IN RE: MARKET SUPPLEMENT ADJUDICATIONS FOR

AUDIOLOGISTS
SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS
DENTAL THERAPISTS
PSYCHOLOGY MASTERS
PSYCHOLOGY PHD

BETWEEN:

HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN

APPLICANT / UNION

AND:

SASKATCHEWAN ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH ORGNAIZATIONS

RESPONDENT / SAHO

Rodger Linka **Adjudicator**

Heard in Regina on January 28, 29, 2026

For the Union: **Kim Canning**
Karen Schmid

For the Employer: **Mathew Klinger**
Jolene Harejda
Mitch Kredenster

Decision: February 23, 2026

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

[1] Saskatchewan Health Sciences Association of Health Organizations Inc. (the "Union" or "HSAS") represents more than 4,400 specialized health care professionals who work within in excess of thirty professions within the Saskatchewan Health Authority ("SHA"). HSAS also represents the employees of certain privately owned ambulance services and the employees of the Canadian Blood Services in Regina.

[2] Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations ("SAHO") is the bargaining agent for SHA and manages classifications and compensation including negotiating market supplements.

[3] HSAS and SAHO entered into a Collective Agreement effective April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2024. The parties have begun the process to renegotiate the Collective Agreement and both agree that this agreement remains in force while negotiations continue.

[4] The SAHO Provincial Market Supplement Program provides a means to adjust wages for particular classifications during the term of the Collective Agreement. The classification of employees is initially based on the education level of the position. For example, a classification that called for a master's degree would receive the same level of pay for an entirely different position that also required a master's degree. Other factors would come into play to cause the rate of pay for a classification to change. One of those factors is the SAHO Provincial Market Supplement Program. The Purpose is described on page 1 of the submissions made by HSAS:

> The SAHO Provincial Market Supplement Program is designed to address specific pay related skill shortages by use of a market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified Employees where workplace initiatieves have been unsuccessful in addressing recruitment and retention challenges. A market supplement will be implemented only when it is necessary to enhance the ability of Employers to retain and/or recruit Employees with the required skills to deliver appropriate health services.

LETTERS OF UNDERSTANDING 12 & 13

[5] Part of the Collective Agreement are two Letters of Understanding that create the Provincial Market Supplement Program. Letter of Understanding 12 ("LOU12") provides that:

> The SAHO Provincial Market Supplement Program is designed to address specific pay related skill shortages by use of a market supplement to attract and/or retain qualified Employees where workplace initiatives have been unsuccessful in addressing recruitment and retention challenges

[6] LOU12 provides that the Program works in concert with the Collective Agreement. All review requests are submitted to the SAHO Provincial Market Supplement Review Committee, (the "Committee"), which is an internal review committee of SAHO and not a committee comprised of union and management representatives. The process that follows is:

- The Committee will consider service delivery impacts, vacancy rate analysis, recruitment issue analysis, and salary and market conditions.
- If established, the market supplemented wage rate is reviewed annually;
- If the Committee determines that a change is needed the Union and Employer will negotiate a new rate. If the supplanted wage rate is considered to be no longer necessary, the rate is frozen until such time as the wage schedule that is negotiated under the Collective Bargaining Agreement matches or exceeds the supplemented wage rate.

LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING 13 ("LOU13")

[7] Either SAHO or HSAS may identify areas or classifications where skill shortages have or will impede service delivery and may make a recommendation to the Committee for consideration and following such a request, the Committee will produce a market supplement review that includes the following information:

- Budgeted permanent full time positions;
- Budgeted permanent part time positions;
- Vacancies for permanent full-time and permanent part time positions (resulting from an employee's termination from a position or the creation of a new position;

- Upon request of HSAS, labour market information submitted by SAHO or the employers to the Committee for the purpose of determining the application of a market supplement…

[8] The Committee will within a limited time, produce a recommendation to provide a market supplement or not. The parties will negotiate to achieve agreement. If the Committee fails to produce a recommendation or if the parties fail to reach agreement, the matter will be referred to a Market Supplement Adjudicator (the "Adjudicator").

[9] LOU 13 (8) sets out the process that is to be followed by the Adjudicator. In making a decision, the Adjudicator is restricted to consideration of the following:

- Service delivery impacts: service delivery impacts are analyzed, including options for alternative service delivery models.

- Turnover rates: an annual turnover (loss of Employees to other competitor Employers) ratio to the existing staff complement in any given occupation. Local analysis of reasons for leaving will be necessary to determine any trends that may be emerging.

- Vacancy rate analysis: whereby the frequency and timing of vacancy occurrences (i.e., seasonal; always following an event; etc.) are analyzed for trends that may affect recruitment/retention efforts.

- Recruitment issue analysis: whereby issues such as length of recruitment times, training investments, licensing issues, supply and demand issues, etc. are analyzed for trends which may affect recruitment/retention efforts.

- Salary market conditions: affected Employer's salary levels are lower than other Employers that affected Employers would expect to recruit Employees from, or other Employers that affected Employees are recruited to. This may be local, provincial, regional or national depending on the occupational group and traditional recruitment relationships. Cost of living considerations may not be appropriate to factor into market salary comparisons.

[10] The process is that HSAS and SAHO will put forward its position whether the Market Supplement is to be approved or not and the Adjudicator decides. If the decision is to approve the Market Supplement, HSAS and SAHO submit their proposed level of the supplement. The Adjudication is restricted to approval of either SAHO's position or that of HSAS.

GENERAL SUBMISSIONS OF SAHO AND HSAS

[11] Both SAHO and HSAS made general submissions that are important to these adjudications. LOU13 (3) requires the Committee to render a decision within forty-five days from the date when it requests labour market information from SAHO's employer membership and HSAS. If a recommendation is not made within this time it **shall** within forty-five further days be referred to the Adjudicator. If the Committee does not recommend a market supplement, HSAS **may** refer the matter to the Adjudicator for a decision. If the Committee supports a market supplement but SAHO and HSAS cannot agree on the amount of the supplement, HSAS **may** refer the matter to the Adjudicator for decision.

[12] While I appreciate that hard deadlines are often not followed to the letter, in this case, the final reports from the Committee were significantly delayed. In the case of the Audiologists for example, the Committee report was due November of 2024 and was distributed in December of 2024 and has come to adjudication in January of 2026, over two years later.

[13] I agree with submissions from both parties that the reason for the delay is not relevant to my decision. The delay has however, raised the issue of what evidence I should consider. Should I consider only that evidence that was available at the time of the delivery of the Committee Report, or should I consider the adjustments to income that have occurred after?

[14] Counsel for SAHO submitted that the wage rates under the Market Supplement Program are automatically retroactive to the date of the Market Supplement Report. Counsel submitted that it would be inappropriate to award retroactive pay starting from 2023 based on a wage rate that may have come into force in 2025. This would likely have the effect of double dipping. If I were to consider information that was subsequent to the date of the Committee Report, I would be considering evidence that might include wage increases in other jurisdictions where collective bargaining settlements had occurred. The submission was that I should only consider evidence

taken at the time of the Committee Report so that my comparison was compared in the same year. I should allow the collective bargaining process to take care of likely increases in wages.

[15] HSAS submitted that the proper comparison data is the most current data that has been provided to me. There is nothing in the Collective Agreement or its LOU's that require that I consider information that is now outdated. HSAS submitted that utilizing outdated information is also inconsistent with past practice where current rates were utilized by the Committee to come to its recommendations. HSAS also submitted that by restricting the data to that which was available at the time of the Committee Report would, if followed, result in a decision that is out of date.

[16] Of course, this issue only arises as a result of the delay in acting on the Committee Reports. My review of past decisions indicates that the time delay between a Committee decision and the subsequent decision of the adjudicator was much shorter. The five criteria that are set out in LOU13 (c) restrict my decision-making authority to those factors. There is no direction as to the time of the evidence presented to me. While it is logical that I consider the date when the Committee decision is made, given that my decision is retroactive to that date, the passage of time before the request for a decision comes to me puts dated data as less of an indicator of the right amount of supplement to be awarded. More current information will also disclose trends as to trends in vacancies, turnover and recruitment. A similar conclusion was reached by Adjudicator Ish in the decision dated April 30, 2025 (SAHO v. CUPE, SGEU et al), where he found that the MSRC report documented information on the five labour market criteria "the MSRC reports were issued about 17 months ago and there may be more current information to be considered in addition to the information by the MRSC" (at p. 3-4).

[17] Further, LOU13 (d) restricts me to choosing the rate set out by SAHO or HSAS. My decision will therefore be based on which of these two positions best reflects what the market supplemented wage rate should be. I will not be restricted to the material available at the time the Committee Report was issued.

DECISION MAKING STANDARDS FOR INTEREST ARBITRATIONS

[18] Counsel for SAHO has set out in its written submissions at paragraph 24, the guiding principles that ought to be applied to this form of interest arbitration. I agree with those submissions and will expand on them.

[19] There is a long history of interest arbitration in Saskatchewan and Canada that outlines the principles that an interest arbitration board should consider in imposing terms and conditions of a collective agreement on which the parties themselves, by definition, have been unable to agree. Perhaps the most fundamental goal of an interest arbitration board is to attempt to replicate as closely as possible what the parties would have achieved through a negotiated settlement where the threat of work stoppage is available. In Saskatchewan, Mr. Justice Ken Halvorson described the replication theory in *Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Saskatchewan Health Care Association*, (unreported, May 17, 1982). At page 2 of that award, he said:

> In compulsory arbitration of this type, it is a duty of the arbitrator to strive for a resolution of the issues which will be consistent with the result which the parties reasonably have expected had the collective bargaining process not been interrupted by the legislation. That is, the arbitrator is not to mediate the differences, nor is he to wear the mantle of a crusader for social change and impose his notions of what is fair and just. Rather, it is his obligation to apply the evidence objectively so that his award will reflect what probably could have been attained in a freely negotiated settlement. The award should then be consistent with labour relations realities.

[20] Another description of the replication approach is that of Arbitrator Robert Laing (later Chief Justice of Saskatchewan's Court of Queen's Bench) in *City of Regina and Regina Professional Fire Fighters' Association*, (unreported, July 18, 1991) where at page 7 he said:

> It appears to be well accepted that the role of an Arbitration Board in an interest arbitration in the public sector, where the right to strike is non-existent, or at best illusory by reason of the likelihood of back-to-work legislation, is to attempt to replicate what the parties might have arrived at, had both parties been left to free

> market forces, which include the right to strike and the right to lock out. An interest arbitration board's impression of what the parties may have eventually settled for, must of necessity depend in large part of the evidence presented at the hearing. With respect to that evidence, the Board must take into account not only the "power" position of the parties and attempt to determine who might prevail if unrestricted economic warfare was permitted but must be guided in large part by the "reasonableness" of the respective positions of the parties. Reasonableness is to be determined in the overall context and economic climate that prevails at the time the dispute is determined. Because a request is reasonable does not mean that an interest arbitration board must grant the same. Reasonableness as to any one demand is not to be looked at in isolation, but rather in the context of the aggregate of demands being advanced. Successful collective bargaining depends on compromise, and the role of the interest arbitration board is to attempt on the basis of the evidence heard to arrive at something close to the type of compromise that would have been achieved by the parties if left to their own devices.

[21] The replication theory or replication approach, while universally accepted, is more of a conceptual construct than a formula of fine art. Its limitations were perhaps best expressed by Mr. Justice Winkler (later Chief Justice of Ontario) in *University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association* (unreported, March 27, 2006) where he said at page 5:

> While the replication principle is a key consideration, it must also be acknowledged that there is a certain amount of artifice involved in attempting to "replicate" the agreement that the parties "would have" reached. The very fact that third party intervention has been engaged means that the parties, based on their current positions, are at an impasse for which they foresee no resolution absent the assistance of the third party. Therefore, although the application of the replication principle theoretically results in an award that represents the likely meeting point between the parties' positions had bargaining continue, that award will, in the circumstances, almost certainly be imperfect because that in effect is the very nature of collective bargaining.

[22] While the replication approach is quite broad in general, arbitration boards have considered more specific factors such as internal and external wage settlements, wage settlements in similar sectors in the province and in Western Canada (more particularly the prairie provinces), the cost-of-living index, municipal and provincial economic circumstances, and comparisons with similar or same occupations elsewhere. While neither legislation nor the previous authorities view any one factor as determinative and normally the entire matrix must be considered, various factors may carry more weight given the "exigencies of the marketplace". (*Re McMaster University and McMaster University Faculty Association* (1990), 13 L.A.C. (4th) 199 (Shime), at 202)

[23] Arbitrators have commonly noted that interest arbitration is fundamentally a conservative process that is not intended to supplant bargaining but, rather, to supplement and assist it. Two recent interest arbitration decisions by well-respected Alberta arbitrators make the point that interest arbitration awards should not be seen as a vehicle to introduce "breakthrough" provisions into a collective agreement. In *United Nurses of Alberta and Alberta Health Services*, 2020 CanLII 2386, Arbitrator David Jones wrote at para.53:

> The guiding principle in interest arbitrations is "replication"–that is, the task of the arbitration board is to achieve a result which would most likely replicate the results that would have been achieved by the parties themselves if they had succeeded in concluding a collective agreement, whether by a negotiated settlement or after industrial action. The focus is on market and economic realities, and not abstract notions of social justice or fairness. An important guide is comparability—that is, settlements reached between similar parties, for a similar time frame, in a similar industry. Unless there is a persuasive reason for doing so, interest arbitration awards should not introduce significant changes or "breakthrough" provisions into a collective agreement.

[24] Similarly, in *City of Edmonton and Edmonton Police Association*, (unreported, June 7, 2023), Arbitrator Ashbell said at para. 57:

> Interest arbitration jurisprudence is clear that parties should not look to interest arbitration to obtain a major breakthrough in their collective agreement that they cannot obtain through collective

bargaining at the negotiation table. Interest arbitration is a "conservative process" which should supplement and assist the parties' collective bargaining relationship, not supplant it.

STANDARD OF PROOF

[25] As this is a "final offer" adjudication I am restricted to choose the proposed rate made by SAHO or HSAS. Consequently, I regard the principle of replication to be applied with this restriction. The evidence I have received is further restricted to the five labour market review criteria set out in LOU13 (c). The evidence I have received from both parties is statistical in nature. It is necessary to draw reasonable inferences from this evidence. My conclusions are inevitably an exercise in selecting the proposal of either party that best anticipates which proposal best addresses the need for a market supplement.

[26] With this introduction I now turn to the five classifications that are the subject of this adjudication.

AUDIOLOGISTS

[27] On December 2024 the Committee issued a Report of the Market Supplement Review Committee regarding "Audiologists Masters". The Committee produced the Report at the request of SAHO. The Report identified that this classification had not previously received a market supplement.

[28] The role of an audiologist is set out in the Committee Report:

> Audiologists conduct audiological evaluations; provide counseling; select and fit hearing aids; conduct minor hearing aid repairs; take impressions for earmolds/earplugs; interact with third part agencies; and provide information as required to the public and allied agencies/professionals.

Audiologists are employed in Regina and Saskatoon. Audiologists require a master's degree in Audiology and must have experience in the field. The Committee Report identified that as of September, 2024 there were seven full-time audiologists and there were two vacant positions.

[29] The analysis made by the Committee identified that there were minor service delivery impacts in Regina and moderate impacts in Saskatoon, that caused inconvenience to patients. There were no turnover trends identified. Recruitment was identified as a significant concern. Graduates of programs are in high demand and employers are paying premiums and recruiting bonuses to entice graduates. Further, graduates have no connection to Saskatchewan as the schools that teach audiology are located elsewhere.

[30] The Committee also reviewed salary market conditions as of April of 2023 and found the following:

British Columbia	$49.26
Alberta	$57.63
Saskatchewan	$49.493
Manitoba	$53.156
Western Canadian Average:	**$52.382**

[31}	On this analysis, the Committee recommended that a market supplement be implemented but did not recommend a rate for the supplement.

[32]	SAHO recommended a market supplement of 8%.

[33]	SAHO's submissions identified that master's programs are available at the University of Western Ontario, University of British Columbia, University of Ottawa, and the University of Montreal. As of October of 2025, there was a vacancy rate of 38.46%. SAHO also introduced information that the cost of living, comparative to the other Western provinces was favourable (less costly) and that there was a generous benefits package with the employment.

[34]	With an 8% market supplement, Saskatchewan rates would, as of December 2024 be at 99.49% of the Western Canadian average. For audiologists at the senior level, it is 99.66%.

[35]	The submission material from HSAS reveals information regarding the impact on service delivery. For example, support to the multidisciplinary Pediatric Cleft Lip Clinic was cut by 50%. About half the patients are no longer receiving services. Two neurotology positions have been filled but there is no audiology support. Infants are to be screened for hearing loss within three months of birth. SHA is unable to meet this requirement. Appendix A to the material of HSAS, entitled "2024 Report Card: Early Hearing Detection & Intervention, reveals that Saskatchewan and Nunavut have the worst record in the country for early childhood detection, while BC and Alberta are satisfactory.

[36]	The wait time for adult cochlear implant candidates is more than twelve months for initial assessments and more than twenty-four months for referrals. Current wait lists have been reduced from twenty-four months to twelve months after a significant number of patients were discharged without assessment. In July 2024 about 615 new patients in Saskatoon and 250 in Regina were waiting for services

[37]	HSAS also quoted rates for private audiologists at $1,000 - $1,250 compared to basic pediatric assessments contracted at $75/assessment.

[38] HSAS proposes a market supplement of 25% based on the rates published as of April 1, 2025 and drawing comparisons to the rates set as of that date for Alberta and Manitoba.

[39] **Decision:** I am unable to rely on the Report Card regarding early childhood detection. While the information is concerning, I cannot draw an inference that the cause of the failure of the Early Childhood Detection Program is caused by the current state of underemployment of audiologists in Saskatchewan. I am also not able to utilize the information regarding the rates for private audiologists since private practice is different from the services provided by SHA. Private practice provides rates that are needed to support a private business which is different from the way in which public practice is delivered.

[40] The rates of vacancy is extraordinarily high. A substantial market supplement is necessary. This is especially so because of the lack of connection of the educational facilities to Saskatchewan. While there are five universities offering audiology in Canada, none are in Saskatchewan or nearby. Students will be drawn to provinces that offer competitive rates.

[41] **Given these two factors, I have concluded that the increase to the market supplement that has been proposed by HSAS should be accepted.**

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

[42] In February, 2024, the Committee issued a Report of the Market Supplement Review Committee regarding "Speech Language Pathologists". The objective of the Program is to ensure that SHA is able to attract and retain employees required to provide the required services. The Committee report sets out the role of Speech Language Pathologists:

> Speech Language Pathologists diagnose communication disorders (comprehension and expression) and swallowing disorders. They plan and implement treatment in language speech, voice and/or swallowing disorders. Speech Language Pathologists design and employ augmentative and alternative communication; and consult regarding language stimulation, inclusion strategies and teaching adaptation for students with language impairments.
>
> Speech Language Pathologists place special emphasis on pediatric and preschool clients, in order to identify and correct impairments at early stages of development.
>
> There are six Canadian training programs. These are located at the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, McGill University and Dalhousie University.
>
> There is no training program in Saskatchewan. Typically, students complete their internships and practicums within the province they attend university.

[43] The Committee Report identified 86 full time positions and 38 part time positions. There were 22 full time vacancies and 10 part time positions that were vacant for a 26.32% and 25.81% vacancy rate. The service delivery impact of these vacancies was reported there was a particular problem delivering service in rural Saskatchewan. Four of the former regional health authorities reported no vacancies, two reported moderate vacancies and the balance of the regions reported critical concerns in that it was likely that positions would not be filled.

[44] The Committee Report indicated that turnover rates were related to retirement, family issues and for reasons that were not wage related. Two employees out of eight left for other employment where the pay was higher. Regarding recruitment, the report indicated that recruitment was difficult. While a certain number of seats in educational institutions were earmarked for Saskatchewan this number could not be increased. The fact that Saskatchewan did not have a school to teach this skill was a contributing factor to the difficulty. A comparison of pay across the western provinces revealed that the Saskatchewan rate of pay was 99.45% of the average.

[45] The recommendation of the Committee was to negotiate an increase to the current market supplement for this classification.

[46] The Committee produced a second report published December 18, 2025. In this report the Committee stated:

> Both full-time and part-time vacancies are rated as moderate from a provincial perspective, meaning vacancies represent less than 20% of existing staff. Vacancies can be difficult to fill and may require a greater than a standard amount of time to recruit i.e. 3 to 6 months.
>
> Northern and rural areas of the province reported critical vacancy levels in some locations, where recruitment challenges persist due to candidate preference for urban centers. As a result of vacancies in these areas are unlikely to be filled or may remain vacant for extended periods of time.

[47] Service delivery was significantly impacted in most areas of the province. Turnover rates for this period were eleven employees who all left for reasons other than leaving for better paid positions. Recruitment challenges in most of the province are significant and recruitment incentives are being offered in northern and rural areas of $10,000.00 - $20,000.00 in rural areas and $5,000.00 - $10,000.00 in urban areas.

[48] A comparison of other western provinces revealed that Saskatchewan rates were 98.88% of the average.

[49] The Committee reported that a new Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology, offering 40 seats will be available in the fall of 2026.

The Committee reaffirmed its support for an increase to the market supplement.

[50] SAHO has offered a 3.5% market supplement to the existing market supplemented rate of pay, based on the last negotiated rate in 2023. SAHO submitted that it was imperative to ensure fair and accurate comparisons between jurisdictions. Any economic increase negotiated at the bargaining table would be applied thereafter according to article 6 of LOU12. SAHO submitted the new university master's course to commence at the University of Saskatchewan in 2026 would have a significant impact on the pool of candidates for vacant positions upon graduation in 2028. It stated that the turnover rates were not indicative of competition with other employment opportunities that paid more. The vacancy rate analysis showed the vacancy rates between 2024 and 2025 was reduced to 11%. This was an indicator for a more modest increase in the market supplement.

[51] Finally, SAHO submitted that comparing Saskatchewan rates to other western provinces indicated that Saskatchewan was competitive with other provinces. Based on the rates set on April 1, 2023 when taking into account the proposed 3.5% increase to the supplement, Saskatchewan rates in comparison to the western provinces would be 101.43% of the average and for senior pathologists, 105.15%.

[52] HSAS proposed an increase of 17% to the market supplement. This proposal was based on the comparison of rates in the western provinces but based on data from April 1, 2025. According to this analysis, the average rate for Saskatchewan would be $61.961. The Western Canadian average as of April 1, 2025 was $61.825, thus raising the Saskatchewan supplemented salary to slightly over 100%

[53] **Decision:** There are three factors that have influenced me in my decision:

- The new master's course at the University of Saskatchewan ought to have a significant impact on new recruitment. I appreciate this will not have an impact until there are graduates in 2028.
- The vacancy rates are high, but mostly not due to employees taking positions at higher pay.
- The data indicates that the problem with recruitment is mostly a problem in rural and northern areas.

A significant increase is not justified due to vacancy rates as the statistics do not indicate that employees are moving to other better paying positions. The vacancy rate exists for other reasons such as retirement. A market supplement does not have an impact in those circumstances. Likewise, a market supplement does not have an impact where the recruitment issues arise in rural areas or northern locations. Cash incentives are more effective.

[54] **On this basis I support the proposed increase of 3.5% proposed by SAHO.**

DENTAL THERAPISTS

[55] In March of 2024, the Committee issued a Report of the Market Supplement Review Committee regarding Dental Therapists. The Report identified that the first supplement was issued and implemented in 2002. There has been an annual review thereafter but no further increases.

[56] The role of Dental Therapists is set out in the Report as follows:

> Dental Therapists are primary oral health care professionals who are trained to perform basic clinical dental treatment and preventive services within a variety of practice settings. As members of a multidisciplinary team, dental therapists provide restorative dental treatment services, disease prevention and oral health promotion programs to maintain and improve health. Dental therapists also advocate for the needs of clients, assist them in accessing care and refer them to other health professionals for services beyond the scope of the dental therapists' practice.
>
> Qualifications: Diploma in Dental Therapy.

[57] The vacancy rate was based on four geographical areas of the province, including Saskatoon and three more northern areas. The report indicates twelve full time positions and two part time positions. There were four vacancies in the full-time positions, setting a 33% vacancy rate. The service delivery in the areas covered was characterized as significantly deficient. Only basic services could be provided. In one area the service delivery was said to be critical.

[58] The turnover rate was regarded to be significant. In the last twelve months there were two departures for wage related issues and in the twelve months before two more for the same reason as well as two others for other reasons.

[59] Recruitment was considered to be a serious problem in all areas and it was hoped that the new diploma course at the University of Saskatchewan would help to alleviate this problem.

[60] The salary market conditions compared to other provinces indicated that Saskatchewan employees were paid at 83.73% of the Western Canadian average.

[61] On this basis the Committee recommended that a market supplement increase be negotiated.

[62] In October, 2024 a further report was provided by the Committee. Of the twelve full time positions and three part time positions there was one full time vacancy and two part time vacancies for a vacancy rate of 8.33% and 66.67% respectively. The turnover rates indicated one employee left for wage related issues and one retirement.

[64] The recruitment analysis was mixed. In some areas recruitment efforts were regarded as moderate while Saskatoon reported the situation as critical. There was hope that the new course at the University of Saskatchewan would soon have an impact. Retention bonuses had been utilized to retain employees.

[65] The salary market conditions reported that the Saskatchewan average compared to the Western Canadian average to be 83.73% The recommendation of the Committee was to negotiate an increase to the market supplement.

[66] A third report was prepared by the Committee in October of 2025. The vacancy rate for full time positions increased to 46.15% and part-time to 100%. Service delivery issues remained basically the same as the previous report and recruitment remained a problem. The hope remained that the graduates of 2025 from the University of Saskatchewan course would have an impact. The salary market conditions had worsened such that Saskatchewan employees were earning 77.5% of the Western Canadian average. The Committee reaffirmed its recommendation for a market supplement increase.

[67] SAHO's offer at 30% would result in an increase of $12,158.00 and for senior employees of $13,130. The proposed changes would result in a salary for regular employees to be 95.42% and for seniors at 101.12%.

[68] HSAS proposes an increase of 46% and relies on the more current statistics in 2025. HSAS underscores the impact on service delivery. Insufficient staffing to a vulnerable sector of the Saskatchewan population to received limited service. Poor dental service causes broader health problems in the communities. Proper dental health not only prevents dental disease, it also results in behavioral change. Good dental care can have a positive impact on broader health problems.

[69] The HSAS proposal would place the rate at slightly below the Western Canadian average.

[70] **Decision:** An increase in the market supplement for Dental Therapists is long overdue. The Committee, over three yearly reports recommended an increase. The need for an increase is demonstrated by the large increases recommended by both SAHO and HSAS. This classification is relatively small and appears to be designed to serve residents in more rural and northern areas Given the preference of many employees to live in urban areas, this makes placement in rural areas more difficult to achieve. This however, is a problem in many classifications and is better addressed through compensation incentives, which is beyond my purview.

[71] The fact that SAHO and HSAS were unable to bring this matter to conclusion for over two years also creates a problem. It is logical to make an award based on the date of the Committee's report, which in his case is April of 2023, the award is retroactive to that date. It is not however, logical to do so when there has been delay. Where there has been delay, as in this case, the ruling becomes backdated by over two years and is therefore not current to the existing state of the employment within the classification. The subsequent Committee reports in 2024 and 2025 reveals a trend. In 2023, the vacancy rate for full time employees was 33% (I must note that with a pool of only twelve employees, only two vacancies causes a large percentage.) In 2024, the vacancy rate for full time employees dropped to 8.33% but was 66.67% for the three part-time positions. In 2025, the full time vacancy had jumped to 46.15% and for part-time positions, it was 100%.

[72] The wage disparity is also significant. In 2023, Saskatchewan employees earned at 83.73% and this remained constant in 2024, yet in 2025, it was 77.5%. Clearly the need for a supplement increase is needed.

[73] The other significant factor is that the University of Saskatchewan course, after a fifteen-year absence has established a Dental Therapy program. It is also operated in conjunction with regional schools such as Northlands College in Prince Albert. I refer to the publication of the Saskatchewan Dental Therapists Association found at Tab 7 in SAHO's material at page 6/8:

> May 17, 2022 Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has given its support for a new national dental therapy educational program and approved $2.1 million in funding to establish the program, which will run collaboratively through a partnership between the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority (NITHA), the University of Saskatchewan (USask) College of Dentistry, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and Northlands College.

[74] Graduates from this educational program is focused on northern and rural areas. It is a significant factor that hopefully will address the vacancies. Graduates will now be participating in practicums and will be moving into the workforce.

[75] **As my decision will be subject to annual review, in this case I find the recommendation of SAHO to be reasonable. In a year's time, the Committee can examine the impact of the academic course to the vacancies and the increase in the supplement will bring Saskatchewan employees close to the national average.**

PSYCHOLOGY (MASTER'S)

[76] On August 14, 2024, the Committee issued a Report of the Market Supplement Review Committee regarding Master's Psychologist. The Report indicated that this classification received a market supplement in 2013.

[77] The role of a Master's Psychologist is described as follows:

> The Master's of Psychologist is responsible for the provision of assessment, consultation, and counseling for specified client groups. Specialized knowledge is applied in assessing and diagnosing clients, and providing advice and consultation to various groups concerning psychological information.

[78] At the time of this Report, there were 29 full time psychologists and 4 part time psychologists. The vacancy rate for full time psychologists was 17.24%. The turnover rate indicated that three employees left for an increase in salary while three left for family reasons. The Report said that many psychologists prefer to continue with education to the PhD level through a program offered by the University of Saskatchewan. The Salary Market Conditions disclosed that Saskatchewan Masters Psychologists earned at a rate of 94.69% to the Western average (Manitoba was excluded in this analysis).

[79] The Committee recommended a market supplement increase on the basis that respondents "reported significant recruitment issues" and there were "moderate to significant" service delivery issues.

[80] As this classification is reviewed annually an abbreviated report was distributed in December of 2024, in which the Committee reported on vacancy information and costing data. The Report disclosed that there were 39 full-time positions, and 10 part-time positions. There were 16 vacant positions for full time positions and 5 for part-time positions, for a vacancy rate of 41% and 50% respectively. The salary market analysis disclosed that employees in this classification were compensated at 94.69% of the Western Canadian Average. The Committee repeated its recommendation for an increase in the current market supplement.

[81] A further report of the Committee was published December 2, 2025. This report indicated that there were 39 full-time positions, 3 part-time positions with 9 vacancies for full-time positions and 1 for part-time positions. This produced a vacancy rate of 23.08% and 33.33% respectively. While the vacancy rate improved from the previous year the shortage in some areas was regarded as critical in that it was unlikely that vacancies would be filled and would remain vacant for an extended period of time. The turnover rate identified that the primary cause of turnover was psychologists moving to the private sector. The Report disclosed that recruitment initiates are being utilized (and are set out in the report) and educational institutions are tying to increase the number of students. It appears that there is a high demand for these employees.

[82] SAHO has proposed a 12% supplement. I agree with SAHO's submission that the vacancy rate is resulting in serious problems with delivery of service and this is the key reason why a market supplement is recommended. There is a great demand for the services in this classification but many candidates carry on to the PhD level and stay in university. While it is not possible to draw a reliable comparison to private practice, it is certain that many potential candidates are drawn to the private sector and this has a negative impact on vacancy rates and recruitment.

[83] SAHO submitted that the cost of living is lower in Saskatchewan and the employee benefits are better in Saskatchewan than in other provinces. SAHO's offer would place regular masters' psychologists at 99.91% of the average and would earn more than psychologists in Alberta and slightly less than B.C. At the first step of the senior level, the Saskatchewan masters' psychologists would have the highest pay in Western Canada. This is based on the 2023 rate of pay and could be improved through the collective bargaining process which is currently in process.

[84] The Proposal of HSAS which is 17% would result in an increase to 103.4% of the Western Canadian average.

[85] The submissions made by HSAS were combined for both Master's and PhD psychologists. A 17% increase in the existing supplements is proposed. This is based on rates at April 1, 2025. The increase would place Psychology Masters at a rate only slightly below the Western Canadian average.

[86] **Decision:** The proposals of SAHO and HSAS are close. SAHO proposes 12% while HSAS proposes 17%. In broad terms, the Psychology Master's classification is one that is affected by high demand and a significant impact from the private sector. These are factors that will not change and the consequence is that SHA can expect service delivery problems going into the future. The rates paid to this classification are at or slightly below the Western Canadian average and employees working in Saskatchewan enjoy a competitive edge in terms of cost of living and employee benefits. Yet there is no marked improvement from 2023 to the present.

[87] **I will approve SAHO's recommendation at 12%, however, I encourage the parties to monitor this increase to determine if it has an impact.** Certainly, the market supplement increase is necessary here to address the impact of the demand and the private sector. While approval of 12% is more conservative, subsequent analysis may prove this increase is insufficient and requires further improvement to put more psychologists to work in the public sector.

PSYCHOLOGY (PhD)

[88] In January 2025 the Committee published its report regarding PhD Psychologists. This classification has enjoyed a market supplement since 2002. Earlier in May of 2023, the Committee did not recommend an increase to the supplement, but this changed in the 2024/5 report.

[89] The role of a psychologist PhD is set out in the Report:

> Psychologists work in clinics, correctional facilities, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, schools and universities. They diagnose and provide therapy for psychological and emotional disorders; help clients manage physical illnesses and disorders; consult with other health care professionals; plan and implement research; and apply theory relating to behaviour and mental process.

[90] The Report indicates 36 full time positions and 8 part time positions. There are 10 vacancies in full time positions and 4 in part time positions resulting in a vacancy rate of 27.78% and 50% respectively. Overall, this rate of vacancy is causing problems with service delivery.

[91] The turnover rates suggest that "individuals are leaving due to workload, relocation to urban centres, better flexibility and gravitation to private practice where wages are higher." The Report provides that "all four areas noted that recruitment challenges were significant in that qualified professionals and new graduates are in great demand by employers. Educational institutions have/are trying to increase the number of educational seats but there is not a sufficient supply of candidates to meet the demand."

[92] The current salary market comparisons show Saskatchewan employees earn 101.62% above the Western Canadian average.

[93] The Committee report recommends an increase to the market supplement. Its conclusions are:

- Vacancies are significant and difficult to fill.
- There were a number of noted trends related to why employees are leaving these positions which included leaving due to workload,

relocation to urban centres, better flexibility and gravitation to private practice where wages are higher.

- Recruitment efforts continue to be significant for this classification and there is significant competition between the public and private sector.
- Relative to other public sector heal care providers in Western Canada the SHA pays a rate that is competitive.

[94] The next annual Report of the Committee is dated October 3, 2025. It reports a vacancy rate of 30% and 66.67% respectively for full-time employees and part-time employees. There was minimal turnover during the year however other factors regarding recruitment and salary market conditions were similar to the year before. The Saskatchewan employee in this classification earned 101.62% of the Western Canadian average.

[95] SAHO's submission was that a market supplement would not address the problem with this classification. There is a recruitment bottleneck caused because of the lack of PHD seats in universities. While the University of Saskatchewan is attempting to ramp up the number of seats in this area of study, it will take time to see a change to the employment statistics. It is important, however, that SHA remain competitive in wages in order to attract and maintain available talent.

[96] The other competitive factor is that private practice will continue to draw employees away from the public sector due to higher level of income and greater professional flexibility.

[97] HSAS proposes a 17% increase. It notes in the area of Service Delivery there is a waitlist for a psychological assessment of 1,766 people, including 1,530 children and this had not changed from past years. In this area of care a lack of access contributes to worsening anxiety, depression and behavioral problems. Rural and remote communities experience disproportionate gaps in services and inequities in mental health support.

[98] HSAS recommends an increase of 17% increase which according to 2025 rates, results in a Saskatchewan rate that is slightly above the Western Canadian rate.

[99] **Decision:** SAHO proposes a 5% increase while HSAS proposes a 17%. Based on the submissions of SAHO, the problem cannot be changed

by an increase in the market supplement because of the inability to recruit new graduates. I am concerned SAHO's proposal, at a lower proposed rate, will only lead to the status quo and will not address the current problem of recruitment and retention. The HSAS submission, at a higher rate, has a better opportunity to attract new candidates graduating out of university. The data regarding private practice results in an "apples to oranges" comparison. While the same service is delivered, there is insufficient data to make a fair comparison between private practice and public employment. The hourly rates charged in the private sector include costs borne by the public sector employer, such as office costs and the cost of administration. Employee benefits appear to be more attractive in the public sector, but I cannot engage in guess work as I have no data to comparable figures in the private sector.

[100] The HSAS proposal offers the only possibility to improve the issue of recruitment and retention and therefore **I accept the HSAS proposal of 17%**

DATED at Regina, Saskatchewan this 23rd day of February 2026

Rodger Linka, Adjudicator