

***Care Workers Locked Out!
Residents Forced to Move Out!***

Outlook – Residents at Variety Place in Outlook, Saskatchewan were forced to relocate and programs have been shut down for participants as Direct Care Workers (DCWs) were locked out by their employer on May 21, 2017 at 3:45 pm.

“We, of course, are shocked that our employer would take this action,” said Carmela Verwimp, Unit Chair for Variety Place. “We have been trying to negotiate a fair collective agreement with our employer for four years now.”

Following the rules laid out in *The Saskatchewan Employment Act (SEA)*, SEIU-West served strike notice to the employer on May 18, 2017 at 1:00 pm.

“Let’s be clear, serving strike notice does not mean that the workers’ first action would be to walk off the job,” said Barbara Cape, SEIU-West. “Our members prefer to resolve our issues at the bargaining table although the membership expressed a willingness to support their bargaining team, as needed. Job action is a last resort.”

The DCWs at Variety Place have a collective bargaining agreement which expired on August 31, 2013 and negotiations have been extremely challenging.

“The issues in this negotiation process have been about employer priorities when it comes to budgeting,” continued Verwimp. “There was additional funding provided by the government in 2013 to address front line staffing wages to the tune of about 9.4% but our members have only seen one 1% raise for 2013, which didn’t happen until 2015.”

Variety Place is funded for more staff than they have working on a daily basis and there have been issues with retaining casual workers because of the lack of fair wages and the lack of respect that workers experience.

“We know that this is impacting the residents and participants who enjoy the services provided by our members and we are not happy about the disruption this brings to their lives,” added Cape. “Our members would prefer to be at work improving the quality of life for participants rather than being locked out.”

SEIU-West represents more than 13,000 working people in the province of Saskatchewan. They include members 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. Purple works in our communities! Visit www.PurpleWorks.ca to find out more about the members of SEIU-West.

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For more information, contact:

Christine Miller, Communications Coordinator
Phone: 306-652-1011 ext. 8733

