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## **Licensed Practical Nurses deserve recognition and respect**

**REGINA:** Licensed Practical Nurses play a critical role on the nursing team and deserve recognition and respect for the work they do, says CUPE.

LPNs are skilled nurses who have been trained and accredited to providing a wide range of medical assessments and procedures. LPNs 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, like all of the health care workers CUPE represents, are committed to patient safety and providing quality care,” said Gordon Campbell, President of the CUPE Saskatchewan Health Care Council. “Allegations that suggest otherwise undermine team morale and lead to workplace stress.”

“LPNs are valuable members of the nursing team but, unfortunately, LPNs still have to fight to do the job we are trained to do and love doing,” said Tracy Gulka, Chair of CUPE’s LPN Committee and an LPN in the Sunrise Health Region. “LPNs deserve to work in an environment where they are respected and the importance of their role is recognized.”

The under-utilization of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) has been a long-standing problem in Saskatchewan. 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 many practical nurses still are not permitted to utilize all of their professional skills.

At the request of the Ministry of Health, the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses is working on amending its bylaws to formalize and recognize the skills LPNs are already trained to perform and have been performing for years. The proposed bylaw changes are being met with resistance by SUN, the union representing RNs, who sees this move as a threat to RNs.

“Overlooking the skills of LPNs is unacceptable. It is like training plumbers but only allowing them to fix leaky faucets, even though there are people waiting for other services they are qualified to provide,” said Campbell. “There are patients waiting for care, and LPNs are qualified to deliver that care in a professional and safe manner.”

“Our health care system needs to maximize the skills of all professional nursing staff, and updating the SALPN bylaws is an important step forward,” added Campbell.

CUPE is the largest health care union in Saskatchewan, representing over 13,000 members. We represent a wide range of health care employees in five major classification areas: clerical, technical, nursing, support and plant operations.

Contact:

Tria Donaldson, CUPE Communications Representative at 306.531.6247