collective agreement to make them match current practice; for example, the hours for the pager position and the weekend standby position.

Despite the differences between our positions, we insisted that both sides do some hard work, and eventually, agreement was reached on several non-monetary items.

The Union then decided it was time for monetary negotiations. We made what we felt was a reasonable and realistic proposal: an 8% increase effective April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 and a 3 year agreement. That allowed for a wage reopener next year and then we would be bargaining again in 2024. This provided some catch up for the years when you had no wage increases.

The Employer counter-proposed with a deal that was nearly 5 years long – no negotiating until 2026 – and annual wage increases of 3%, 1%, 1%, and 2% starting December 1<sup>st</sup> this year and then every year after that. There was a signing bonus but no retroactive pay increase. The last pay increase of 2% would come on the last day of the agreement, which

makes it impossible to negotiate for anything in the first year of the next agreement. So, a 5 year deal becomes a 6 year deal and you have to wait a long time for small increases.

You could say the total increase in all the years of the two proposals wasn't that different. Ours was 8% (with the possibility of negotiating something more next year) and theirs was 7%. However, their 7% would be a long time coming while our 8% was retroactive for a period and their proposal had no chance of negotiating in the future. That's a huge difference. Their package also still contained some of the "out of the blue" Employer proposals mentioned above and no response at all to a lot of our non-monetary proposals.

Bargaining continued until November 18<sup>th</sup> when the Employer issued an ultimatum: if we did not ratify their latest proposal "as-is" by November 30<sup>th</sup>, they would withdraw it, without any further negotiation. We do not believe that's fair to you. The Employer's offer is a long way from our most recent proposal, and we think you have the right to a better chance to be heard than just "take it or leave it". As stated above, we cannot continue to negotiate under those circumstances, and have exercised our right under the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* to request the help of a conciliator. We will not be bullied. We can't bargain if they won't.

Please join us for a Zoom meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. to get details of what has gone on at bargaining, ask any questions, and offer us your advice and feedback. Watch your email and bulletin board in the coming days for details about how to join the meeting.

Thank you for your patience throughout this process. Your bargaining committee is working as hard as we can to bring you an offer that is fair, reasonable, and timely.

Your SEIU-West bargaining committee

Morgan Grono, Unit Chair

Hilary Kennedy, Unit Communicator

Elizabeth Tawpisin, SEIU-West Union Representative

Cam McConnell, SEIU-West Negotiations Officer