



**Partnership Between  
The Government of Saskatchewan  
and  
The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses**

## **Partnership between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses**

The parties acknowledge that there is an urgent need to stabilize and rebuild the Registered Nurse and Registered Psychiatric Nurse workforce in Saskatchewan in order to ensure that our health care system can deliver high quality, timely and accessible health services that Saskatchewan residents need.

SUN polling in November 2007 asked members about their employment intentions if working conditions do not improve dramatically over the next three years.

25% of those polled said they would retire or resign. 13% said they would revert to casual. 24% said they will continue working their present hours. 39% said they were unsure.

If nurses act on their intentions over the next three years 1,820 nurses will retire or resign, and another 780 will revert to casual. The number of full time nurses and part time nurses will drop dramatically, from 6,020 to 3,416, a loss of 2,600 full time and part time nurses, in addition to the current shortfall of 1,000 positions.

The province must persuade large numbers of experienced and skilled nurses to remain in the nursing workforce until aggressive recruitment and expansion of nursing education programs can slow, and finally reverse the falling supply of nurses in Saskatchewan. A comprehensive nursing retention and recruitment strategy that “works for nurses and benefits patients” must include action to:

- ◄ Improve workplace conditions for nurses by improving nurse/patient ratios, addressing safety issues, and providing up-to-date equipment that works.
- ◄ To improve nurse patient ratios, Saskatchewan Health will require Regional Health Authorities to “hire 800 Registered Nurses by filling 600 existing vacancies and hiring an additional 200 Registered Nurses.” Until that target is accomplished, Regional Health Authorities shall act aggressively to retain and recruit nurses and be required to maintain, as a minimum baseline, the number of full time equivalent RN and RPNs (including current vacancies) employed by each Regional Health Authority as of November 1, 2007 with no positions or vacancies abolished or replaced by other health providers.
- ◄ Ensure that Regional Health Authorities are responsible and accountable for the care they provide. In order to provide financial support and incentives for regional health authorities to meet retention and recruitment targets and ensure that nursing budgets are utilized for frontline nursing services, a joint Health Region/SUN Retention and Recruitment Fund shall be established for each health region, effective April 1/2008.
  - The joint funds shall be dedicated to supporting initiatives to fill RN and RPN vacancies.

- Financial contributions to the joint Retention and Recruitment Funds shall be made as noted (bolded and underlined).

#### **April 1/2008 to March 31/2009 (40% Region contribution-60% Ministry)**

- Effective April 1/2008, each Health Region shall contribute funding to each Health Region/SUN Retention and Recruitment fund equal to 40% of the monthly salary and benefit costs of each RN and RPN vacancy that existed on November 1/2007, with Saskatchewan Health contributing the remaining 60%.
- Thereafter, until April 1/2009, Health Regions shall contribute to the joint funds at the first of each month, funds equal to 40% of the monthly salary and benefits costs for the total number of FTE RN and RPN vacancies that existed on the first day of the previous month while Saskatchewan Health contributes the remaining 60%. (e.g. On May 1/2008, Health Region contributions to the joint funds shall be based on the vacancies that existed on April 1/2008.)
- Where the total number of FTE (full time equivalent) positions actively employed (i.e. excluding vacant positions) in each health region exceeds the baseline FTE established for each health region, contributions for vacancies will be reduced by the number of positions that are in excess of the FTE baseline.

#### **April 1/09 to March 31/2010 (additional 40% Region 20% Ministry)**

- ✦ Health region contributions for the joint Health Region/SUN funds based on the above formula shall be increased to 80%, supplemented by Saskatchewan Health contributions of 20%.

#### **April 1/2010 to March 31/2011 (additional 20%= 100% Region contribution)**

- ✦ Health Region contributions for the joint Health Region/SUN funds shall increase to 100%.

#### **Quarterly Retention and Recruitment Targets**

- ✦ The Ministry of Health, SUN and the Health Regions shall collaborate on establishing quarterly targets for the baseline FTEs employed in each health region over the next three years, based on the broad objective of increasing provincial baseline FTEs by 800, divided into annual targets of 40% by April 1/2009, 40% by April 2010, and the remaining 20% by April 2011.
- ✦ Provide incentives for senior nurses to stay in the workforce longer such as recognizing long term service and providing opportunities for mentoring new graduates and immigrant nurses.

- ◀ Provide an enhanced collective bargaining mandate for upcoming SUN/SAHO negotiations which recognizes the special nursing retention and recruitment challenges that Saskatchewan faces, and permit RHAs to offer competitive salaries, benefits, and innovative retention and recruitment initiatives which will permit Saskatchewan to compete effectively with provinces that attract Saskatchewan nurses.
- ◀ Increase the use of nurse practitioners. Immediately create positions and offer full time employment to all licensed Nurse Practitioners in Saskatchewan.
- ◀ Provide assistance and training opportunities for professional development such as obtaining the specialized skills required in intensive care units, emergency rooms, and operating rooms.
- ◀ Recruit expatriate nurses back to Saskatchewan.
- ◀ Recruit more immigrant nurses.
- ◀ Undertake a significant recruitment campaign to bring non-practicing RNs back into the health care system.
- ◀ Ensure that new graduates have permanent full-time employment opportunities.
- ◀ Establish a bridging program to make it easier for LPNs to become RNs.
- ◀ “Renew the focus on prevention....and strengthen provincial efforts to promote wellness and preventive care through education, nutrition, and physical activity.”
  1. Reduced clinical hours for senior nurses to enable them to coordinate care, do patient teaching, clinical education, mentorship, health promotion and prevention.
  2. Expanded and enhanced roles for RNs and RPNs working to their full scope of professional nursing practice can, with reduced clinical workloads, and collaboration with other health professionals and providers, coordinate patient care pre and post-discharge from facilities, expand RHA patient teaching and support, establish and lead chronic disease support groups, expand RHAs capacity for community-based and targeted health promotion initiatives. Nurses who would otherwise retire early or reduce their hours could significantly impact the efficient use of the health care system by individuals trying to navigate the health care system, while burdened by multiple chronic diseases and inadequate support.
  3. Nurses in every facility and unit, working with staff, patients and clients, can identify nurse-led health provider, patient and client teaching initiatives and support that would identify key patient safety and health promotion initiatives, ranging from medication compliance, critical incident reduction, chronic disease management, fitness, smoking, and weight reduction programs.
- ◀ Conduct patient exit surveys to measure the quality of a patient's experience with the health care system. The information will be compiled and made public in a 'report card' and will be used to improve the health care system.
- ◀ Create 300 new Registered Nurse education seats in Saskatchewan.

The parties also commit to development of a more detailed action plan to implement the comprehensive nursing retention and recruitment strategy described above and to continue meeting on a quarterly basis to measure progress on the comprehensive retention and recruitment strategy, and to refine initiatives and opportunities to collaborate with other stakeholders.

Signed this 28<sup>th</sup> of February, 2008, in Regina in the Province of Saskatchewan.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan

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