



SASKATCHEWAN UNION OF NURSES

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August 27, 2021

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health
Room 204, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Minister Merriman:

I write to you today on behalf of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) and our more than 10,000 Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN) and Registered Nurse (Nurse Practitioner) (RN(NP)) members, to share my deep concern and disappointment at your recent comments regarding health system capacity and the ongoing shortage of healthcare workers in the province.

We are facing an incredibly challenging time in our province. While vaccinations have provided some mechanism for protection, the lack of additional health measures has allowed variant COVID strains to circulate among the people of Saskatchewan. Patients are now entering into hospital, including the province's ICUs, younger and sicker than at earlier phases of the pandemic. Amidst the resulting anxiety and loss felt by those families and our member's, registered nurses are too often finding themselves in a situation where there are not enough staff to provide the necessary patient care.

Just recently, we have heard from the Saskatchewan Health Authority, that the province is experiencing "a very real labour shortage" due to individuals leaving the healthcare system, and "staffing challenges are being experienced in many areas across our system as we are balancing service resumption with our ongoing COVID response".

Increasing numbers of registered nurse positions across the province are vacant, including 95 ICU positions. None of these are due to registered nurses "taking vacation". Many have still not been able to take vacation time, are being mandated to work, and are continuously taking on overtime shifts so that their patients would have the care required.

This issue is magnified by the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, 78% of our members report a greater sense of tension, 67.2% reported a greater sense of anxiety or hopelessness, and 75.4% reported increased concern with safety. Based on member survey data, 47.5% of members have considered leaving the profession over the past year, with nursing conditions being the leading factor. 1 in 5 SUN members are currently eligible to retire.



This is an untenable situation. Registered nurses and other healthcare professionals are burning out at unprecedented rates. Our members are looking to you and your government for leadership and support. We do believe there are solutions and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss those with you.

To coordinate a time that fits with your schedule, your staff can contact my office assistant, Carmen Powers, at 306-566-5570 or Carmen.Powers@sun-nurses.sk.ca.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy M. Zambory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Zambory RN
President