



**Regina Office**  
2330 2nd Avenue  
Regina, Saskatchewan S4R 1A6  
Phone: (306) 525-1666  
Toll Free: (800) 667-7060  
Fax: (306) 522-4612  
Email: [regina@sun-nurses.sk.ca](mailto:regina@sun-nurses.sk.ca)

**Saskatoon Office**  
204 - 440 2nd Avenue North  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 2C3  
Phone: (306) 665-2100  
Toll Free: (800) 667-3294  
Fax: (306) 665-9755  
Email: [saskatoon@sun-nurses.sk.ca](mailto:saskatoon@sun-nurses.sk.ca)

[www.sun-nurses.sk.ca](http://www.sun-nurses.sk.ca)

*Healthy Members, Healthy Union, Healthy Communities*

March 13, 2020

Scott Livingstone  
Chief Executive Officer  
Saskatchewan Health Authority  
[scott.livingstone@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:scott.livingstone@saskhealthauthority.ca)

Dear Mr. Livingstone:

I write following a concerning conference call SUN participated in on the morning of March 12, 2020, with the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), Ministry of Health and other provincial healthcare unions regarding the province's preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have learned the highest level of personal protective equipment (PPE) – the N-95 respirator mask – will not be made available to registered nurses and health workers who may come into contact with the virus at testing sites.

The Public Health Agency of Canada admits there is still a lot we don't know about how the virus is spread and its clinical severity. With so many unknowns, we believe the SHA must follow the precautionary principle in our province's response to COVID-19. If the precautionary principle is not instituted throughout the healthcare system, nurses and other healthcare workers could become vectors spreading the disease to each other and their patients.

According to Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines, an N-95 respirator and facial protection are recommended for all healthcare workers present in a room where a procedure that could generate aerosols is performed on a patient with signs, symptoms and exposure criteria consistent with COVID-19.

The US Centre for Disease Control similarly recommends that N-95 respirators should be used when healthcare workers are present for or performing a procedure that could generate aerosols.

The fact is, we do not know all we should about how coronavirus is transmitted from person to person, and it is likely that multiple transmission modes are in play, including droplets, aerosols and physical contact. Precaution requires that we assume the possibility of all paths, particularly in the early stages of an outbreak.

Based on the precautionary principle, it is the position of SUN that at a minimum all registered nurses and frontline healthcare workers who have the potential for exposure and/or who are caring for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients be protected using a fit-tested NIOSH-approved N-95 respirator.

We cannot risk registered nurses and other frontline healthcare workers becoming infected and in turn, infecting the public they are committed to protecting.

**SUN is calling on the SHA to do the following:**

- Implement plans and protocols in response to COVID-19 based on the precautionary principle. SUN maintains that all healthcare workers at risk of exposure to COVID-19 be equipped with N-95 respirator masks.
- Include SUN and the province's registered nurses in the planning and execution of all protocols and procedures relating to COVID-19. Transparent and regular communication is essential.
- Ensure front line healthcare workers at all worksites across the province are fit-tested for the N-95 respirator mask, and that the necessary training on the proper use, donning and doffing of PPE occurs.
- Contact all staff and individuals who are exposed to confirmed COVID-19 patients in an effort to prevent further transmission.
- Plan for surge of patients with possible or confirmed COVID-19, including plans to isolate, cohort, and provide safe staffing. This is critical given many areas of the province's health system, including our tertiary centre emergency rooms where many potential cases will likely present, are already running at capacity.
- Develop a strategy in concert with registered nurses and other healthcare provider groups that will address a potential long-term care home outbreak given the known vulnerability of this patient population.
- Implement innovative testing solutions currently being employed in other countries such as drive-through COVID-19 testing sites. This will help the province test more people more safely and improve the public health response by identifying and isolating those who are ill. Furthermore, it will protect at-risk groups such as the elderly or immunocompromised from coming into close proximity with others who are potentially infected. Drive-through testing sites are also a safe, easy to employ and cost-effective way to meet the needs of rural communities.

We look forward to engaging in future dialogue with the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Ministry of Health. Our constructive partnership and cooperation can have a serious impact on protecting Saskatchewan from COVID-19.

I eagerly anticipate your quick response.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy M. Zambory".

Tracy Zambory  
President of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses

cc Suann Laurent, COO, Saskatchewan Health Authority  
Mike Northcott, Chief Human Resource Officer, Saskatchewan Health Authority  
Jennifer Green, Acting Director, Labour Relations, Ministry of Health  
SUN Board of Directors