

Will Federal Funds be Invested in Front Line Healthcare?

Saskatchewan— Yesterday, the Federal and Provincial governments announced an agreement in principle on health care funding. Saskatchewan will get almost \$6 billion in federal funding over the next 10 years, including an “unconditional, one-time” Canada Health Transfer (CHT) top-up of \$61 million to deal with “immediate” needs, such as pressures in children’s hospitals, emergency rooms, and long surgical wait times.

SEIU-West members welcome this initial investment but point out that the public deserves assurances that the money will be spent on healthcare to ensure that everyone in Saskatchewan has access to a publicly-administered system of integrated care provided by teams of properly-supported workers.

“Our members have been lobbying the government for staff retention initiatives to meet the needs of patients, clients, and residents for years,” says SEIU-West President Barbara Cape. “What they’re looking for is better wages to keep current staff which also attracts new people into the sector in order to level the workload.”

The federal government has also promised \$1.7 billion over the next 5 years to boost wages of “personal support workers and related professions”. “We are still waiting for details on this,” Cape continues. “What professions will be targeted? What will be Saskatchewan’s share? What benchmarks will the province have to meet to receive this money? Because there should be benchmarks, and our members must be involved in setting them. Our members work across the spectrum of care, across the province. They are the real front line experts, so these decisions need their expertise.”

“What we are concerned about is the lack of reporting that the province will need to provide the federal government on how this money is spent,” quips Cape.

Service Employees International Union West (SEIU-West) represents over 13,000 people across Saskatchewan. They include people who work in health care, education, municipalities, community-based organizations, retirement homes, and other sectors. They are joined by one colour—purple—and one union, SEIU-West. Visit PurpleWorks.ca to find out more about SEIU-West members.

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