

Tuesday » June  
6 » 2006

## Public's confidence in nurses retained despite shortages

**Anne Kyle**

Leader-Post

*Thursday, May 04, 2006*

Public confidence in registered nurses' professional competence remains high despite growing concerns that staffing shortages have resulted in a decline in the quality of care, a new survey says.

"A quarter of the people surveyed reported that the care provided by RNs today is worse than it was five years ago," said Donna Brunskill, executive director of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association.

The results of the survey conducted by Sigma Analytics on behalf of the SRNA were released Wednesday at the association's annual meeting.

The survey was part of the SRNA's public accountability monitoring to see what the public's perception was regarding registered nurses and the role they play in the delivery of health services, Brunskill said.

"The survey confirms what the SRNA has been saying all along that we need to address the quality of nursing work environment and the nursing shortage that is growing more urgent every day," she said.

The public response Brunskill said clearly indicates that there is some confusion as to who the service providers are and the need for more of an effort to clearly identify RNs and their roles in the delivery of services.

Of the 609 Saskatchewan residents who participated in the survey those who felt the care had declined commented on the highly demanding workplace workloads, understaffing, a shortage of RNs and multi-tasking demands that limited direct RN time with clients, she said.

"The findings were very positive and very encouraging to see," said SRNA President Fay Puckett referring to the confidence levels in nurses and the 89 per cent support for the need for more RNs in the province's health care system.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus four per cent.

Both SRNA officials said they were heartened by Health Minister Len Taylor's message to their membership that the province recognizes the need for more registered nurses and is working on implementing strategies outlined in the province's health human resources plan.

Nurses need to play a key role at the policy tables and in the problem solving aimed at making the workplace safer for both the nurses and their patients, Puckett and Brunskill said.

The regional health authorities have to put significant effort into nursing leadership and the recruitment and retention of RNs in the valued positions that they are in, Brunskill said.

"We must acknowledge the extent of the current shortage and the inadequate nursing work life and take immediate action to repair it," Brunskill said.

More nurses need to be trained and full-time positions need to be created to keep those nurses working here in Saskatchewan, she said.

"Of the current graduating class 95 per cent plan to stay here," Brunskill said. "When I meet

with nursing graduates they consistently tell me they want to stay in Saskatchewan but can't get full-time jobs."

The SRNA membership passed a resolution Wednesday calling for an increase of an additional 150 nurse education program seats over and above the existing 400 seats already in place.

The province and the regional health authorities need to hire more nurses to work in the acute-care, long-term care and public health systems, Puckett and Brunskill said.

© The Leader-Post (Regina) 2006

Copyright © 2006 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.