

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Solution to nursing shortage must involve LPNs**

**REGINA:** Discussions to resolve the nursing shortage are doomed to fail as long as licensed practical nurses are excluded from the conversation, says the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The provincial government and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses are meeting today to discuss the shortage of registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses.

But any long-term solution to Saskatchewan's nursing shortage must involve the third group of nurses – licensed practical nurses who account for 20% of all nurses in the province.

The under-utilization of LPNs has been a long-standing problem in Saskatchewan. Although the provincial government passed the LPN Act in 2000 to enable LPNs to work to their full scope of training, many practical nurses still are not permitted to perform all of their job duties.

A 2006 survey by the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, for example, found only 51% of the LPNs surveyed were fully utilized and working to their full scope of practice – up slightly from 44% in 2004. “Overall, it is most common for the nurse manager to decide what an LPN may perform in the workplace, followed by board policy, the RN on shift, and the administrator,” the survey stated. It also found that “most LPNs do not feel valued, fulfilled or supported.”

Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council, described the under-utilization of LPNs as a tremendous waste of nursing talent and scarce health dollars.

CUPE has requested a meeting with SAHO to discuss a strategic plan for nursing – one that includes licensed practical nurses. “Any plan to address the nursing shortage must begin by addressing the reasons why one of every five nurses in the province is prevented from performing all of their job duties,” he stated.

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