

35th UNA Annual General Meeting: **Nurses 'at your side, on your side'**

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United Nurses of Alberta
NewsBulletin



*Tara Johansen, President
Local 13, Manning Health Centre*



November Demand-Setting Meeting:

'All business, all about business'

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**Union Educator receives
Diamond Jubilee Medal**

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*Wishing you
a happy holiday!*

The holidays are upon us, and with them the time to put our worries and concerns aside for a little while and focus on family, friends and celebrating the season. So please enjoy your holiday season. There will be plenty of time for us to focus on the challenges that face us as nurses ... *next year!*

We know that 2013 is going to be a busy year.

With negotiations for a new Provincial Collective Agreement beginning early in the year and continuing until we have an agreement that Alberta's 25,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, student nurses and allied workers can be truly proud of.

Just before this issue of NewsBulletin went to press, your worksite representatives from throughout Alberta met in Edmonton for UNA's Demand-Setting Meeting, the event at which our bargain-

ing positions are discussed, democratically voted upon and set for the coming round of negotiations.

In the months ahead, your priorities will be the priorities of UNA's bargaining committee as we work through 2013 to improve the Provincial Agreement – and to improve (and not erode) our public health care system.

In 2013, I urge you to show your pride and promote our nursing profession. Let your clients, patients and residents know that you are a nurse and a UNA member.

Keep in touch with bargaining on UNA's website – www.una.ab.ca.

I look forward to working with you in 2013 and beyond. UNA will continue to fight for the right of Albertans to good nursing care when they need it. Happy New Year!





November's Demand-Setting Meeting was 'all business'

Delegates to the United Nurses of Alberta's 2012 Demand-Setting Meeting gathered in Edmonton on Nov. 27 for three days of what President Heather Smith characterized as "all business, and all about business."

More than 400 voting delegates were at the Edmonton Expo Centre for the first step in the effort to create, as Smith put it, "a new agreement that sets the standard for nurses in this province and, I dare say, sets the standard for nurses all across this country."

In all, more than 700 people took part in the important first step of the 2013 round of bargaining for the Provincial Collective Agreement when board members, negotiating committee members, union staff, funded observers and others were added to the voting delegates.

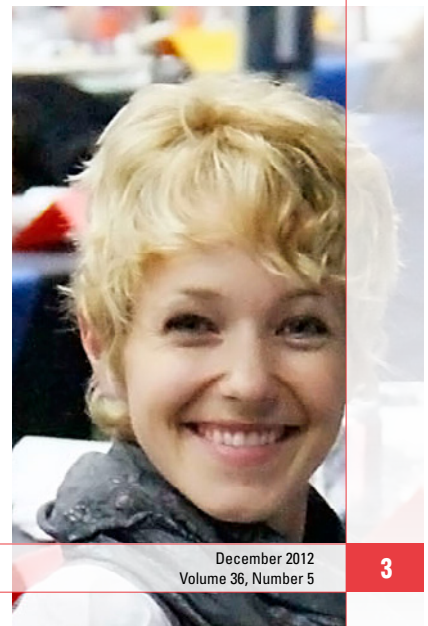
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2013 Bargaining



Some of the Delegates from the November Demand Setting Meeting



... continued from page 3

The delegates had the opportunity at the meeting to examine in detail UNA's "ingoin" negotiating proposals, and to amend them if they agreed, within the scope of the negotiating committee's submission to the meeting.


Over three intense days of hard work, they did just that, emerging on the afternoon of Thursday, Nov. 29, with a complete bargaining package to put to the union's general membership for ratification. UNA expects that province-wide vote to take place on Jan. 30.

Feb. 12 is the target date for an exchange of bargaining proposals in the negotiations with Alberta Health Services and the other employers included under the Provincial Collective Agreement – Alberta Health Services, the Bethany Care Society, Covenant Health and the Lamont Health Centre. Face-

to-face negotiations will commence soon after that, UNA expects.

UNA also expects to negotiate the same contract for employees of the Bethany Group, Capital Care, Carewest Col. Belcher, Clifton Manor, the Good Samaritan Society, St. Michael's Edmonton, Salem Manor and the Shepherd's Care Society.

When an agreement has been reached, all affected UNA locals will have the chance to vote on the agreement.

When locals have ratified the agreement, the all eligible members in UNA's general membership will then get to take part in a ratification vote. Only when the agreement has been ratified at that level will UNA's leadership sign the agreement. 

Some of the Delegates from the November Demand Setting Meeting



'At your side, on your side'



is not just a slogan: Heather Smith to AGM

President Heather Smith, acclaimed to a new two-year term as leader of the United Nurses of Alberta, opened the union's 2012 annual general meeting on Oct. 23 with the reminder that "at your side and on your side" is not just a slogan, it is who we are and what we do."

"Every day our actions speak volumes about our intent and interest, not just in nursing but in working for all Albertans," Smith told the approximately 775 people in the hall at Edmonton's Northlands Expo Centre for the first day of UNA's 35th AGM.

Secretary Treasurer Karen Craik was also acclaimed to new two-year term on the UNA Executive.

"Now 25,000 members strong, there is no question that we speak for working nurses in this province," said Smith, who was first elected as UNA president in 1988.

In the 35 years since UNA was founded, she noted, a lot has changed for Alberta nurses, mostly for the better. But in 2012, with right-wing governments and lobbyists in the driver's seat throughout the world, UNA in many ways faces similar challenges to those it faced after its inception in 1977, Smith warned.

"Every day our actions speak volumes about our intent and interest, not just in nursing but in working for all Albertans."

– Heather Smith



Heather Smith

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Scenes from the 2012 AGM





“Looking back at the distance we have travelled reminds us of the sacrifices we had to make individually and organizationally to get where we are today,” she said. “What do we need to do to meet the challenges of today, in a very anti-public-sector, anti-union environment, not just to ensure we do not go back, but that we go forward as nurses, as a union and as citizens?”

“We have big goals ahead of us, but big goals have never deterred us,” she said.

“We expect to face bargaining challenges we may not have experienced since 1988,” Smith said, adding that UNA will also know soon if Alberta Health Services’ “scheduling optimization” plans can be resolved with respect for nurses and their negotiated collective agreement.

UNA's Executive Officers with Alberta Health Minister Fred Horne.



“Our goals include vision, not just dreams, and a mission,” she said. “We envision expanded public medicare, inclusive of pharmacare and a national long-term care program. And we want a federal government that works with the provinces and negotiates a Health Accord that is about more than just money.”

The federal government, she added, needs to be “committed to real health and high-quality health care from coast to coast to coast, that also means addressing the determinants of health of all Canadian.”

“We envisage a future with real health workforce planning, a future where nurses continue to touch patients and not just to think about their care,” Smith added to the cheers of delegates and others. “I have been proud to represent this membership during the past year,” Smith concluded. “I am honoured to be entrusted to do so for two more years.”

Other speakers at the AGM included Canadian Federation of Nurses President Linda Silas and Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan, both of whom urged Alberta nurses at the three-day event, which ran until Oct. 25, to stand together to defend public health care and union rights in Canada.

Alberta Health Minister Fred Horne also briefly addressed the AGM, as did Alberta Health Services Nursing VP Deb Gordon.

Delegates also heard long-term care researchers Diana Gibson of Edmonton and Tamara Daly of Toronto’s York University call for nurses to push back against creeping privatization in the health care system.

Another speaker, former Nova Scotia nurse manager Barb Fry, shared valuable advice on creating healthy and productive work environments.



Some of the participants in UNA's 2012 AGM



UNA's annual general meetings provide an opportunity for activist nurses from all parts of Alberta to meet, hear from and query dynamic speakers, discuss the future of their union and the health care system, and elect Executive Officers and District Representatives.

Chosen by election or acclamation to serve as District Representatives to the Executive Board were Roxann Dreger, Susan Gallivan, Terri Barr, Teresa Caldwell, Jennifer Castro, Susan Coleman, Christina Doktor, Jenna Knight, Karen Kuprys, Keith Lang, Dianne McInroy, Sandra Zack, Wanda Zimmerman, Marie Aitken, Kathy Bouwmeester, Marie Corns, JoAnne Rhodes, Daphne Wallace, Denise Palmer, Cameron Westhead, Maxine Braun and John Terry. 🍷



Health researchers urge nurses to push back against privatization

Study after study shows costs are higher, care is worse and workplace violence against women is more frequent in for-profit than public health care facilities

The best strategy for ensuring fair, universal long-term care in our society is to resist the efforts by Canadian governments to encourage “privatization, commoditization and marketization” of seniors’ care, York University Health Policy Professor Tamara Daly told UNA’s AGM on Oct. 24.

“One of the things we can do is push back and say, ‘this is not working for us,’” said Daly, who along with Edmonton health care researcher Diana Gibson addressed delegates on the future on long-term care in Alberta and Canada.

Comparing seniors’ care in Canada unfavourably to the system in place in the Nordic countries, Daly argued to the applause of delegates that care for older adults in this country should be considered “a right of citizenship.”

Tamara Daly



Diana Gibson



Daly called for the imposition of legislated minimum care standards as “an absolute necessity.”

She added that because the majority of seniors in care are women, as is the majority of their caregivers, our increasingly privatized and inaccessible system is “a symbol not only of how we treat vulnerable women but of how women’s work is treated in this country.”

Study after study shows costs are higher, care is worse and workplace violence against women is more frequent in for-profit than public health care facilities.

Gibson, the Research Vice-President of PolicyLink Research and Consulting and the former director of the Parkland Institute, called the seniors’ care privatization strategy of the Alberta government an effort to “offload the costs of the public sector onto the backs of seniors.”

Gibson also noted that one reason private-sector costs are typically higher is that for-profit companies lack the public sector’s ability to buy in bulk. “Bulk purchasing is cheaper. The private sector doesn’t have access to the bulk purchasing discount that the public sector does.” 🍷

Front-line advice: you can create a better future

The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself, former Nova Scotia nurse manager Barb Fry advised delegates at the final session of UNA's 35th annual general meeting.

"We can no longer eat our young and terrorize each other," the reformed "workplace queen" told the AGM. And the way to solve that problem is to undergo a self-imposed attitude adjustment, she explained. "Choose your attitude wisely, it's your right to choose."

Fry noted that a number of harmful (and voluntarily adopted) workplace attitude archetypes – including the aforementioned "workplace queens," plus their princesses, in addition to rumour mongers, patient traders and eye rollers – continue to current problems in the nursing profession.

Her suggested workplace cure: "Live your standards and your code of ethics. Be accountable responsible for creating healthy workplace relationships."

The answer to workplace bullies like the queens and their princesses: "Don't confront. Have a conversation. Reclaim your professional nursing power."

"Toxic behaviours deprofessionalize nursing," she concluded. "We cannot continue working this way any longer."



Barb Fry

Fixing the situation in Alberta health care workplaces can be boiled down to three letters we all know well, she said:

**U
N
A**

"Unify and strengthen your nursing practice through mutual respect, collaboration and excellence in all you do."

"Never regret the path you chose to be a nurse."

"Act now to reclaim the vanishing art of professional nursing."

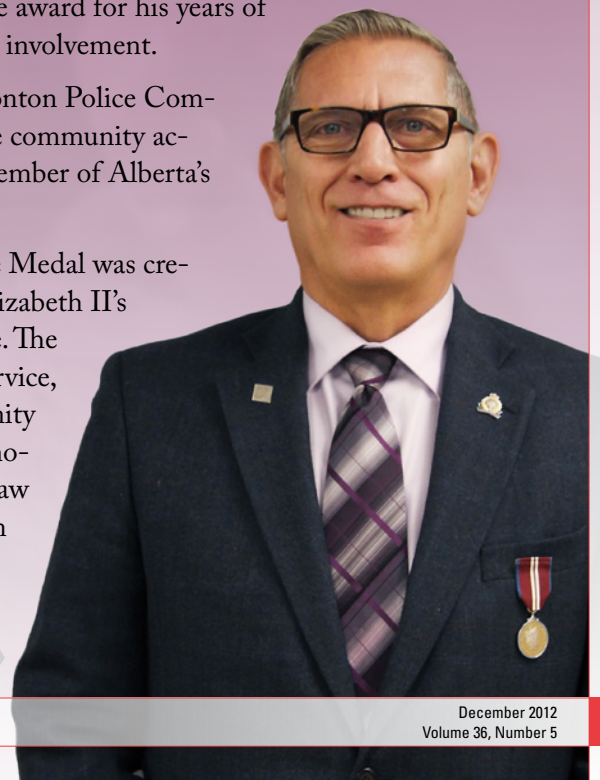

Educator Murray Billett receives Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal

United Nurses of Alberta Educator Murray Billett was presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal by Alberta Premier Alison Redford and Lieutenant-Governor Don Ethell on Nov. 14 in Edmonton.

Billett, who works at UNA's Provincial Office in Edmonton, received the award for his years of service and community involvement.

He is a former Edmonton Police Commissioner and longtime community activist who is a proud member of Alberta's gay community.

The Diamond Jubilee Medal was created to mark Queen Elizabeth II's 60th year on the throne. The award is a symbol of service, excellence and community involvement. The ceremony took place in the Shaw Theatre at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. 

Murray Billett 



Health care financing faces 'perfect storm'

– CFNU president

Health care is facing a “perfect storm” of aging demographics, increasing chronic disease and rising demand for public health at the same time as governments are cutting funding, Canadian Federation of Nurses’

Unions president Linda Silas warned nurses at the UNA AGM.

That’s why nurses need to be part of the discussions about the future of the public health care system, Silas said on Oct. 24. “We have to look beyond acute care and walk the talk about patient-centred and family-centred care. We need to improve primary health care and long-term care to save our health care system.”

And Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan told the AGM that a nurse’s job is never done – and that includes participating in politics and social activism, not just professional nursing.

“In many ways this is the most significant fight that the labour movement has faced since at least the Second World War,” said McGowan, referring to attacks on collective bargaining and pensions.

“We have to look beyond acute care and walk the talk about patient-centred and family-centred care.”

- Linda Silas CFNU President

“You have a pension that you can be proud of because you helped create it,” McGowan said of the Local Authorities Pension Plan, which most Alberta nurses will be able to access upon retirement.

He called on nurses “to say no to the Tea Party agenda” of right-wing Canadian politicians and stand up for the Canada we believe in.

UNA marks

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

United Nurses of Alberta recognizes the anniversary of the senseless slaying in Montreal of 14 young women by a mentally ill man with a semi-automatic rifle.

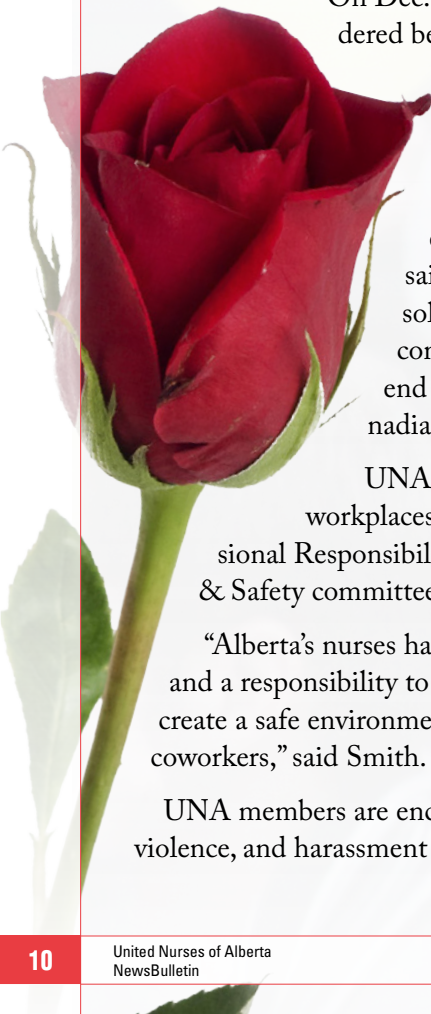
On Dec. 6, 1989, 14 young women were murdered because of their gender at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal.

“On the front-lines of health care, Alberta’s nurses see the impact of violence against women, and sometimes experience it in their own workplaces,” said UNA President Heather Smith. “This solemn occasion reminds us to renew our commitment to finding practical ways to end violence against women and girls in Canadian homes, communities and workplaces.”

UNA continues to work toward creating safer workplaces for Alberta’s nurses through Professional Responsibility Concerns and Occupational Health & Safety committees.

“Alberta’s nurses have a right to a safe working environment and a responsibility to make sure rules are being enforced to create a safe environment for our patients, residents, clients, and coworkers,” said Smith.

UNA members are encouraged to take a stand against abuse, violence, and harassment in the workplace. 🍷



Nurses call on provincial Health Ministers to ensure safe nurse staffing levels for patients

Excessive nursing workload is negatively affecting patient outcomes, according to a study released by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions in September at a meeting with provincial health ministers in Halifax.

UNA First Vice-President Bev Dick attended the Halifax meeting with other nurses' union elected officials from across Canada.

As a result of the study's conclusions, nurses are calling on the provincial health ministers to work with them to answer the question, just how many patients can one nurse safely care for?

"Matching nursing levels to number and acuity of patients pays off. It pays off for patients in terms of improved health. It pays off for nurses in terms of reduced illness and injury in the workplace, and it pays off for governments by lowering costs of nursing overtime and turnover, less hospital readmission and shorter lengths of stay," said CFNU President Linda Silas.

The report, Nursing Workload and Patient Care: Understanding the value of

nurses, the effects of excessive workload and how nurse-patient ratios and dynamic staffing models can help, surveyed Canadian and international evidence relating nurse staffing to patient outcomes, including mortality. It also captures the results from three consultations of experts and the experiences of frontline nurses.

Dr. Lois Berry, RN, PhD, the author of the report, said in researching this report, she was "struck both by the amount of evidence supporting safe nurse staffing to improve patient safety and quality of care, and the lack of progress toward better care for patients and families through improved nursing levels."

Inadequate nurse staffing has been proven to be associated with increases in mortality rates, hospital-acquired pneumonia, urinary tract infections, sepsis, hospital-acquired infections, pressure ulcers, upper gastrointestinal bleeding, shock and cardiac arrest, medication errors, falls, failure to rescue and longer than expected length of hospital stay. 🍷



Matching nursing levels to number and acuity of patients pays off. It pays off for patients in terms of improved health. It pays off for nurses in terms of reduced illness and injury in the workplace, and it pays off for governments by lowering costs

Charity on the move...



United Nurses of Alberta

United Nurses of Alberta | Local 196



CUPE | Local 30

Local 196 President Joy Arntzen shows off UNA's logo on the Edmonton Civic Employees Charitable Fund's total-wrap Edmonton Transit Bus highlighting the donations of the organization, which is supported by the community health local's members. The fund, whose approximately 10,000 contributors are members of nine unions and associations, supports donations to charities, special medical assistance to the families of members, and post-secondary scholarships for members' children. Pattison Outdoor donated the bus artwork.

Redford Government introduces 'whistleblower' law

Introduction of the act culminates a long period during which calls for whistleblower protection legislation has been urged by a variety of actors, including public service unions.

The Progressive Conservative government of Premier Alison Redford has introduced whistleblower legislation which it says is intended to protect workers who report wrongs, such as illegal acts, threats to the environment, health and safety, or gross mismanagement of public funds.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act passed on November 28 and became law on December 10.

Introduction of the act culminates a long period during which calls for whistleblower protection legislation has been urged by a variety of actors, including public service unions.

If passed, as is likely, the act will apply to government departments, provincial agencies, boards and commissions, academic institutions, school boards and health organizations such as Alberta Health Services.

It does not appear to apply to private or not-for-profit sector agencies or facilities, even when they are delivering a government service. Nor does it apply to corporations, either private or publicly held, even if they are operating in areas of public interest where employee intimidation may be a factor, for example, for-profit nursing homes.

The bill establishes both an internal process within each government department or agency to report wrongdoing, and a public interest disclosure commissioner and staff that oversees the work of those processes.

Criticism to date of the Act as written focuses on the view it directs employees with concerns or complaints into what may turn out to be a secretive and bureaucratic process that in fact will result in fewer public sector abuses being brought to the attention of the public.

The bill has also been criticized for the relatively tight two-year time frame it imposes on prosecutions for violations of the proposed act. ❗

green corner

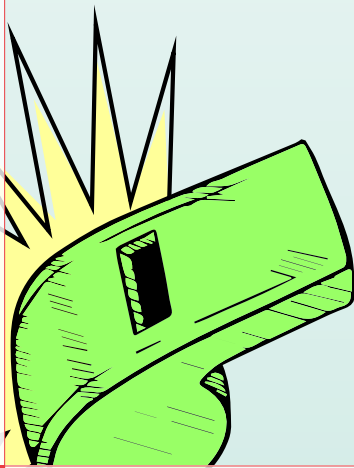
It can

Most folks are trying hard nowadays to live a greener lifestyle.

But that can be hard – harder than you expect – if you're not careful.

Take hope, however, there may be simple things we can do to make our footprint on the environment just a little smaller.

For example, most of us have considered using biodegradable, low-toxicity, natural ingredients over synthetic ingredients that may be harsher and harder on the environment when we clean our clothes. But we forget that when it comes to climate change, we may be able to make a bigger difference simply by not heating the water we're washing our garments in.



UNA role will increase, health minister Fred Horne promises

Health Minister Fred Horne assured Alberta's nurses on Oct. 24 that they are valued partners and that their union's role is going to increase significantly in the health care system.

Addressing delegates to UNA's AGM, Horne spoke about the government's introduction of Family Care Clinics and the role they will play in primary health care.

"We do not see this as a government-driven cookie-cutter approach. We see this as a grassroots community-driven process," he said.

Horne spoke about wanting to improve the health care system while signalling that the government is not interested in reorganization that would provoke instability in the health care system.

"I am not going to reorganize or disrupt what is happening in the health care but I will engage you finding headway on how to improve the system," Horne said.

Because of the Harper government's disengagement in health care, he said that he has focused on working with other provincial health ministers through the Health Council of Canada. ♡



Fred Horne

be hard to live a green lifestyle but keep trying!

So the most effective way to contribute to a cut in carbon emissions may simply be using the cold-water cycle on our washing machines when we do the laundry.

Indeed, some sources suggest we'd do less damage with cold washing using harsher detergent than with a hot wash and a gentle eco detergent!

Those of us with small kids may try to make a little space in landfills by replacing disposable paper diapers with reusable cloth ones. But this may not turn out to be the positive exchange we think it is – especially if we use lots of hot water to clean the cloth ones. (Worse, diaper-washing services tend to use even more energy than home washing machines.)

So the most environmentally responsible approach may be to wash cloth diapers in cool water – and hang them up to dry.

Finally, plenty of folks are buying local produce to cut down on the environmental impact of trucking produce from far away. This is a sound practice in season, as long as local materials don't use a lot of energy to create. Just remember that while local transport is important, it may not be the only factor – and, despite the trucking, field vegetables from California or Mexico could have a lower carbon footprint than hothouse veggies from Western Canada!

Food for thought! ♡

Green Corner is brought to you by UNA's
Education, Communication and OH&S Committee.

Dump Bill C-377

UNA president urges Parliamentarians

Bill C-377 is little more than a crude attempt by anti-union business interests to make it hard for working Canadians to speak effectively against them.

Moreover, if it becomes law, the private member's bill narrowly passed in the House of Commons on Dec. 12 with the support of most members of the Conservative caucus has the potential to do serious damage to Canadians' privacy rights. To become law, the bill must also pass in the Senate and receive Royal Assent.

As a result, President Heather Smith said in a submission to Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance, United Nurses of Alberta see the bill as little more than an attempt "to obstruct the operation of unions in society" and to help the Conservatives make political gains.

The bill proposed by Surrey-White Rock-Cloverdale MP Russ Hiebert, would introduce onerous and redundant reporting requirements on unions and many other organizations involved in labour relations practice, Smith said in her Oct. 16 letter to committee chair James Rajotte.

The bill, officially known as *An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act (Requirements for Labour Organizations)*, is described by its supporters as an effort to increase transparency and accountability of union operations, she observed.

"But UNA believes that this description is misleading," Ms. Smith told Mr.

Rajotte, who is the Conservative MP for Edmonton-Leduc. "Unions are among the most open and democratic institutions in our society, already transparent and responsive to their members, and furthermore they are not 'public institutions.'"

She noted that the Canadian Bar Association said of the bill: "it is unclear what issue or perceived problem the bill is intended to address."

Smith's letter also complained that some of the bill's provisions violate Alberta privacy law and are in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that it is redundant since provincial legislation already requires unions to provide financial information to their members.

The definition of labour organization in the bill is so broad it also includes pension funds, health plans and employer organizations involved in collective bargaining, so direct costs would be substantial for business and will have a harmful effect on investments and financial markets. Costs for taxpayers of administering the bill would also be extensive.

"UNA does not believe this law is well drafted, carefully thought out or designed to address an existing legislative need in Canada," she concluded in urging the committee to recommend against passage of the bill. "We believe it is certain to be vigorously challenged in the courts, at great expense to taxpayers, and is likely to be ultimately overturned." 🐾

UNA does not believe this law is well drafted, carefully thought out or designed to address an existing legislative need in Canada.



11 young Alberta nurses visit Uganda to join fight against malaria

Last September, 11 young Registered Nurses from Edmonton journeyed to Uganda in East Africa to take part in a worldwide effort to roll-back malaria.

Aware that malaria, a preventable and 100-per-cent treatable disease, kills a child in Uganda every 45 seconds and worldwide puts 50 million pregnant women and their unborn children at risk of poor health or death, they decided they needed to make a contribution, said UNA North Central District Representative Jennifer Castro, one of the organizers of the trip.

The 11 young RNs who travelled to Uganda, all members of Local 301 of the United Nurses of Alberta at the University of Alberta and Stollery Children's hospitals in Edmonton, focused on distributing long-lasting insecticidal nets through the Buy-a-Net charity. The nets provide protection to risk groups, especially young children and pregnant women in high-transmission areas.

Based in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, they also travelled to rural areas and spoke with Ugandan nurses, learning to their shock that in that poor nation, Cas-

tro observed, "if there's a complaint, they get thrown in jail!"

Indeed, she said, getting nurses release from jail is a major part of their union's work.

RN Zachary Farnden said the trip opened his eyes to the problems of poverty in the Third World and he hopes to be able to make a bigger contribution to its reduction. "We met a lot of inspirational figures who were able to represent their community," he said. "I definitely will be going back."

The trip had the additional benefit of getting young nurses involved in their own union, UNA, right here in Alberta, Castro said.

The group of nurses raised \$60,000 from friends and family, covering the cost of their travel and accommodation and contributing a major donation to Buy-a-Net.

There's more information on the trip and the continuing fight against malaria on the Young Nurses Take Action in Uganda website at yntau.com and at buyanet.ca/.



Did you know? ...

By Holly Heffernan

United Way

working together for everyone's benefit



A successful city and province invests in its children, education, and training, strong communities and quality work environments.



All Albertans benefit from having a great place to live, work, do business, play, grow up, go to school, raise a family and more. But such a place is only possible when government, citizens, business leaders and organizations like United Way work together to address and alleviate social challenges over the short and long-term.

It takes a whole community working together to make a difference.

It takes a whole community working together to make a difference. Creating safe neighborhoods for families, opportunities for youth to explore their potential and the ability for corporations and unions to attract and retain talent show how a strong community benefits us all.

An estimated 9,000 students drop out of high school each year, costing the government and taxpaying citizens \$142 million per year in Employment Insurance, social assistance, judicial system costs, increased health care costs and lost tax revenue. United Way funded programs in Alberta that help youth graduate from high school.

November is Family Violence Prevention Month in Alberta. Did you know that Alberta has the second highest rate of domestic violence in Canada? In Calgary more than 1,000 women and 1,100 children resided in domestic

violence shelters in the last year. During that period more than 5,000 women and children were unable to find a spot in a shelter.


Throughout 2011, United Way funded programs in Calgary were accessed 773,194 times!

So, even at the risk of sounding like a broken record, please consider donating to your local United Way this year.

Payroll deduction is so easy and a donation can be less than a cup of coffee each day. As health care workers we are heroes everyday in the work we perform and how we help our patients or clients. A United Way Everyday "Hero" donates one dollar per day for a year, helping to change lives and brighten futures.

That adds up to just \$14.60 per pay period – and a gift of \$365 ends up costing only \$232.50 after a tax credit is applied? Tax credits increase to 50 per cent after \$200.

If you can see your way to becoming a leader, which is when you give \$1,000 or more to United Way, the tax credits add up quickly. A donation of \$1,000 to \$1,199 costs only \$550-\$649, or \$41.66 - \$49.96 per pay period. A \$1,200 donation, or \$100 per month, costs \$650 after a tax credit or 50.00 per pay period.

A successful city and province invests in its children, education, and training, strong communities, and quality work environments. That is what United Ways in Alberta strives to do in 2012 and every year. 

Bill 1's failure to add nurses: an opportunity lost

By Dewey Funk
UNA OH&S Advisor

The Alberta Government has passed Bill 1, which makes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) “Presumptive” for police officers, firefighters and paramedics. This means special status has been conferred on these groups of workers. If they file a WCB claim for PTSD, the condition is presumed to be work related.

If you belong to any other profession and make a WCB claim for PTSD, however, you will have to prove your claim for PTSD is work related.

No one disagrees that police officers, firefighters and paramedics can be exposed to horrific events. But what about emergency health workers, like those in UNA's membership? What makes us different? Why was the legislation not extended to cover all emergency health workers?

When the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulations and Code were passed in May 2004 the law had the problem it was mostly self-regulated by employers. The only time OH&S Officers go to the worksite is when there is a complaint or an injury or fatality takes place.

For example, under this legislation, an employer may seek an “acceptance” under Section 34 for “first aid service” if it provides “equal or greater protection” than the regulations or adopted code for the affected employees. Under OH&S Regulations Section 10, the employer must provide “equal or greater protection than the original requirement,” must also post the “Letter of Acceptance” and inform the affected workers.

I have asked the government's Ministry of Human Services what responsibility the government has to ensure compli-

ance and what follow-up is done upon an LOA's expiry. I have twice been told I will get an answer within three days. I have now written a letter to the Deputy Minister demanding an answer.

So what's the big deal?

No one doubts the expertise of RNs and RPNs to provide emergency first aid. My concern is that RNs and RPNs will not look after themselves. They will rush to help anyone in distress and put themselves at risk by not assessing the situation or how the outcome could affect their personal wellbeing.

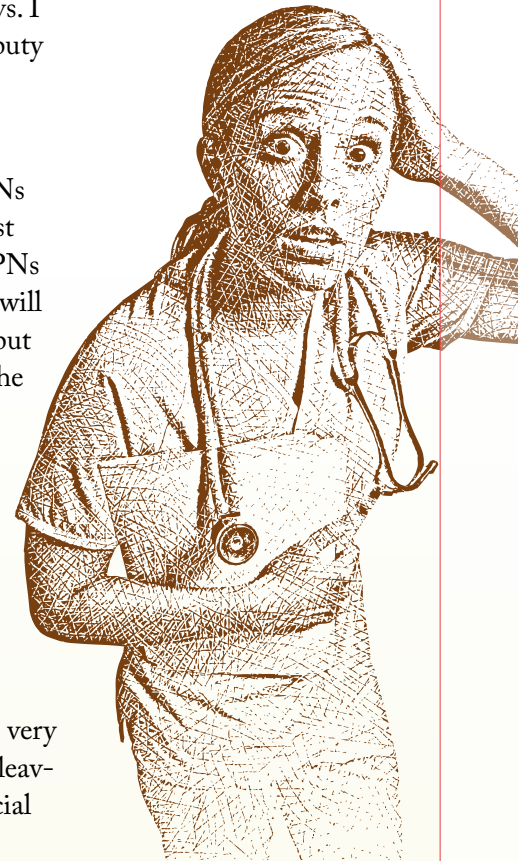
In the little time I have been with UNA, this membership prides itself on how the care provided for the residents and patients. But you will have to prove you suffered an injury on the job that caused your PTSD. This can be very difficult and time consuming to do, leaving victims of PTSD without financial support when they need it most.

I can say with certainty there are employers who are not in compliance with the regulations. This means nurses are at risk!

Each LOA is granted on the condition the employer trains affected employees to assess situations and not put themselves at risk. The latest changes to OH&S legislation were a perfect opportunity for the government to recognize the significant contributions of UNA members to health care and the people of Alberta, and make the “PTSD Presumptive Clause” more inclusive. Sadly, this was another missed opportunity.

I am asking nothing more from this government than what is expected of us – accountability.

Stay Healthy, Work Safe!



Why was the legislation not extended to cover all emergency health workers?

What makes us different?



Newspaper's editorial misrepresented UNA collective agreement

The editorial confused the difference between casual and part-time nurses, making reference to the contract's provisions relating to casual employees to draw misleading conclusions about part-time nurses.

The Calgary Herald's Nov. 5 editorial "Taxpayers are being gouged" misunderstood and misrepresented UNA's collective agreement with Alberta Health Services to help the newspaper reach an unsupportable conclusion that nurses' overtime pay is hurting the health care system, President Heather Smith said in a letter to the newspaper.

"The suggestion ... overtime is a significant cost driver in the health care system is simply wrong," Smith wrote on Nov. 6. "AHS has conceded ... overtime is not a significant factor in the cost of the Alberta health care workforce."

In fact, Smith said, the amount of overtime in the health care sector is around 5 per cent, compared to higher rates in the rest of the economy. In addition, nurses work significant overtime for which they are entitled to be paid but do not claim. If the Herald had evidence for its conclusion about the cost of overtime to the health care system, "I am sure both UNA and AHS would be interested to learn what it is."

The editorial confused the difference between casual and part-time nurses, making reference to the contract's provisions relating to casual employees to draw misleading conclusions about part-time nurses.


"Nurses designated as 'casual' (not part-time) are entitled to overtime if they work more than 147.25 hours over a four-week period," Smith's letter said. "It is simply not factually correct to state ... that a casual nurse is therefore eligible to be paid overtime if she works more than 36.8 hours. To qualify for overtime

the nurse would have had to have worked more than the entire 147.25 hours over four weeks. So it is possible for a nurse to have worked more than 80 hours in one week and get no overtime!"

Smith said the Herald was also wrong to say paramedics do not have similar provisions in their collective agreement, and to compare paramedics and RNs with taxi and truck drivers. "It is really outrageous for the Herald to try to turn these poorly supported arguments into a wholesale attack on the public health care system."

Smith said the Herald failed to explain why 28 per cent of the RNs employed by AHS work full time, compared with a national rate of 56 per cent: badly conceived Alberta government from the mid-1990s and years of management decisions at AHS and predecessor organizations that emphasized hiring a "just-in-time" workforce based on part-time and casual employees.

"In a profession that is predominantly composed of women, many nurses choose to work part time or casual shifts in order to raise their families or care for elderly relatives," she wrote. With a worldwide shortage of RNs it is easy to see how the Herald's conclusion overtime earned by nurses is keeping the system from hiring more nurses is false.

UNA supports the implementation of a higher percentage of full-time positions over time, but AHS must recognize RNs have built their lives around longstanding AHS policies and cannot be expected to rearrange their lives to suit an arbitrary change. 



UNA nurse's fantasy novel describes the end of the world ... right now!

What would happen if the Mayan prophecy turned out to be true later this month and the world was about to end?

Well, you can find one nurse's take on that thought by picking up *The Blue*, by P.L. Jones – the working name for UNA member Paulette Jones, an Emergency Room nurse at Edmonton's Royal Alexandra Hospital.

The news from the near future is not good: The book starts with a virus that wipes out most of the world's population – after which, the few survivors are changed in strange ways and mystical ways. They book's cast of characters struggle to survive in a world where the

remaining inhabitants are more interested in carnage than co-operation.

Jones said she was inspired to write fiction by her experience as an ER nurse, a job in which “you see everything, young and old, from an ingrown toenail to a cardiac arrest.”

Jones said she started to write after growing frustrated with another author's work and, after that, “it was almost as if I were channelling – the ideas just flowed through me! At the beginning, I had no idea where the story was going to go.”

Jones self-published the book, which is now available through Amazon.com or at book signings by the author in Alberta bookstores. 🍷



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Excerpt from *The Blue*

I remember passing through the waiting room on my last shift and hearing vague reports on the television. Groups of scientists had formulated the gene hypothesis. The virus was attacking our genes. They had only a small framework of time allotted to them. Time, as it turned out was not on our side. The virus was taking us one by one—dominos falling, quicker and quicker. Soon more reports that the whole world was infected filled the channels.

People had died in their homes, on the street, in their cars. Holding a hand, reaching out to the empty air—humanity had over reached. We trusted in our technology and our science. Death's hand had seized the world, overwhelming and incapacitating by simple dizziness and stupor.

The world stopped, a pounding heart stilled with no chance of resuscitation.

I listened to the city's echoed stillness; a bird's flutter of beating wings, a gentle gust of wind that rustled my wind chimes, a dog's haunted howl.

A dog's howl? “What the...?” I turned in the direction of the distant noise.



UNA will fight AHS effort to use 'Scheduling Optimization' to change FTEs

If an employer wishes to create more full-time FTEs, it must properly post new positions.

Use of scheduling provisions by Alberta Health Services or other employers covered by the Provincial Collective Agreement to change United Nurses of Alberta members' full-time equivalencies (FTEs) will not be tolerated.

"UNA will vigorously oppose any attempt by employers to incorrectly interpret the Collective Agreement in this manner," says President Heather Smith.

Smith said UNA has heard many reports managers throughout Alberta are trying to change members' FTEs to "optimize" work schedules to ensure sufficient staffing on all shifts.

UNA is very concerned by reports some nurses have been told by managers this

misuse of Scheduling Optimization to implement FTE changes in violation of the contract was approved by the union or its officers. "This claim is simply false," Smith stated. "We do not and will never approve of violations of the Collective Agreement." UNA's policy in such cases is to file grievances and proceed to arbitration and the courts if necessary.

In 1991, UNA won an arbitration that established the principle the employer may not eliminate RN positions and redistribute the hours among new positions. As a result, it has been established the employer may eliminate positions only for genuine need. It cannot eliminate positions as a back-door method of changing FTEs or to avoid properly compensating employees scheduled to work Named Holidays under Article 18.

If an employer wishes to create more full-time FTEs, it must properly post new positions.

UNA members are advised to watch out for attempts by their employer to use this policy to alter FTEs and to report it to their UNA Local and Labour Relations Officer as quickly as possible.

Under Article 14.01 (d) (v) of the Provincial Agreement, the employer may not alter daily hours or shifts per cycle.

If a new schedule is posted that is unsatisfactory to nurses in a unit or office, the employees and their UNA Local have the right to draft an alternative schedule. The employer may not unreasonably refuse to implement the unit's proposal. ❧

President sends holiday greetings to Alberta

UNA President Heather Smith was in the studio early in December to record her annual holiday message.

The message – which sent holiday greetings to all the people of Alberta from the 25,000 UNA nurses who are on their side and at their side – are on the air on stations with major market share from Dec. 18 to Christmas Day.

The ads play in Calgary on XL 103 and Lite 95.5, and in Edmonton Up! 99.3, Lite 95.7 and 96.3 Capital FM and can be heard in most part so the province. The spots will be played about 250 times.



Meetings of Provincial Collective Agreement Joint Committee suspended

After several months of growing evidence the Employer-UNA Joint Committee is failing to fulfill its mandate, the United Nurses of Alberta on Sept. 24 suspended all meetings of the committee.


The Joint Committee was founded more than a decade ago to exchange information to resolve issues that emerge under the day-to-day administration of the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement. Meeting each month, it has functioned effectively for many years with the provincial health regions and other health sector employers.

Unfortunately, while the Joint Committee continued to provide a useful mechanism for resolving potential disputes for a time after the creation of Alberta Health Services, in the past several months' actions taken by AHS have made the committee's work increasingly difficult and unproductive, said UNA President Heather Smith.

"The leaders of UNA's locals and our union's activists now need to be informed that the employer is consistently disregarding long-established understandings of the Provincial Collective Agreement and sending the message that it does not respect employees, their union or the agreement itself," Smith said.

"UNA is very disappointed that this kind of attitude has become commonplace at Joint Committee meetings and cannot allow this body to be used in a destructive way to undermine our mem-

bers' Provincial Collective Agreement," Smith stated.

Accordingly, UNA has concluded the Joint Committee is not meeting its mandate and has suspended all meetings. 

"Actions taken by AHS have made the committee's work increasingly difficult and unproductive."

— Heather Smith




UNA's Dave Cournoyer at No. 3 among province's Top Ten Tweeters

UNA Communications Officer Dave Cournoyer has been named Alberta's third most influential Twittering journalist for his work on his Daveberta.ca blog by a prominent lobbying and public relations firm.

Hill & Knowlton Strategies said it used a combination of Klout scores plus the total number of Twitter followers and the total number of Tweets to determine who the province's 10 most influential political and journalistic Tweeters. (Klout scores, if you're wondering, measure such things as the number of public reactions to social media activities.)

Cournoyer, UNA's social media communications specialist, was awarded a score of 97 by Hill & Knowlton, which named Edmonton Journal columnist Paula Simons (with a score of 99.2) and Global TV provincial affairs reporter Vassy Kapelos (with 97.8) as No. 2.

Cournoyer edged out such media luminaries as the Globe and Mail's Josh Wingrove, the National Post's Jen Gerson and the Calgary Herald's Don Braid for the No. 3 spot.

According to Hill & Knowlton, the province's top three political Twitterers are Premier Alison Redford (97.9 points), Opposition Leader Danielle Smith (90.5) and Deputy Premier Thomas Lukaszuk (86.9). 

Local 416 ratifies first collective agreement with Aakom-Kiyii Health Services

Nurses represented by UNA Local 416 have ratified a Memorandum of Understanding with the Aakom-Kiyii Health Services at the Pikanii Nation in Brocket.

The four-year collective agreement, which took effect on Nov. 14, 2012, and will expire on March 31, 2016, is the first for nurses at this worksite.


Under the new collective agreement, the majority of bargaining unit members will receive increases up to Alberta Health Services rates based upon all previous years of service.

The agreement also includes a letter on Compensation Pay Equity, which gives members parity

with newly bargained salaries for UNA members employed by AHS for 2013, 2014 and 2015.

UNA Local 416 members covered under this agreement will maintain their superior CARNA registration reimbursement until March 31, 2016, at which point they will receive AHS rates.

Two bargaining unit members will be red-circled above AHS salary rates until March 1, 2016.

The agreement at the Aakom Kiyii Health Services was a first contract, achieved only after difficult bargaining thanks to the strength and solidarity of UNA members determined to achieve a collective agreement for Local 416 members. 

UNA members remember Diane Poynter


UNA members were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Diane Poynter on Oct. 6 after a long battle with ovarian cancer. She was 72.

Diane served UNA as Local Executive, South District Representative on the UNA Executive Board and Negotiating Committee member. She was an active member of Local 72 at St. Michael's Hospital in Lethbridge, and later of Local 120 when her unit was transferred to Lethbridge Regional.

Even after her retirement, Diane assisted at UNA annual general meetings and de-

mand-setting meetings as Sergeant at Arms and continued to be a strong advocate for public health care as an active member of the Lethbridge chapter of Friends of Medicare.

Born in Calgary, Diane lived for a spell in Edmonton before moving to Lethbridge.

Funeral services were held Oct. 12 in Lethbridge. Memorial donations may be made in Diane's name to the Canadian Cancer Society - 317 10 Street South, Lethbridge, AB, T1J 4L5. 





Report from Director
of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

UNA determined to fight Employer's decision to ignore seniority articles

Article 14.01 (c) of the United Nurses of Alberta Provincial Collective Agreement states that “Vacancies shall be filled through a single competition, *whenever possible from within the bargaining unit.*” (Emphasis added.)

It is UNA’s contention that this statement means what it says, and adults must be prepared to live up to their agreements. Indeed, that is our premise whenever we sign off an article to a collective agreement in bargaining.

So it is naturally highly distressing that Alberta Health Services is now consistently indicating to UNA that it will ignore this Article of the Provincial Agreement and that it believes it can hire externally in such situations if it wishes to do so.

Alberta Health Services also claims to believe that Article 14.04 – “In making promotions and transfers, the determining factors shall be skill, knowledge, efficiency, experience and other relevant attributes, and where these factors are considered by the Employer to be relatively equal, seniority will be the deciding factor” – allows them to hire externally if they believe the external candidate is, in their opinion, a superior candidate.

In fact, this issue has come up before and has been settled in UNA’s favour. In May 1983, an arbitration panel dealing with a seniority grievance at the Drayton Valley General Hospital ruled in a case involving very similar language in the collective agreement between UNA and the Alberta Hospital Association.

“The Grievor was the only applicant from the bargaining unit,” the decision stated. “Her qualifications must therefore be measured against the vacancy. If (the Grievor) is qualified, then it is possible to fill the vacancy “by promotion within the Department of Nursing.”

Since the Grievor was qualified to fill the job, the panel ordered that the employer do this and that all benefits flowing from the appointment be retroactive to the date the vacancy was originally filled with another candidate, who was had similar qualifications but was from outside the bargaining unit.

So it is a sad reflection on the employer’s commitment to the collective agreement its own negotiators have signed that AHS seems to so determined to ignore the clear language set out in Articles 14.01 and 14.04 of the current agreement.

This speaks to the employer attitude that in September forced UNA to suspend all meetings of the Employer-UNA Joint Committee.

Obviously, UNA will not stand by while the employer attempts to roll back our collective agreement by 30 years. We are prepared to fight grievances in every case where the employer violates these contract articles.

For this reason, all members applying for positions within AHS are encouraged to be aware of their rights and to keep clear records related to their application from Day 1 to assist UNA’s staff in the process of protecting your rights under the Provincial Collective Agreement. ♥

We are prepared to fight grievances in every case where the employer violates these contract articles.

Holiday Greetings

from Alberta's Nurses



*We're at your side
and on your side*

 **United Nurses of Alberta**