

# Health staff issue

BY SHELLY BANKS, THE STARPHOENIX NOVEMBER 2, 2011

I sure hope that Brad Wall and the Saskatchewan Party are not convincing the general public that they have increased staffing levels in the health sector.

As a health provider, my experience is that they have tried to address staffing issues for registered nurses, while the rest struggle. The public ought to know that there are staff shortages regularly in such hands-on care classifications as special care aides and licensed practical nurses.

Visit a community nursing home and you will see it for yourself. Those who work in diagnostic classifications are routinely required to work overtime. Critical retention and recruitment issues have been largely ignored.

During our collective bargaining process, SEIUWest presented more than 3,000 examples of incidents where staffing levels did not meet required essential service levels. We received no reply from the Health minister.

The government has expanded private, for-profit options in health care. So we are now competing for the same pool of health professionals, and taxpayers get to pay more for these services.

I note that the leaders' debate did not involve a question on this topic. As I understand it, this is not working out so well for the Regina-Qu'Appelle Health Region. A news report indicates the private Omni Surgery Centre Ltd. is suing the health region for a potential \$10 million.

Doesn't it make more sense to invest in our public system?

Shelly Banks Milden

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