

United Nurses of Alberta

# News Bulletin



Nurses joined in with about 1,000 other Albertans to protest health, education and other budget cuts during the Conservative Convention in Red Deer November 7<sup>th</sup>.

Members vote at the UNA Annual General Meeting held in Edmonton in October.

More AGM photos on Page 4.



**forward**  
together

NOV | DEC 2009  
VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 5



Published by the United Nurses of Alberta six times a year for our members

**Editor**

Keith Wiley

**Production**

Kelly de Jong

**Executive Board**

**President**

Heather Smith  
H: 780-437-2477 • W: 780-425-1025

**1st Vice-President**

Bey Dick  
H: 780-430-7093 • W: 780-425-1025

**2nd Vice-President**

Jane Sustrik  
C: 780-915-8367 • W: 780-425-1025

**Secretary/Treasurer**

Karen Craik  
H: 403-720-6690 • W: 780-425-1025  
or 403-237-2377

**North District**

Roxann Dreger  
Susan Gallivan

**North Central**

Terri Barr  
Teresa Caldwell  
Christina Doktor  
Karen Kuprys  
Keith Lang  
Beverley Lawrence  
Judy Moar  
Beryl Scott

**Central**

Dianne McInroy  
Sandra Zak  
Wanda Zimmerman

**South Central**

Blanche Hitchcow  
Tanice Olson  
Denise Palmer  
JoAnne Rhodes  
Lois Taylor  
Daphne Wallace

**South**

Maxine Braun  
John Terry

**Directors**

**Labour Relations**

David Harrigan

**Finance and**

**Administrative Services**

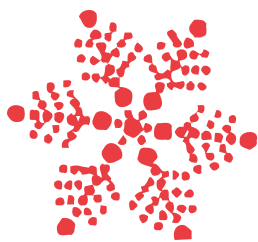
Darlene Rathgeber

**Information Systems**

Florence Ross



PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT #40064422  
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE  
CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:  
UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA  
900-10611 98 AVENUE  
EDMONTON AB T5K 2P7



*Wishing you  
a happy holiday!*

Please enjoy this year's holiday season. I hope you have a great time with your family and friends. Put your worries and concerns aside for awhile and celebrate the season. There will be time enough to deal with the challenges facing us as nurses... next year.

It will be a busy year.

Right now, all UNA Locals are distributing special RN, LPN and RPN pins to all members. We would like you to wear the pin with pride and promote the importance of our nursing profession. Let your clients, patients and residents know you are a nurse!

We will putting a short video clip with holiday greetings and more about the importance of wearing your Nurse pin on our website over the holidays. Check it out at [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca).

I look forward to working with you in 2010. We have lots to do to improve, not erode, our public health care. We will protect the right of Albertans to good nursing care when they need it. Happy New Year!!

*Heather Smith, President*



**Provincial Office**

900-10611 98 Avenue NW  
Edmonton AB T5K 2P7  
PH: (780) 425-1025 • 1-800-252-9394  
FX: (780) 426-2093

E-mail: [nurses@una.ab.ca](mailto:nurses@una.ab.ca)

**Southern Alberta Regional Office**

300-1422 Kensington Road NW  
Calgary AB T2N 3P9  
PH: (403) 237-2377 • 1-800-661-1802  
FX: (403) 263-2908

Web Site: [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca)

# Demand Setting Meeting sets up negotiations proposals

Members vote on proposal, January 20

**N**urses across the province will be voting soon on the package of proposals approved at the UNA Demand Setting Meeting (DSM) held in Edmonton, November 24-26.

The provincial Negotiating Committee brought recommendations for proposals to the DSM from the dozens of proposals submitted by members at Locals all over the province. Intense discussion from over 600 members at the meeting resulted in the package that is now going to the members for approval.

The proposals are confidential and restricted to UNA members only. They will not be published on the website and are only available through each Local.

The Ratification vote will be Thursday, January 20th of members at all Locals included in provincial negotiations. Packages with the proposals will be distributed to the Locals in December.

UNA expects the exchange of proposals with the Alberta Health Services and the other employers in the provincial round will occur sometime early in 2010.

*Front row (left to right) Wanda Zimmerman (Co-Chair) David Harrigan (Director of Labour Relations), Heather Smith (President), Judy Brandley (Co-Chair). Standing: Tanice Olson, Steven Johnson, John Terry, Jeannine Arbour (LRO staff), BettyAnn Emery, Gail Pederson, Sheila Dorscheidt, Malcolm Weisgerber, Darlene Wallace*

## The Locals involved in Provincial negotiations:

*(note - at this time we are not certain how many tables we will be at)*

- AHS (including the former Alberta Cancer Board)
- Covenant: Local 79 (Ed General and Grey Nuns), 11 (Misericordia), 99 (St Joseph's, Edmonton), 154 (Youville), 86 (Bonnyville), 192 (Killam), 22 (St Joseph's, Vegreville), 12 (St Mary's, Camrose), 3 (Banff Mineral Springs), 198 (Castor), 72 (St Michael's, Lethbridge)
- Bethany Group: Local 12 (Bethany, Camrose), 204 (Rosehaven)
- Bethany Care Society: Locals 91 (Bethany Care Centre), 173 (Bethany, Cochrane), 2 (Bethany Collegeseide, Red Deer)
- Capital Care Group Local 118
- Carewest Colonel Belcher Local 221
- Good Samaritan Society - Locals 212 (Stony Plain), 223 (Medicine Hat), 311 (Millwoods), 314 (Dr. Zetter Centre), 316 (Southgate)
- Shepherd's Care - Local 219
- St Michael's Edmonton Local 150
- Salem Manor - Local 194
- Lamont Care Centre - Local 29



UNA's Provincial Negotiating Committee



*Nurses cheer on the Wrong Way campaign*



*Larry Connell and observer Wendy Armstrong (at the microphone).*



*On the Podium (l to r) 1st Vice-President Bev Dick, 2nd Vice-President Jane Sustrik, Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik*

*A member making her comment at the microphone.*



*Guest speaker Avi Lewis drew a huge response talking about the struggle to reform U.S. health care.*



*Angie Gagnier gave a great talk on what it's like to be a new nurse working with long-time RNs.*



*There were over 700 nurses at the AGM.*



*Provincial Executive Board member Christina Doktor at the mic.*





## 4,000 nurses mobilized to save H1N1 vaccination campaign

**N**urses all across Alberta worked extra shifts and extra hours to staff the vaccination clinics and get so many people vaccinated quickly.

“Vaccination is a key way to stem the H1N1 pandemic, it’s a vital public health step that will save many lives,” says UNA President Heather Smith.

“We congratulate the nurses who worked extra hours in tough conditions and have done so much to protect so many Albertans,” says Heather Smith.

“Once again nurses have demonstrated they are the backbone of our health system and when the rubber hits the road, nurses are there to get the job done.”

The vaccination campaign got off to a bad start when Alberta Health Services and the provincial government opened a limited number of vaccination sites to anyone wanting the immunization. Long line-ups and overcrowded clinics drew a tremendous amount of criticism from Albertans who were concerned the government was botching the immunization program.

Alberta Health Services stepped back and moved to the plan followed in most other provinces, staging the vaccination for higher priority and more vulnerable people first. ♥♥

## Tremendous crowd at “Stop the Cuts” rally at Red Deer Convention

**N**early 1,000 citizens from centres all across Alberta showed up in Red Deer at the Conservative Convention to protest drastic cuts to health care, education, and social services.

“We have as many citizens outside here, as they do inside,” said David Eggen from Friends of Medicare, one of the organizers of the largest rallies Red Deer has seen in recent times.

United Nurses of Alberta was well represented with a large contingent of nurses from Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton and places in between.

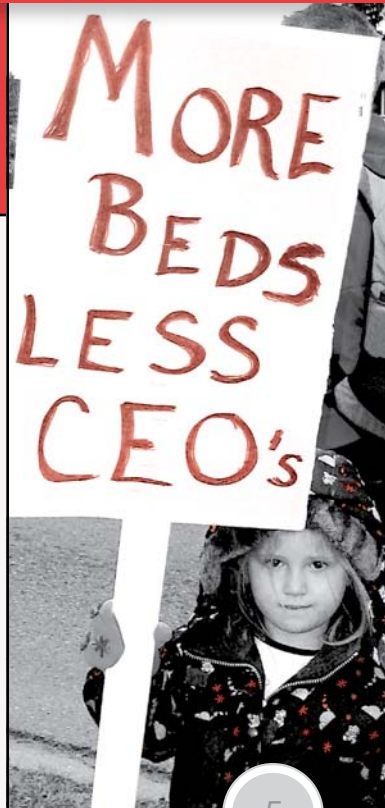
UNA President Heather Smith told the crowd government is going “the wrong way” in public services that citizens depend on.

“We are here about the Conservative Party’s agenda and the lack of leadership – the wrong leadership – they have shown in terms of health care, mental health care, seniors’ care and the health care workforce in this province,” she said, “all of which are being steered down the wrong road, the wrong way.”

A speaker representing people with developmental disabilities said their voluntary sector is dealing with 4-5% funding cuts this year and have been told to expect cuts of 10-15% next year.

“Save our services. Cuts hurt people,” the large developmental disabilities contingent at the rally chanted. ♥♥

*A girl holds a toughly worded sign at the Alberta Better Care rally October 24th in Calgary.*





# UNA dismayed by ruling on Duckett conduct complaint

UNA is disappointed by the ruling from Alberta Health Services Ethics and Compliance Officer, Noella Inions, dismissing the UNA complaint about public statements from CEO Stephen Duckett.

"I find that this complaint is unfounded. I dismiss this compliant," writes Noella Inions in her November 18 response to the complaint filed by UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik, and Second Vice-President Jane Sustrik.

"Ms. Inions did not even take the time to meet or contact UNA or Jane or Karen about the complaint, which is unheard of in investigating a conduct complaint," says UNA Executive Director David Harrigan.

"It appears that Inions simply accepted statements by Stephen Duckett as facts, even when they are not and on two of the four matter raised, she did not actually address our complaints," David Harrigan points out.

UNA has responded to Inions indicating her report is unfactual and unsatisfactory. All the documents on the Conduct complaint are available on the UNA website.

## Brooks layoff.

On September 15 Duckett wrote on his blog: "We are not currently looking at lay-offs and we will not consider lay-offs unless and until it becomes absolutely necessary."

But on September 11, 2009, representatives of AHS announced layoffs in Brooks.

Inions said, "Dr. Duckett's comments were clearly made in reference to the Edmonton and Calgary situations and not intended to apply to every facility in the province." However, UNA points out that Stephen Duckett is the CEO for the entire province, and his blog made no reference to Edmonton or Calgary at all.

## Overtime and part-time

The UNA Complaint noted: On September 18, 2009, CEO Duckett was quoted in the media saying:

"I don't want to say part time is a bad thing, but many of them say: 'I'm going to work three days a week and get paid and then do another two days of shifts and get paid for six days a week.' That's not on."

The implication in Duckett's statement is that nurses are manipulating the system, intentionally choosing to become

part time employees in order to work overtime. Inions' report completely failed to address this. Inions' report reproduced a chart from Duckett showing "the proportion of nurses working part time in Alberta is higher than any other province (except Manitoba)."

## Hours of work

UNA also complained about Duckett's public statement: "A nurse working in our system for a long time gets more money than any other province. Not only that, in order to get that money they work fewer hours because of the length of time for lunch breaks and morning tea breaks and afternoon tea breaks and coffee breaks and everything else." (emphasis added)

And Inions in her ruling again gave space to Duckett who produced a chart of the annual hours of work, and completely ignored the matter he raised - time spent on breaks. In fact Alberta nurses' breaks are the same as nurses' right across Canada. Again, Inions did not substantiate Duckett's remark nor address the implications of his statements.

"Inions' observations on the facts of each of the specific instances of the complaint do NOT refute the concerns UNA raised," says David Harrigan. "We are quite disappointed with this clearly self-serving report from the AHS Ethics and Compliance Officer, who had taken the time to gather information from her boss, but not from the complainants." 🙄



*Eryka Haley has been a nurse for 50 years and still loves it. "We have an incredible power as nurses, we need to learn how to utilize it... in Alberta we're doing a pretty good job. Each one of us is an ambassador. Each one has to become a PR person for our profession on a one-to-one basis with every patient we meet, every friend we have." Eryka loves the slogan on the button: Believe in the POWER of nursing!*



# “Voluntary exit” ratified by UNA members

## Better than a hot stick in the eye! UNA’s strategic reasons for agreeing to exit deal

**N**urses voted in favour of the “voluntary exit” agreement with Alberta Health Services in a province-wide ratification vote held on Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>.

“Although it was approved by a majority of members who voted, it wasn’t a huge turnout,” said UNA President Heather Smith. “We recommended acceptance of the exit agreement because it could mean money to a few nurses, but it’s not a good deal for any but those nurses who were leaving anyway.”

UNA ratification votes have to be approved by a majority of members and by a majority of Locals. In Monday’s vote, seventy-seven per cent of the members voting and eighty per cent of the Locals voted in favour.

“We still believe Alberta Health Services is wrong when they claim we have an oversupply of nurses,” Heather Smith says. “It’s wrong to encourage staff to leave and diminish the number of nurses we have, particularly in light of the public health and safety issues we have now with H1N1.

*“We definitely don’t advise it for anyone not planning to leave their job anyway,”*

*says David Harrigan.*

“For anyone who is retiring or leaving anyway, they may as well take this money,” notes UNA Director of Labour Relations David Harrigan. “As I said to the Transitional Negotiating Committee, for someone who is planning to retire, it’s better than a hot stick in the eye.”

UNA also says that other nurses, who were not planning to leave anyway, should not be attracted by the exit package to avoid layoffs. A nurse could get more money if laid off with severance than with this voluntary exit. Any Employee taking the Voluntary Exit should also check their eligibility for Employment Insurance or if retiring, with the timing of their pension with the Local Authorities Pension Plan.

UNA Locals where the employer is Alberta Health Services are included in the letter of understanding. But other provincial agreement locals, for example, Covenant Health, or other voluntary employers, are not.

Besides providing extra money for nurses who were planning to leave anyway, UNA had strategic reasons for agreeing to the exit plan.

“It really appeared to us that AHS was trying to set up the unions to refuse a bad offer and then turn around and

layoff staff. They could then blame the unions for refusing to negotiate the voluntary exit plan. I think they were surprised when we agreed to it. It doesn’t hurt our members or their contract rights at all, and it does offer more money to nurses who would leave anyway,” David Harrigan says.

UNA is NOT saying the exit plan is a good arrangement. “Frankly, it is not very workable at all,” says David Harrigan. “But it doesn’t erode any nurses’ rights either.”

Alberta Health Services CEO Stephen Duckett announced in August that it was bringing in voluntary exit plans to reduce the workforce across health care. First they announced a plan for managers and non-union workers that would give them 2 weeks pay for every week worked up to a maximum of 52 weeks.

AHS then announced it was offering unionized health workers one-and-a-half weeks pay for 26 weeks.

UNA and Health Sciences Association of Alberta reached deals offering one-and-a-half weeks pay for 52 weeks. The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees has rejected the proposal.

“We definitely don’t advise it for anyone not planning to leave their job anyway,” says David Harrigan.

He also points out that under the terms, Employees have to apply for the “voluntary exit” and once they apply they cannot back out, and it is “at the Employer’s sole discretion” who gets the exit pay.

“Alberta Health Services has told us that they will not discriminate against Employees who may have apparently been planning retirement,” David Harrigan says. ♡

UNA member  
Robin Lambrecht  
from Grande  
Prairie proudly  
wears her pin!



# DUCKETT SAYS

## “nursing’s future is not in nursing’s hands”

**A**lberta Health Services CEO Stephen Duckett made some revealing remarks at a meeting with AHS nursing leaders, and the province’s nursing educational and regulatory colleges on November 4th.

The College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) put out an article on the meeting. ([www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna/index.aspx?WebStructureID=3949](http://www.nurses.ab.ca/Carna/index.aspx?WebStructureID=3949))

Duckett told the group that “nursing’s future is not in nursing’s hands” and indicated that big changes are coming in the models of nursing care and the role of nurses. Duckett and AHS Nursing Strategies Vice President Andrea Robertson said that AHS will hire less than 40 per cent of nursing graduates, will be laying off nurses and offering voluntary exit packages to others.



New “transition” nursing models are going to be piloted at the University of Alberta Hospital and the Peter Lougheed Hospital, according to AHS. But they have made no firm details available on what is really entailed in these new models. There have been repeated references to a study undertaken at Toronto East General Hospital.

The Toronto East pilot project was another version of “nursing teams” according to the Registered Nursing Association of Ontario. RNAO has published several critical reports of the Toronto study on their website, please see: Original Evaluation: [www.rnao.org/Storage/59/5322\\_CCT\\_evaluation\\_report.pdf](http://www.rnao.org/Storage/59/5322_CCT_evaluation_report.pdf)

Several comments on the study including: [www.rnao.org/Storage/59/5325\\_TEGH\\_Report\\_Review\\_for\\_RNAO\\_-\\_Greta\\_Cummings\\_-\\_July\\_31\\_2009.pdf](http://www.rnao.org/Storage/59/5325_TEGH_Report_Review_for_RNAO_-_Greta_Cummings_-_July_31_2009.pdf). ♥

### Get the inside UNA connection

## UNA\*Net

UNA's FREE, member internet network

**G**et connected on the UNA\*Net and keep up with the latest UNA information including negotiations.

UNA's electronic email and conferencing system is the best way to keep up with the contract bargaining news, union news, professional nursing issues and province-wide discussions. Get the latest inside info on UNA\*Net.

UNA\*Net information and discussions are confidential to UNA members. There's lots on UNA\*Net that will not be on the UNA website or facebook or anywhere else.

The service is available free to all UNA members with a Macintosh or Windows computer and a connection to the internet. Packaged with your account comes your very own email address @una.ab.ca

Getting online with the UNA\*Net is easy. To find out more go to [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca) and click on the link MEMBERS AREA. There you can download the easy client software and send a message to the information systems department requesting your account. Once your membership has been verified, a user ID and Password will be emailed to you giving you immediate access to the system.

Only UNA members who register with their member number can get on UNA\*Net. Only UNA members participate in the many discussions on UNA Net. Ask questions about nursing practices at other facilities. Read stories about nursing issues. Participate in wide-ranging discussions on union and nursing topics. ♥

All on UNA\*Net!





# These government policies affect all Albertans

# ONE NURSE'S VIEW

By Jens Gundermann, RN

I am an RN who graduated in the 1990s, the last time the axe came down on the healthcare system. I was forced to go to the United States where there were plenty of jobs. After nine years, I decided to move back to Alberta where we wanted to raise a family. Today I find myself fearful of losing my job and fighting to keep the education and healthcare system that I moved back to, intact.

This conservative government has made continuous attempts to dismantle public healthcare and introduce private care. This means the patient and family will be responsible for direct payment of services. It's interesting that while we are moving to a system that resembles the US, they are desperate to move more to a public health system.

Stephen Duckett, CEO of Alberta Health Services, was hired by this Conservative government. Make no mistake that what he is doing is under government direction. He was hired to decrease the budget and make cuts. This way, he takes the blame for the government's policies.

It's frustrating to hear all the misinformation being fed to the public. Let me make this clear--there is a nursing shortage, it is worldwide and it will get worse. This is the reason for overtime in our hospitals. About 2 years ago we were told by the government to decrease the wait time for cardiac surgery, hip and other orthopedic surgery. No extra staff, so we worked more overtime and reduced the waits. In

cardiac surgery, where I worked, surgeries were not cancelled because of short staffing. There was plenty of overtime. Now Duckett and Ron Liepert tell us it's our fault for working too much. That's the thanks we get for decreasing the wait time in cardiac surgery from 6 months to 1 month.

Mr. Duckett keeps saying that there are too many RNs in acute care. What he is really saying is that he wants to replace RNs with cheaper staff with lower levels of expertise. Think about this--in acute care where patients require more specialized care he wants to decrease the number of staff who can give this type of care.

Mr. Duckett says that RNs have too many breaks. In an eight-hour shift we receive two 15 minute breaks and one unpaid 30 minute lunch. This is the same as in 9 out of 10 provinces. Rarely are staffing levels adequate enough for nurses to take all their breaks. But now we are mandated by AHS to take all the breaks unless we get prior approval to miss one.

Mr. Duckett said that RNs spend 25-75% of our time doing work that could be done by others. I would agree that approximately 25% of my time is spent looking for supplies, emptying waste and linen bags, making phone calls to lab, x-ray, housekeeping, porters, doctors and other departments as there is a shortage of staff everywhere. If staffing levels were adequate, if supplies and linen were plentiful then I could concentrate on my job.

Mr. Duckett said that one of his objectives is to increase access to care. First he tried to close 9 helicopter pads in rural communities, now he plans on closing 350 beds in Edmonton and Calgary. Now I'm a nurse not a mathematician but if you decrease the numbers of beds, how does that increase access and decrease ER waiting times?

This conservative government has wasted millions in the past, giving tax breaks to the oil companies, giving away our oil and gas royalties and planning to spend \$300 million on legislature renovations. Oh, don't forget all those severance packages and bonus' people get for getting us into this mess to begin with. Now they are asking all of us to make sacrifices and cuts.

Now is the time for everyone to stand up and say ENOUGH! These government policies affect all Albertans. We need action to make this government take notice. We are going the WRONG WAY in healthcare and we need to turn around now. 🇨🇦





# Government attack on public health care continues

**A** “leaked” Alberta Health Services powerpoint claimed the organization would be broke by February. The presentation also equated AHS to the General Motors corporation. Later in the week AHS announced it was getting a line of credit from the Royal Bank.

Providing health care services for Albertans is one of the core expectations citizens have of our government. But government is working hard to make our health system look another corporation.

Everyone agrees health services have to be efficient and not waste resources. But, as Paula Simons of the Edmonton Journal points out, AHS appears to be bleeding money.

Setting public health care up for failure in the eyes of Albertans is a dangerous political game the government is playing. ❧

## Am I missing something here? What's going on?

**B**ut there is simply no comparison between the minor deficits the old regional health authorities ran and the massive cost overruns racked up by the new superboard.

In 2006-07, the regional health authorities had no overall deficit. In fact, they posted a combined surplus of \$47 million.

“In 2007-08, the year before the 12 health authorities were merged, the authorities, all told, had a deficit of \$97 million.

“In 2008-09, the year health authorities were amalgamated, the deficit more than tripled to \$343 million.

“But even that looks like a bargain now, compared to projected deficits of \$1 billion to \$2 billion. What happened to all those efficiencies we were supposed to achieve by merging the boards? What about all those promises to eliminate efficiency and waste? Instead, it looks as though we blew up a system that was managing money relatively well, in favour of one that's racking up crippling deficits.” ❧

*Excerpt from Paula Simons Edmonton Journal column, Dec. 3.*

## Huge public pressure forces government to “pause” on Alberta Hospital Edmonton cuts

**T**he day after the Oct. 5 major rally at Alberta Hospital Edmonton, Premier Ed Stelmach announced a “pause” to closures at the facility and a transition team that he said would ensure patients were not moved out until community care was in place.

Tours of new facilities for Alberta Hospital Edmonton patients continued until November 4th when MLA Fred Horne apparently ordered AHS to stop.

Meanwhile no one doubts the plan still is to close most of the hospital, which most critics say will be disastrous for mental health care in the province.

The forensic programs were supposed to continue at the hospital, according to original announcement, but one program, the Phoenix program was rumoured to also be closing. Patients were not being admitted for the last several months. But a one year extension to funding for the program was recently announced.

Public opposition to the closures at the mental health facility continues.

To email directly to your MLA about your opposition to the downsizing at AHE, there is a special website. The link to the campaign site is on UNA’s webpage at [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca). ❧

## Show you are proud to be a Nurse

### GET THE NEW UNA PIN

**U**nited Nurses of Alberta is now distributing new metal RN, LPN and RPN pins to members at all Locals. See your Local representatives for your pin.

The pin helps to identify you to your patients, clients and family members as a Registered Nurse, Licensed Practical Nurse, or Registered Psychiatric Nurse. It is important to let these people know that you are bringing your professional capabilities to their care.

Special ribbon Forward Together: The new high quality shiny silver pins have a slot at the bottom that can hold a special message ribbon. The ribbon going out now reads simply: Forward Together, the main message as we go into this round of provincial negotiations. UNA can provide other message ribbons for other concerns in the future. ❧

**Wear our pin proudly!  
Show you are a Nurse!!!**





# UNA working with AHS to keep nurses safe during pandemic

# H1N1

**W**hile Alberta recovers from the second wave of the H1N1 pandemic, Alberta Health Services is conducting a “debriefing” on the response. They will be meeting with representatives of UNA, AUPE and HSAA who will provide feedback on what worked and what didn’t work well. The unions will have an opportunity to make recommendations on what should be done differently and comment on implementation. The group hopes that the information gathered in this process will be used to improve the implementation of AHS’s pandemic plan during the third and subsequent waves of the pandemic.

Representatives of AHS and the healthcare unions have been meeting on a weekly and now bi-weekly basis since September to share information and raise concerns regarding human resource, labour relations and occupational health and safety issues. Some of the issues dealt with at these meetings include N95 fit-testing, personal protective equipment, refusal to work, staffing plans, income continuance and immunization.

The information UNA received from various Locals and members was of great assistance in efforts to ensure the employer met their obligations to provide safe and healthy working conditions for all employees. We need you to continue to bring any questions and concerns regarding any aspect of the H1N1 pandemic plan and implementation to your UNA Local representative or Labour Relations Officer. 🇺🇦

## Prepare yourself, protect yourself

### UNA and CFNU give nurses tools

**U**NA has also been working with Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) to provide nurses information about H1N1 safety. New CFNU “Prepare yourself” posters and pocket-sized pamphlets are being distributed through all UNA Locals.

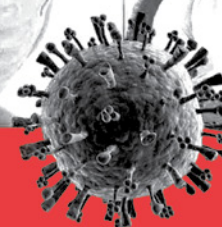
UNA’s Occupational Health and Safety Officer Janice



**Prepare Yourself**



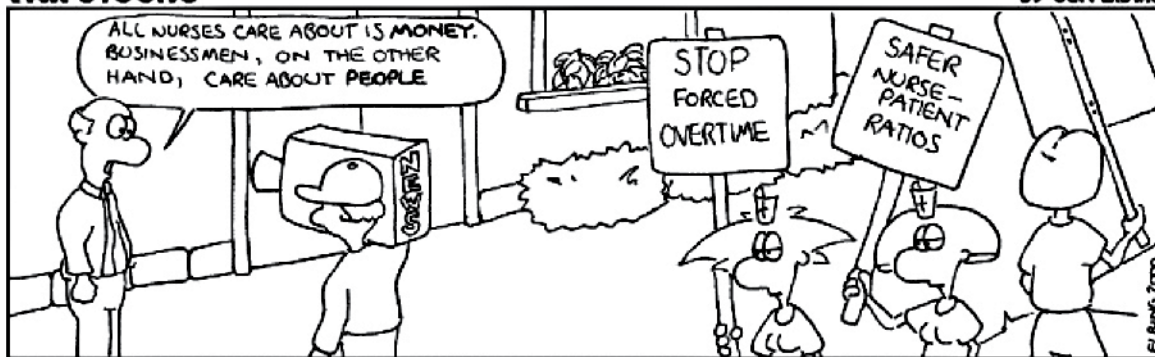
**for H1N1**



Peterson has put out a number of OH&S “Alerts” and other documents regarding H1N1 which are posted on UNA’s website and on UNA\*Net.

CFNU has produced a video: Prepare Yourself For H1N1. The video provides more information about protecting yourself in the workplace. At [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), search for “Prepare yourself for H1N1”. 🇺🇦





## Premier's wage freeze talk is another attempt to mislead Albertans

**P**remier Ed Stelmach's call for a wage freeze is deliberate spin-doctoring that is designed to distract Albertans from the fact the government is cutting health services, education and other necessary public services for Albertans.

"This province has NO need to cut our public services at all," says UNA President Heather Smith. "The province has plenty of room to expand revenues, or run short-term deficits to maintain the education, social and health services all our families depend upon. This is no time to cut services, or public economic activity. Everyone should be looking at economic stimulation not cuts."

Smith also says Premier Stelmach is trying to steer the issue into wages, which is a deliberate attempt to divert attention from the reality the province is making another 90s style shrinking of public services.

"Nurses would likely be willing to consider a freeze if it would actually help maintain health services for our patients, but it wouldn't at all. And it's just not needed," Heather Smith says.

There is no trade-off between wages and layoffs, UNA points out.

"It's absolutely bogus to say nurses should freeze wages, to prevent layoffs and to maintain the levels of nursing care. They said that in the 1990s and then laid off nurses anyway."

UNA points out that polling shows that 70 per cent of Albertans do NOT trust the government's health directives and policies. Polling also shows Albertans would accept tax hike to maintain good health care services.

"Premier Stelmach has seized on the economic recession as an opportunity to further the long-standing hard conservative agenda of shrinking all government services and turning more over to for-profit investors."

The Stelmach government is attempting to mislead Albertans about the need for health care cuts and about the real plans for health care services. They are also trying to mislead Albertans about what the province can really afford.

"It's incredible that they believe they can snow Albertans so often, and on such important issues. We can't let them get away with it," Heather Smith says.

The Parkland Institute report by economist Greg Flanagan published earlier this year showed that real health costs are rising only slightly and completely affordable in the Alberta fiscal context.

"Hospital spending has not recovered from the cuts of the 1990s and yet they are being hit again. Those costs are not out of control and cuts are completely unjustified," says Parkland Research Director Diana Gibson. ♥♥

Crystal Davis, UNA nurses in Grande Prairie shows off her RN "Forward Together" pin.







The voluntary sector representing people with developmental disabilities and care givers. They are facing 4-5% funding cuts this year and have been told to expect cuts of 10-15% next year.

## 1,000 Albertans at Stop the Cuts! rally in Red Deer



The celebrities at UNA's Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton were the twins Josie and Hanna, held here by Heather Smith with proud mom Stephanie Shelstad.

## Demand Setting Meeting





# Nursing News



## Student nurses rally against cuts

Student nurses held two separate rallies on the steps of the Legislature recently to protest health cuts in the province. The first rally in September, the students focused on the sudden and nearly complete disappearance of nursing jobs for Alberta nursing grads. “We were told we were desperately needed,” student Quinn Grundy told the gathered crowd. And she pointed out that many students are already working in the health system and see directly for themselves that short staffing is a huge problem and they are desperately needed.

For their second rally November 6<sup>th</sup>, the students protested the cuts in health care and the health care policies of the government. 🍷

## Canadian nurses protest deskilling at Blood Services

United Nurses of Alberta is joining nurses from across Canada in calling on Canadian Blood Services (CBS) to halt their plan to eliminate nurses from direct blood donor screening. CBS plans to replace donor-screening nurses with

*4<sup>th</sup> year nursing student Quinn Grundy points out to reporters that Alberta needs student nurses to stay in the province.*



unlicensed “multi-skilled workers” who have a training program of approximately eight weeks.

“We believe CBS would undermine the confidence of Canadians in the blood supply, by drastically reducing the qualifications of screeners,” says UNA President Heather Smith.

“Given the Canadian experience with blood safety problems we are surprised at the CBS proposal to drastically reduce the skill level of first stage donor assessment,” Heather Smith said. 🍷

## “UNA TV” now on the website

A growing collection of short videos are now online and can be watched by nurses anytime from their own computers. You can watch short videos of students at some of the Wrong Way protests or you can watch several of UNA’s produced mini-documentaries. The website also has links to exciting new Friends of Medicare videos and other videos on health care topics too. Look for the VIDEOS link on the left menu at [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca). 🍷

## Survey evaluates special retention initiatives

UNA has joined with Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness in research to evaluate nursing retention strategies. Under the federal Research to Action program the research looks at the success of different nurse retention initiatives in Alberta. UNA helped promote two surveys on our website in November and December. The first looked at the Transitional Graduate Nurse Recruitment Program and the second examined the Recruitment and Retention initiatives included in the provincial collective agreement, including the retirement preparation program, flexible part-time, weekend worker and seasonal part-time positions. The irony in surveying now is that the government appears to be far less interested in retention of nurses than it should. 🍷

## Calgary event on new LTC study

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) has produced a comprehensive new study on the crisis in long-term care in Canada, and they are taking the information on a cross-country tour. Sociologist and author Pat Armstrong will be the guest at a special CUPE event in Calgary: For our elders, for ourselves: Better Long-term Care! The event is 7 pm Monday, January 25 at the Radisson Hotel 2120-16 Avenue NE. Everyone is welcome. 🍷



*Student nurses protesting nursing cuts at the Legislature*



## Liepert tells nursing students NOT to expect a job UNA members outraged.

Student nurses protested by putting tape over their mouths when Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert paid a visit to the nursing program at the University of Lethbridge. Liepert responded by telling the students they shouldn't expect to get a job in Alberta when they graduate.

When the nurses told the Minister they would have to leave Alberta to work, he said fine, leave, but "you'll be back." The students who were told they would be desperately needed in Alberta when they enrolled, were infuriated.

When one of the nurses said she wanted to work at the bedside, he told her she should have been a Licensed Practical Nurse or a care aide instead. ♡

## Nurses write to protest Liepert's treatment of students.

At the UNA annual general meeting in October, members were outraged by the story of Liepert's conduct in Lethbridge.

"We need these new nurses here in our work," Debbie Martin from Lethbridge told the meeting. "We can't lose another generation of young nurses."

The nurses at the meeting decided to do a "mass mailing" and wrote letters to Ed Stelmach on the spot to protest the behaviour of his minister. ♡

## AHS Ethics Office declines to investigate Liepert

One Red Deer nurse was so frustrated by Liepert's conduct she copied her letter about the Lethbridge incident to Noela Inions, the Alberta Health Service Ethics and Compliance Officer.

"He demonstrated his utter contempt for the nursing students, for nurses and the nursing profession," she wrote. "I expect Mr. Liepert to offer an official apology to these nursing students and to nurses in this province."

Noela Inions responded saying "AHS does not have jurisdiction" and the "Code of Conduct does not apply." ♡

## Budget cuts target frills, like food

"If you have an incontinent friend or family member in the Alberta health system, do not bring them flowers when you visit, bring ATTENDS. Our pitifully poor tax base can no longer afford these LUXURIES!" writes Calgary nurse Mona Frederickson on UNA\*Net.

"When you are heading to the hospital to 'deliver', best bring a bundle of diapers. If your 85 lb. mother is in the system, best remind the Doc that 'Ensure' is no longer provided without a prescription. Forget about ginger-ale or any kind of fruit juice; you can't get those without wasting a Doc's time writing an order for those and many other nutritional items."

Budget-slashing is now hurting nutrition across Alberta's health system. Not a good plan for promoting health, but it may a good plan for promoting private health care. When the public system is choked and degraded it will have less public support. Are we on the road to a future where Albertans could say: 'Going into the poor public system? You must be desperate.' ♡

## Email massive cuts to mental health services



Nurses are extremely concerned by the nearly complete closure of Alberta Hospital Edmonton and the impact that will have on mental health patients in the province. For your opportunity to have a say, and let Premier Ed Stelmach know, go to the UNA website, [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca). You can email the Premier directly from the specially set up site. ♡

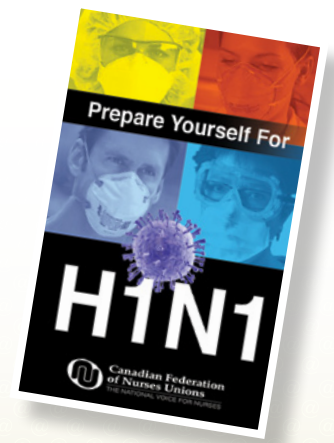
*"My highlight of the graduation was meeting Paul Brandt!" says Local #89 President Debbie Martin about convocating at the University of Lethbridge with her Masters of Science (Nursing). Debbie's research highlighted the role nursing can play in working with women who live in violence. She gave it the title: 'An Apple A Day Won't Keep The Violence Away: Listen To What Pregnant Women Who Live In Intimate Partner Violence Say About Their Health'.*

*Brandt is an RN himself and used to work at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, he told Debbie*



# Win an iPod Touch!

Sign up for UNA E-Update!



More about  
H1N1 preparedness

See Page 11



## Get the latest news from UNA on your email!

Send an email and mention E-Update (in the subject line or message) to [nurses@una.ab.ca](mailto:nurses@una.ab.ca).

### To sign up you must email:

Your name: .....

Your email address: .....

Your UNA member number: .....

**We'll put your email on the list for the E-update.**

UNA will be sending an email to members that we already have an email address for. You will need to reply and confirm your email address and member number to be entered in the draw.

All UNA\*Net members with a [una.ab.ca](mailto:una.ab.ca) email address will automatically be entered in the draw.

UNA E-Update will NOT be too frequent, and jam up your in-box.

It will be occasional with the latest, most important urgent news from UNA.

**Sign up today and your name will be entered in a draw for a brand new Apple iPod Touch!**