

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Strategic plan needed for third group of nurses: LPNs**

The CUPE Health Care Council welcomes the Wall government's agreement to hire more registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, but it says the long-term solution to the "nursing shortage" must address issues facing the third group of nurses in Saskatchewan – licensed practical nurses.

Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Health Care Council says the government's partnership agreement with SUN is a first step in addressing the nursing shortage. "The next step must involve the development of a strategic plan to allow *all* licensed practical nurses to use the full range of their skills and education in caring for patients and long-term care residents," he says.

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, that is still not happening in many health facilities.

A 2006 survey by the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, for example, found only 50% of the LPNs surveyed were fully utilized and working to their full scope of practise – up slightly from 44% in 2004. It also found that "most LPNs do not feel valued, fulfilled or supported."

Campbell described the under utilization of LPNs as "a tremendous waste of nursing talent and resources.

"In the face of a nursing shortage, it is unbelievable that so many health facilities are still allowed to have policies that prevent one group of nurses from nursing. The strategic plan must ensure there is much more public accountability," he stated.

CUPE, which represents more than half of the LPNs in the province, wants to work with the government and other health care unions on the details of an LPN strategy.

CUPE represents about 12,000 members employed in five health regions across the province.

