

# ***Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals***

## ***Meeting with the Minister of Health Theresa Oswald***

March 9, 2012

MAHCP President Wendy Despins and Executive Director Lee Manning met with the Minister of Health Theresa Oswald, Tim Smith Project Manager for the office of the Minister and Dr. Brenna Shearer Executive Director Health Workforce Strategies Manitoba Health. The primary focus of the meeting was to highlight the impact of previous trends of bargaining on the Technical Professional Paramedical membership of MAHCP.

The meeting was a candid discussion of why these trends in bargaining have not been working for MAHCP membership. President Despins explained several issues that have come to light through three rounds of collective bargaining regarding impacts of market driven adjustments for Technical Professional Paramedical employees.

Despins highlighted the narrow margins that the recent collective agreements were ratified by and that the MAHCP membership needs to see significant improvements in their collective agreements.

MAHCP found the meeting to be a frank and to some degree enlightening discussion with regard to the Minister's receptiveness as to why collective bargaining is not working. MAHCP was very clear with the Minister that the intention was to discuss bargaining and that the MAHCP President and Executive Director were not there to negotiate. The discussion of what has happened in the past three rounds of negotiations was initiated with the goal of preparing the groundwork for 2014 bargaining.

The discussion covered items such as how a "cookie cutter" approach to all collective bargaining will simply not work. The Technical Professional bargaining must look at a broad spectrum of criteria when considering wages, pay scales and classifications. MAHCP spoke to a number of points unique to our membership citing examples throughout various sites, regions and occupational groups. Executive Director Manning showed Minister Oswald an example of a current health care practice using expensive out of province solutions. Mr Manning and Mrs Despins suggested an alternative solution. MAHCP would rather work with government to keep valuable jobs in the province.

Minister Oswald seemed to appreciate MAHCP's practical approach, one that is based on internal and/or external education, as well as other considerations. There was a consensus to bring these professional groups to future meetings. And moreover MAHCP showed how low the wages of specific occupational groups had fallen because of market based bargaining and that, in and of itself, needed to be rectified. Emphasis was made that all occupational groups need to be looked at and considered.

The Technical Professional occupations are key players in the primary care model. MAHCP discussed both the concerns and the enthusiasm of the affected groups, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Dietitians etc. to meet the government mandate of providing physician care and availability.

A very positive outcome from that meeting was the commitment from Minister Oswald to regular on-going meetings with MAHCP.