

Fast Facts

For Starting Your Career As A Registered Nurse



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President's Message

CONGRATULATIONS on choosing a career in registered nursing!!

When people think of registered nurses, words like “caring” and “compassion” are often the first things that come to mind. There is no arguing there are those innate and unique qualities that cannot be taught, but what many people forget or are unaware of is that registered nursing is also a science.

The knowledge and skills registered nurses possess have been acquired through extensive education and clinical experience, and truly do make the difference in life or death situations.

Your career as a Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Psychiatric Nurse (RPN), or Registered Nurse (Nurse Practitioner) (RN(NP)) will be challenging, rewarding and empowering. The nursing profession is dynamic, innovative and stimulating. Few professions give you as many choices of where to work, or areas to specialize in. You have chosen a career that can offer you infinite possibilities around the world.

As providers of expert care in our public health care system, each and every day registered nurses are able to make a real difference in the lives of individuals, families and the communities we live in.

As a fellow registered nurse I am honoured to stand beside you and guide you through this journey as you begin your career. As a future member of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) know that as your President, my door is always open for you to voice your concerns and to share your personal success stories.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy M. Zambory". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline for the name "Zambory".

Tracy Zambory, RN
SUN President

Who is SUN?

SUN was established in 1974 under the Saskatchewan Trade Union Act. SUN represents almost 9,000 Registered Nurses (RNs), Registered Psychiatric Nurses (RPNs), Registered Nurse (Nurse Practitioners) (RN(NP)s), and graduates of these programs. Registered nurses work in rural and urban:

- Acute care hospitals;
- Long-term care facilities;
- Home care services;
- Integrated facilities;
- Public and mental health services;
- Schools; and
- Canadian Blood Services offices.

SUN's primary role is to protect the individual and collective rights of registered nurses in Saskatchewan, to ensure our members are able to practice in a safe environment in order to provide patients with high quality, safe care.

SUN's role in representing our members extends far beyond our work in labour relations. SUN is a strong advocate for the registered nursing profession, patient safety and improving our healthcare system. It is through our work with the government, health regions, regulatory bodies, patients, educational institutes, and other key stakeholders, and evidence-based research that SUN is able to ensure our members are represented in all aspects of their working and professional lives.

In addition to our work and advocacy in the healthcare system, SUN and our members are also a voice for all working people in Saskatchewan – unionized and non-unionized alike. SUN strongly believes that in order to have a healthy union with healthy members we must first have healthy communities. This means ensuring everyone has the right to fair, balanced and safe labour legislation, decent hours of work, a decent wage and the ability to work in a safe and healthy environment – regardless of social status, education or occupation – everyone deserves to have a voice and to be treated with respect.

What makes SUN unique?

SUN plays an important role in Saskatchewan's health care system, giving registered nurses a greater voice in the workplace so they can confidently be a voice for the patients and families they care for. SUN promotes higher quality patient care by advocating for better working conditions and registered nurse staffing levels that are in line with what research points to as safest for patients. An overarching principle of patient safety and well-being has always, and will always, be the driving force behind our membership's bargaining priorities.

We know that registered nurses rely on the work their union performs on their behalf — it empowers them to work to their full potential and to realize their passion for helping others, which at the end of the day is the sole reason they do what they do. Registered nurses wouldn't settle for anything less and neither should the people of Saskatchewan.

Eighty percent of the registered nurses in Canada are members of a union. Nurses' union members take home some of the strongest pay and benefits packages in healthcare in the country.

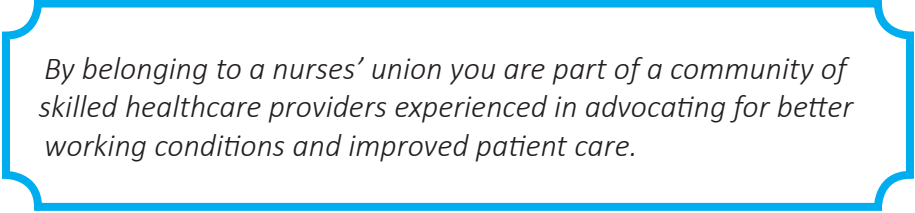
Unions are viewed as significant contributors to the economic and social well-being of their communities. SUN in particular is seen as an effective and innovative Union. Trade unions are considered an irreplaceable driver of workplace improvements. Unions are credited with improving wages, and health and safety for both union and non-union workers.

As a Union representing a single profession, we are able to focus our efforts on a common goal, experience or concern in the working lives of registered nurses. SUN members have indicated this undivided attention is more desirable than the disparate interests of larger, more diverse unions representing persons in different occupations.

Membership uniformity is a core strength for SUN. Through our community of interests, our knowledge and our profession becomes our strength; it allows us to provide knowledgeable statements in

regard to professional development, patient safety and advocacy. As a trade union, SUN strongly believes in improving the working lives of our members and non-unionized employees, and furthering the achievements of the labour movement as a whole. SUN members trust their Union and are proud to be members. They consider SUN a leader among unions, and in their communities, and are attracted by its role in public policy and healthcare management.

Our members hold SUN to the highest standards and we strive to meet and exceed those standards. Our members expect SUN to publically advocate for the registered nursing profession and high quality, safe patient care, to actively support our communities and charitable organizations. It is because of our democratically elected and accountable structure that we have built the trust that allows us to meet your expectations.



By belonging to a nurses' union you are part of a community of skilled healthcare providers experienced in advocating for better working conditions and improved patient care.

In addition, the public's perspective of SUN shows that, as a Union, it receives high marks for effectively representing nurses in the workplace, for being answerable and open to its members, for contributing to improvements in healthcare and for being open and honest with the public (August 2012 public survey). It is through our active voice within the media and through our public relations campaigns as we advocate for the registered nursing profession and high quality, safe, evidence-based, patient-centred care, SUN has been able to set ourselves apart from other organizations within healthcare.

SUN vs. The Regulatory Bodies

As the regulatory bodies for the registered nursing profession, the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association (SRNA) and Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan (RPNAS), primary role is to ensure the safety and protection of the public. Secondly, the SRNA and RPNAS ensure RNs, RPNs and RN(NP)s are properly educated, adhere to their professions' code of ethics and meet their defined standards of practice in order to provide safe, high quality patient care.

Public concerns are reported to and investigated by the appropriate regulatory bodies; disciplinary actions are dependent on the findings of the investigation and/or hearings conducted by the regulatory bodies.

The majority of registered nurses working within the public healthcare system in Saskatchewan are members of SUN. SUN bargains the terms and conditions of employment for our members, and once in place, assists nurses in enforcing those conditions; and fairly represents every member in a grievance or rights arbitration in a manner that is not arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith.

In simple terms, the role of your regulatory body is to protect the public; the role of SUN is to protect the registered nurses.



Working as a Nurse

Temporary License

Once you graduate you are able to start working as a registered nurse before you successfully obtain your license. Before you start, the onus is on you to ensure you have met all the requirements and obtain your temporary license from the appropriate regulatory body – SRNA or RPNAS.

As a Graduate Nurse (GN) you are able to practice registered nursing under the supervision of a registered nurse in accordance with your regulatory body's policies and for the period specified in your temporary license.

Graduate Nurses hired with a temporary license to practice will receive the Graduate Nurse (Unregistered) rate of pay. Graduate Nurses or Graduate Psychiatric Nurses with a temporary license who become registered within the first eight months of employment shall have their rate of pay adjusted up to the first step of the Nurse A rate.

This adjustment shall be retroactive to the date of successful writing of the exam or the date of employment, whichever is most recent.

Leave of absence from work, without pay, may be granted upon request in order for you to study for the professional registration exam. In addition, you are entitled to receive at least 16 hours off duty prior to writing your professional registration examination.

If you are scheduled to work on the day you are to write a professional registration exam, you shall be released from duty with no loss of pay.

Probation

When you begin employment within a bargaining unit, you are on probation during your first 60 working days or 480 hours of employment with the Employer - whichever occurs first.

Your Employer has the option, on one occasion only, to extend this probation up to a maximum of 40 working days or 320 hours. This is based on the opinion of the Employer who feels circumstances warrant this extension.

Seniority

Seniority is used by SUN as an objective measuring stick recognizing an employee's contribution to the workplace independent of the hours worked.

Seniority is accrued from the date on which a permanent or temporary employee's continuous service within the bargaining unit (working as a SUN member) commenced, including employment as casual, temporary or permanent.

Newly hired employees to the bargaining unit are ranked on the seniority list according to their date of hire.

You maintain your ranking once hired until you resign or retire.

Job Selection

Upon graduation, you are able to bid on all jobs that are posted in your facility or those in another facility. Remember that seniority will play a major role as to whether or not you are the successful candidate.

The provincial Collective Agreement states: "In all cases of promotion, transfer and filling of vacancies, the position shall be offered on the basis of seniority provided the applicant possesses the qualifications required to fill the position and the sufficient ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position."

Representation

Once you have been hired, you have the right to union representation during performance expectations/coaching meetings.

Resolving Workplace Issues

Under our provincial Collective Agreement, SUN has a formal process in place for registered nurses to document their concerns regarding their professional practice environment called the Nursing Advisory Process. By reporting workload concerns and completing a Work Situation Report (WSR) every time there is a workload concern, a practice issue or an unsafe condition, the responsibility is shifted back to the Employer.

The WSR itself is not a professional responsibility complaint, but the start of a paper trail to identify and demonstrate ongoing problems which will require a response by your manager. It also acts as evidence that you have identified an issue to your manager related to patient safety or potential risk and provides you with the proper documentation should you find yourself in the position of responding to complaints with the SRNA or RPNAS.

The process has led to increased staffing levels, practice setting improvements, safer workplaces, enhanced nursing practice/quality of care, and the provision of necessary equipment and supplies - to only name a few.

More information regarding the Nursing Advisory Process can be found under the Professional Practice section of our website .



Member Inquiries

Collective Agreement & Professional Practice Questions

If you have a problem in your workplace, it is recommended that SUN members first contact their Ward/Unit Representative or Local President for assistance. If they are not available to assist you, SUN Provincial is always available to answer your questions. You may contact either the Regina or Saskatoon SUN office and a SUN Employment Relations Officer (ERO) on-call will be available to provide advice and assistance. If required, a member of the Professional Practice Team will be available to provide advice and assistance.

Answering Your Questions

Member inquiries are logged, and, in most instances, calls are returned that same day. To help the staff handle your call effectively, please be prepared to answer a few questions from our receptionist - your name, the name of the facility you work at, a brief description of the problem/question, a phone number where you may be reached, and a convenient time to return your call.

Contact Information for SUN Provincial

Regina Office	306.525.1666 or 800.667.7060
Saskatoon Office	306.665.2100 or 800.667.3294

Your Safety

Every worker has the right to know of any hazardous situations at their workplace, to participate on their Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee, and to refuse unsafe work.

These three fundamental rights are enshrined in the OH&S section of *The Saskatchewan Employment Act and Regulations*. If you have a question or concern about your safety at work, speak to the OH&S Representative for your unit/ward and/or facility/agency.

If you are injured on the job and require medical attention, you must tell your Employer, report your injury to the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), and follow the roles and responsibilities set out by WCB.



More than JUST A NURSE

Registered nurses do make a difference. They are the essential providers of expert care in our health care system. Registered nurses provide expert care to patients and their families. It's a proven fact that optimizing the registered nurse role improves patient outcomes, reduces mortality, and improves treatment experience. By partnering with patients and families, registered nurses enhance not only health care, but quality of life as well.

As a new registered nurse, know you can make a difference in the lives of your patients, their families and your communities, and recognize the value registered nurses bring to our healthcare system.

To do this, your task is simple:

1. Wear the professional designation pin you will receive when you become a SUN member and wear it with pride.
2. When introducing yourself to patients and their loved ones, include your designation. When asked what you do as a career proudly say "I AM A REGISTERED (PSYCHIATRIC) NURSE".

You worked long and hard to earn your designation – it is your time to show it off!

Notes



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