

September 18, 2014

Dear CUPE Licensed Practical Nurses:

RE: LPNs deserve workplace respect

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) play a critical role in the delivery of health care. They provide hands-on nursing care to patients at the hospital bedside, to residents in special care homes, to the public who require home care services, and they provide key support for community health initiatives.

LPNs are skilled nurses who have been trained and accredited to providing a wide range of medical assessments and procedures. They are valuable members of the health care team, but unfortunately they are facing misunderstanding.

LPNs have to fight to do the job they were trained to do and love doing. According to surveys by the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, 50 per cent of LPNs in the province are not working to full scope, which means that many practical nurses still are not permitted to utilize all of their professional skills.

The under-utilization of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) has been a long-standing problem in Saskatchewan. In 2000, the provincial government amended the LPN Act to enable LPNs to work to their full scope of training and not under the direction of a Registered Nurse, but further work is needed.

At the request of the Ministry of Health, the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses (SALPN) is working on amending its bylaws to formalize and recognize the role that LPNs are already trained to perform. The proposed changes to the bylaws are being met with resistance by SUN, the union representing RNs, who sees this move as a threat to RNs.

CUPE feels strongly that overlooking the skills of LPNs is unacceptable. Our health care system needs to maximize the skills of all professional nursing staff, and the updating of the SALPN bylaws is an important step forward for you.

Furthermore, all LPNs deserve to work in an environment where they are respected and the importance of their role is recognized. Allegations that undermine the credibility of your profession and your contribution to providing safe, quality care only lead to workplace stress and conflict within health care teams.

The CUPE Health Care Council knows that this is a frustrating time for many of you, and that the actions of SUN are having an impact on relationships in the workplace.

CUPE will continue to stand by our LPNs and advocate for the full utilization of scope of practice and respect you deserve.

In the coming months, these are a few of the steps we are undertaking:

- We will reach out to the SFL, SGEU and SEIU-West to have a conversation with SUN about the negative impact its campaign is having on workplace morale.
- In the next few weeks, we are having LPN membership meetings in Prince Albert, Whitewood and Regina. We will continue to host membership meetings to discuss these issues. If you are interested in having a meeting in your local, please contact your CUPE Local Union Office.
- We will continue conversations with SALPN about how we can best support it in the process of bylaw amendments.
- We will continue our public awareness campaign to promote the role of LPNs in providing safe, quality patient care. In the next several months, we will be running print ads in papers all around the province and ramping up our efforts in the media. This is in addition to billboards and print ads that ran in communities throughout the province during the summer.
- We are currently conducting a member survey on scope of practice and workplace stress. Once our data is collected in early October, we will compile the information and use it as a backbone for continued lobbying of our provincial politicians and health authorities to ensure that LPNs are respected members of the nursing team who are able to do the job they were trained to do.
- The data from the survey will also be used to create a post card campaign focused on giving CUPE LPNs the tools to contact the Ministry of Health around workplace respect and scope of practice. If you are interested in getting involved with the campaign, please contact your CUPE Local Union Office.

In conclusion, we are committed to standing up to demand respect for the work and role of CUPE Licensed Practical Nurses.

If you have any questions, please contact your CUPE Union Local Executive.

Thank you for your continued support.

In Solidarity,

Gordon Campbell

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