

**In the Matter of and Adjudication Concerning Market Supplement Wage Rates
for the following classifications:**

- **Physical Therapist**
- **Paramedic**

Between:

Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan

-and-

Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations

Before: Beth Bilson, Q.C., Adjudicator

**Present: For HSAS: Kevin Glass
JoAnn Walker Johnston
Kateri Singer**

**For SAHO: Kevin Zimmerman
Ian Billett**

Hearing Date: November 2, 2005

Decision of Adjudicator

This is a decision concerning market supplement wage rates for employees in the Physical Therapist and Paramedic classifications represented by the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan (HSAS). The employers of these employees are represented for the purposes of collective bargaining by the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO).

In a collective agreement concluded in 2001, the parties agreed to a process for the award of market supplements to classifications covered by the agreement, and for periodic review of the market supplemented wage rates. A subsequent collective agreement has now been concluded, and will come into effect shortly. The parties are in agreement that the Letters of Understanding of 2001 reflecting the agreement on the market supplement process continue to govern this issue, and provide my authority to conduct this adjudication.

Pursuant to the Letters of Understanding, the existing market supplemented wage rates for these and several other classifications were submitted to the Market Supplement Review Committee (MSRC), which issued reports on October 15, 2004. In all cases, the reports recommended the continuation of existing market supplements, but did not recommend any additional market supplement.

The Letters of Understanding provide that either party can challenge the recommendations of the MSRC before an adjudicator. HSAS brought such a challenge to the MSRC recommendations with respect to seven classifications. In a decision dated March 17, 2005, I upheld the recommendations of the MSRC related to five of the classifications, but found that an additional market supplement is warranted for the Physical Therapist and Paramedic classifications.

Since that decision, the parties have attempted to reach agreement on the appropriate amount of such a market supplement in these classifications, but have failed to do so. Their submissions to me indicate that they made considerable progress in this regard, but they were unable to arrive at agreement on a final figure. They have therefore asked me to decide on the amount, using the final offer selection process outlined in the Letters of Understanding.

In their submissions, the parties essentially relied on the information provided to me in February and on the contents of the MSRC reports. In addition, they described the expected impact of the collective agreement which has recently been concluded, and provided some additional information about vacancy rates and turnover in the two classifications. On the basis of this information, I have reached the following conclusions.

Physical Therapist

In the decision of March, 2005, I pointed out that it was somewhat difficult to tell from the information contained in the MSRC reports whether the existing market supplement rate was having a significant effect in attracting and retaining Physical Therapists. For example, the vacancy rate for full-time positions had declined noticeably over a two-year period, but the vacancy rate in part-time positions had risen slightly. On balance, I concluded that the picture was one of sufficient volatility in this classification that an additional market supplement was warranted.

There was relatively little new information provided by the parties about developments with this classification since the last hearing before me. The picture appears to be more or less the same as that described in the MSRC reports, with some issues of service delivery being reported.

Changes under the new collective agreement will give employees in these classifications normal economic increases in addition to their market supplements, and counsel for SAHO indicated that the SAHO proposal for an additional market supplement is based on the premise that there should be an opportunity to assess the impact of these increases on recruitment and retention issues before any dramatic change is made to the market supplement rate. He pointed out as well that the process provides for regular review of the effect of market supplemented wage rates, and that this provide an opportunity to test whether existing market supplements are adequate.

As I stated in my original decision, the situation for this classification is somewhat unclear, and the argument that the new wage rates may have some ameliorative effect on recruitment and retention seems to me to have merit. I am therefore accepting the proposal put forward by SAHO as the amount for additional market supplement in the Physical Therapist classification.

Paramedic

I pointed out in my decision of March, 2005, that the situation for the Paramedic classification seemed to be the most volatile of all the classifications being considered. The information provided by the parties at this hearing seemed to confirm that there are still recruitment and retention issues, particularly in the Regina-Qu'Appelle Health Region, though there has recently been a drop in vacancies in that region.

Turnover has been an issue in this classification, though there is some disagreement between the parties on the significance of that phenomenon. HSAS put forward the view that the turnover is indicative that the proper comparators for this classification should include not only ambulance services in Saskatchewan and neighbouring provinces, but also fire and police services, which have been successful in recruiting EMTs.

Counsel for SAHO enumerated the reasons for the departure of the individuals in this classification in 2003 and 2004. He argued that, though the qualifications of EMTs make

them attractive recruits for the fire and police services, the decisions of EMTs to take these opportunities represent a career shift rather than a move to a comparator position.

I agree with the analysis of SAHO on this point. Though the fire and police services (and academic positions at SIAST) may represent attractive career options for people with the qualifications possessed by employees in the Paramedic classification, they are distinct careers. Many different considerations go into the calculation of wage rates for those careers, and they cannot really be compared to the EMT positions under review here.

This does not mean that vacancies and turnover do not continue to be a concern in this classification, judging from the information presented to me. Though the new wage structure can be expected to have some impact, these issues seem to be sufficiently serious to warrant the kind of additional supplement proposed by HSAS. I therefore accept their proposal for the market supplement rate for the Paramedic classification.

DATED at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, this 17th day of November, 2005.

Beth Bilson, Q.C.