



United Nurses of Alberta
NewsBulletin

Giving back to the community

UNA Volunteers help out at 22nd Annual
Edmonton Labour Day Barbeque



From left to right: Bev Dick, First Vice-President; Marie Therese-Mageau, President of Local 301; Heather Smith, President; and Christina Doktor, North Central District Representative. See story page 3.





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'Nursing our Future' through 2011 and into 2012

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Even as my sweet peas are in glorious bloom, I know by the early morning temperatures that fall will soon descend upon us. With the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in October, it is always a busy time for UNA. This year's theme will be "Nursing our Future," an idea our thoughts will turn to many times in 2012.

I anticipate a particularly interesting fall as party elections may well lead to a provincial election, possibly as soon as November. Who gets elected to lead the Conservative and Liberal parties and which party forms the government have enormous implications for all Albertans. Leadership and governing party policy will determine what course health care will take, and that has huge ramifications for us as providers, and for our families and communities across the province.

Workforce supply – the hiring of nurses – became a significant issue for Alberta Health Services (AHS) over the summer. It will become an even bigger issue as AHS struggles to expand bed capacity, including opening the Calgary South Health Campus in 2012. We do not yet know the results of the "Rapid Hiring" of 300 nurses initiated in July, but UNA is now engaged in discussions with AHS to eliminate the increasing utilization of nurses employed by external agencies.

Watch UNA publications and our website for more information on the "Nurse Locum" program. I characterize this program as "Alberta Travel Nurses," in which nurses would be employed by AHS and agree to work assignments in difficult-to-recruit-to areas of the province. At this time we are concentrating on northern Alberta.

Still on the theme of hiring, one of the new provisions in the 2010-13 Provincial

Collective Agreement was a commitment to hire 70 per cent of Alberta nursing graduates into regular or temporary positions. While the numbers suggest more than 70 per cent were hired, the majority were hired on a casual basis.

This fall UNA, AHS, Covenant Health and CARNA will undertake a survey of nurses who graduated in 2010-11 to try to get a better understanding of the reasons they entered the profession as casual versus regular employees. Were regular jobs available? What full-time equivalency would have been ideal? Was practice location or focus more important than regular employment? What factors contributed to their decision? We also hope to ask new graduates about their first employment experience, including the adequacy of orientation and whether they felt "mentored" by other staff. Ideally this first-run survey will become more sophisticated and be an annual undertaking.

Also this summer, after two years of waiting for the Alberta Labour Relations Board to make a decision, we were able to welcome nurses employed by the Blood Tribe Department of Health in Stand Off, near Cardston, and at Aakom Kiyii Health Services of the Piikani Nation at Brocket.

I will close with a welcome to our newest members – and, indeed, to all nurses – whether you graduated in Alberta or travelled here from another province or country. Welcome to the United Nurses of Alberta!

In Solidarity,

Heather Smith

President, United Nurses of Alberta



EDLC Labour Day BBQ provides 6,500 meals

The Edmonton and District Labour Council celebrated Labour Day on Sept. 5 by serving more than 6,500 meals to the homeless, the unemployed and the underemployed.

Burgers, hot dogs, oranges, bananas, ice cream and soft drinks were handed out by volunteers from EDLC affiliate unions to the throng that gathered for the 22nd Annual EDLC Labour Day Barbecue at Giovanni Caboto Park in inner-city Edmonton.

On hand as volunteers were United Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith, First Vice-President Bev Dick, North Central District Representative Christina Doktor, Local 301 President Marie-Therese Mageau, and other UNA Members.

Smith used the occasion to remind Albertans that public health insurance, public hospitals and health care, overtime pay, child labour laws, workers compensation, occupational health and safety legislation, employment insurance, fair pensions and weekends “are all among the things unions have worked hard and fought hard to bring to our society.”

EDLC President Brian Henderson described the annual event as an opportunity for members of the union movement to give back to the community. “We’re not just around for our members, we’re here for the whole community.” 🍷



More than 3,000 attend vigil for Jack Layton at Alberta Legislature

More than 3,000 solemn Albertans, including many UNA members, showed up at the provincial Legislature on Wednesday, Aug. 24, to mourn the loss and honour the memory of NDP Leader Jack Layton.

UNA President Heather Smith, who on Aug. 22 described Layton as “a strong defender of public health care in Canada” whose “passion on the national stage will be missed,” was at the vigil.

“On behalf of United Nurses of Alberta, I send our heartfelt condolences to his wife Olivia and their family,” she said.

Many participants in the Aug. 24 vigil left orange flowers and bottles of Orange Crush on the Legislative steps.

Speakers included NDP MLA Rachel Notley, Alberta NDP Leader Brian Mason, former leader Raj Pannu and Alberta’s only New Democrat MP, Linda Duncan.

“Jack has restored civility and decency to Canadian politics,” Pannu told the crowd in his often emotional remarks. “He has made it respectable again. Our hearts are heavy but our spirits are high...”

People from all political parties have offered condolences in the form of flowers and letters, and by signing memorial books at locations throughout the city. Vigils were held in many other communities throughout Alberta and in all parts of Canada. 🍷



AHS hiring of 300 RNs captures media interest in July

News that Alberta Health Services is hiring 300 Registered Nurses province-wide became a major story in July.

AHS told UNA the “rapid hire” job postings are part of a recruitment campaign that aims to meet current demand as well as the anticipated future need for RNs in Alberta, as well as to address staff shortages in areas of high demand. The new hires were to be parceled into groups of 100 in Calgary, the Capital Region and in rural areas.

The positions will be located in major facilities, rural sites and community programs, AHS said. Positions will be in Operating Rooms, Emergency Departments, Mental Health, Home Care, Labour and Delivery, Neonatal ICU, Surgery and Hemodialysis and other areas.

The majority of the new hires are to be full-time or high-part-time jobs, AHS said.

AHS told media that they expected to be able to hire graduate nurses right out of school.

While UNA is pleased with the decision to hire significant numbers of new RNs, First Vice-President Bev Dick expressed concerns in media interviews that there still aren't enough nurses in the province.

“We believe that at any given time there are at least 1,500 to 2,000 nurses that are needed,” she told CTV News, noting that many nurses are thought to have left Alberta during the 2010 hiring freeze imposed by AHS.

“We have to keep every new graduate in this province that we can,” she said. ... We lost that crop and we couldn't afford to do that,” she added.

The positions are part of the government's five-year funding commitment to health care. CTV reported that the new positions will cost \$6.5 million. 🍷



“We have to keep every new graduate in this province that we can.”

– Bev Dick

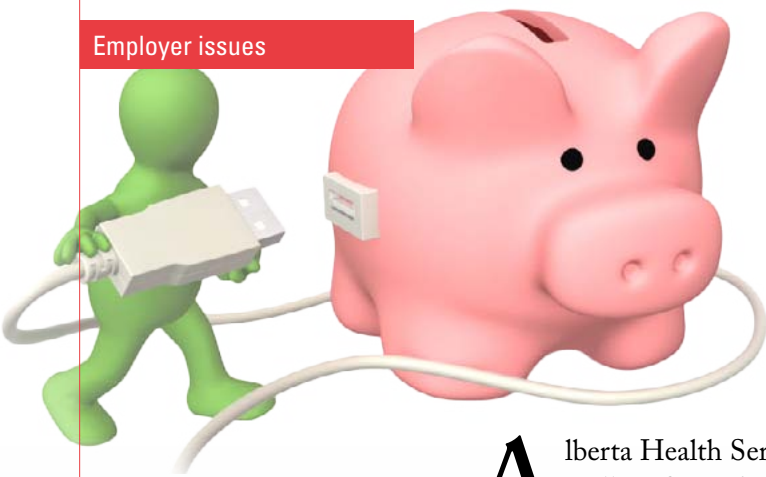
AHS calls for community participation in Health Advisory Committees

Alberta Health Services is seeking participation from community-minded Albertans to join its 12 regional Health Advisory Councils. This call offers real opportunities for Albertans committed to public health care and committed to social activism.

As AHS describes it, members of the 12 regional committees serve the role of “volunteer ambassador for your community, friends and family by providing valuable feedback on local health issues.” The province-wide health board says it is seeking individuals who reflect Alberta's diversity and have a broad interest in health issues and the wellbeing of their communities.

UNA members may have family members, friends and neighbours who share their commitment to public health care who could be encouraged to play this role in their community. More information from on the HACs from AHS can be found at: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/689.asp> 🍷





AHS says e-People payroll system to launch in October

Alberta Health Services has formally informed employees that its new e-People Human Resources and Payroll system will be being launched in October.

In a memorandum to staff, AHS said employees will receive their first pay via e-People on Oct. 19. The system, AHS boasts, will result in “self-service’ functionality” for employees, 24 hours a day for those who have home computers.

There will be three significant changes as a result of the adoption of this system, AHS said. These are:

- 1) The paper pay stub employees receive today will be replaced by an online “pay advice.”
- 2) Timing of benefit deductions such as medical, dental and basic life will take place in the pay period in which the first of the month, instead of being split across bi-weekly pay periods as is AHS’s current practice.
- 3) Human Resources assistance will be provided by a new HR Contact Centre available online, by email or by toll-free telephone line. An HR contact information card will be provided to employees

When the system goes live in October, AHS said, employees will receive a new eight-digit employee identification number by email, which they will be required to use when they call the HR Contact Centre or access the e-People website. (AHS notes that employees will continue to need their old VAX ID numbers to access other systems.)

Employees are advised by AHS that they should receive the AHS email, user ID and password by Sept. 16, and should contact their manager if they have not received this information. 🍷

First year Nursing Scholarship deadline approaches

UNA will again award seven Nursing Scholarships in 2011 to assist students in their first year of an approved nursing program in Alberta.

The scholarships encourage young people, particularly those with a family history in nursing, to take up the profession.

Scholarships are \$750.00 each, and students must be related to a UNA member in good standing, plus complete a short essay and an application to be eligible for the award.

Instructions for the essay, which must be followed, and the application form are found on UNA’s website at <http://www.una.ab.ca/resources/scholarship/>. 🍷



Completed applications must be received at the UNA Provincial Office no later than 4:30 p.m., Oct. 14, 2011. The awards will be announced in late January 2012.

President Heather Smith backs postal workers at Edmonton rally

UNA members and representatives of many other unions were on hand June 21 in Edmonton for a lunch-hour rally to support locked-out postal workers in their struggle with Canada Post and the government of Canada for a fair collective agreement.

UNA President Heather Smith attended the rally with about 1,200 other supporters of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and observed that Canada Post employees were “being dealt a really, really bad hand” by the Conservative government in Ottawa.

The day before, federal Labour Minister Lisa Raitt had introduced a bill in the House of Commons to force the postal workers back to work. The bill was passed by the Conservative majority in the House on June 26.

“This is the first time we’ve seen what the Conservative majority is prepared to do to workers, and it’s not good,” Smith said. “They’re holding all the cards . . . They’re proposing a salary increase that’s even less than Canada Post was going to give them, and in addition they’re sending them to binding arbitration with an arbitrator that the federal government selects.

“Bad deal! If this is a poker game, the government’s got all the cards on their side.”

Smith noted that the postal dispute matters to Alberta nurses, and to all other working people because the same thing could happen to them. “Canada Post may be the first one facing it, but they’re not going to be the last. It could be us too!”

Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, told the crowd that “rather than help find a solution to disputes by acting as an independent umpire or counselor, this government has chosen to take sides and help the employers impose their will on working Canadians.”

McGowan said the Harper government “has made common cause with employers and employer groups that want to strip away and water down the hard won wages and benefits that provide a foundation for Canada’s increasingly precarious middle class.”

Canada’s 9,000 postal workers launched rotating strikes on June 3 in their effort to win a fair collective agreement. On June 14, Canada Post locked out the postal workers across the country. The Conservative majority legislated them back to work with an inferior deal to the one the employer was offering on June 25. 🍷



“This is the first time we’ve seen what the Conservative majority is prepared to do to workers, and it’s not good.”

– Heather Smith

Heather Smith and CUPW member on the line





Lease battle over Calgary seniors' facility illustrates problems with private care

"We need to end these expensive and risky experiments with private involvement in what should be fully public facilities."

— Heather Smith

The plight of elderly residents of a Calgary seniors' residence who faced eviction during July is another example of why public health care and private market-oriented health-care providers are not a good mix, UNA President Heather Smith said.

Media reports in early July revealed that 29 seniors living in the assisted living wing at Carewest Colonel Belcher facility were scrambling to find new homes after Alberta Health Services and the current private owner of the suites, Chartwell Seniors Housing REIT, failed to agree on a lease renewal agreement.

"This is just another example of the government touting private-sector 'solutions' that turn out to be the wrong prescription for curing the ills of the health care system," said Smith at the time. She noted that in 2003, the agreement that led to the arrangement between Chartwell and AHS was touted as a model partnership between the public and private sectors.

The 30 beds Chartwell wanted to close to make available for more profitable uses are part of a complex of 145 seniors suites operated by the company and 175 nursing home beds run by Carewest, a wholly owned subsidiary of AHS. About 20 of the 30 designated assisted living beds are reserved for veterans.

In late July, after heavy media coverage and criticism by health professionals and consumer advocates, AHS was able

to negotiate a contract with the private, for-profit company that allowed the seniors, several of them war veterans, to stay at the assisted living facility in the city's northwest.

Smith called on AHS and the province to clearly state the true details of contracts signed for all public-private development of continuing care facilities in Alberta. She called the situation reminiscent of what happened at the Health Resource Centre, also in Calgary, a private sector hip and knee surgery clinic that went bankrupt after contracting to provide surgeries for the public health care provider.

"Public health care facilities need to be fully in the public sector, where they are both less expensive to run and where proper staffing levels of Registered Nurses and other professionals can be assured," Smith said. "This kind of financing just doesn't work in health care."

In this case, it appeared the company initially wanted out of the deal simply because it could make more money in the current market by providing more expensive hotel-style services.

Chartwell Chief Operating Officer Richard Noonan initially told Calgary media his company intended to upgrade the 30 suites and rent them out privately for more money. "We'll be able to charge whatever the market can bear," he was quoted as saying in the Calgary Herald. 🇨🇦

30th Anniversary CFNU conference in Winnipeg provided learning and solidarity-building opportunities

More than 170 members of the United Nurses of Alberta took part in the 30th Anniversary Conference of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, an important exercise in solidarity and professionalism that took place from June 13 to June 17 in Winnipeg.

About 800 nurses from across Canada came to Winnipeg – where the federation had its founding convention in 1981. They took part in workshops, were inspired and energized by the speakers, walked a picket line with locked-out members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and partook of the fun that was also part of this important event.

In her remarks to the biennial convention, CFNU President Linda Silas expounded on the key role nurses play in Canadian health care – and the even more important role they could play. “Never mind a doctor for every Canadian,” she said. “It should be a nurse for every Canadian and finally we would focus on prevention!”

“We need to address the flaws in our medicare system and at the same time protect it and expand it,” she added.

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CFNU conference video can be watched online

The Canadian Federation of Nursing Unions has released a video of its 2011 Conference, June 13 to June 17 in Winnipeg.

The video, which shows scenes from the conference and brings greetings from the presidents of member nurses' unions, celebrates the organization's 30th anniversary – which was marked in the same city as CFNU's original conference.

“It's pretty amazing how quickly nurses' unions across Canada formed a national body after the original provincial organizations were formed in the late 1970s,” UNA President Heather Smith observed in the video. “It speaks to the intention of nurses to not only organize in their province but to come together nationally.”

CFNU President Linda Silas tells of how Canadian nurses were determined to build their own national organization. “We needed to do it on our own and we needed to be successful,” Silas says. “Today we're representing health care professionals across this country in a very significant way.”

The video can be seen at www.youtube.com/thecfnu.



UNA President Heather Smith and many members of the large Alberta delegation joined then-striking postal workers on their picket line at Winnipeg postal headquarters. They also heard from representatives of Australian and Irish nurses' unions.

Lee Thomas, Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, inspired delegates with her account of a campaign to improve staffing levels in Australia's long-term care facilities. And Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the New South Wales Nurses Association, described how Australian nurses took on their state and won safer workplace staffing ratios by delivering flyers to 100,000 homes and unleashing a TV advertising campaign.

The assembly approved several resolutions, on such topics as nurse fatigue, models of care, and the role of RNs. It also passed a resolution calling for a national conference on the care of Canada's seniors and vulnerable populations.

A resolution also passed in support of Jordan's Principle, a national campaign created in memory of five-year-old Jordan River Anderson, who died in hospital because the Manitoba and Canadian governments could not agree on who should pay for his home care.

CFNU resolved that the needs of children should have priority over payment and jurisdiction. ♡



June 13-17 • 2011 • Le 13-17 Juin



National poll gives top marks to Canadian nurses

A national poll released during the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Conference in June shows that Canadian patients overwhelmingly approve of the treatment they receive from the country's nurses – despite obvious nursing shortages observed by patients in many hospitals.

The poll, conducted by Vector Research of Toronto for CFNU for the organization's 30th Anniversary Biennial Convention in Winnipeg showed that Canadian nurses were given top grades by their patients.

“Poll results showed Canadian patients respect and value the care they receive from nurses, clearly seeing evidence that nurses are health care professionals with superior knowledge – and the ‘caring touch’ that those who are ill need,” said CFNU President Linda Silas.

“The poll also showed that one third of patients noticed that the facility in which they sought treatment was understaffed


with nurses, making the high approval ratings even more significant,” Silas said.

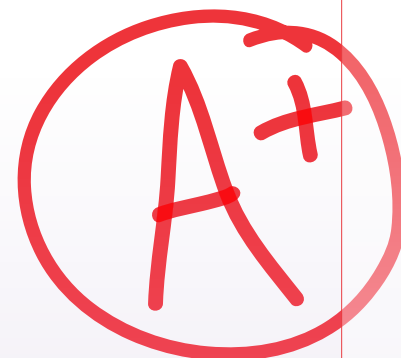
The poll's respondents also rated nurses very highly for being technically competent, for explaining procedures to patients, for helping patients understand their conditions and for quickly addressing their needs. Four in 10 of those polled gave nurses a perfect score.

For some of the benchmarks of good care measured by the poll, nurses were more productive and responsive than the public expected – especially with the nursing shortage.

“Patients give the highest marks to nurses working in facilities with what they view as ‘the right number’ of nurses,” noted Silas. “Nurses working in understaffed facilities rated the lowest, yet they still gave nurses high marks for their efforts when they're overworked. In fact, 34 per cent of respondents say they noticed the facility they used had too few nurses for the amount of work that had to be done.”

UNA President Heather Smith agreed, noting that Canadian politicians clearly need to address nursing shortages. “When the problem has grown severe enough that patients are noticing and commenting, it's a clear sign that governments all across Canada need to focus on ways to resolve this issue,” she said.

Full poll results are available on the CFNU's website. CFNU represents approximately 176,000 nurses across Canada, including the close to 25,000 members of the United Nurses of Alberta. 



“Poll results showed Canadian patients respect and value the care they receive from nurses.”
– CFNU President Linda Silas

Among the poll's findings:

- 88 per cent of respondents who saw a nurse the last time they needed health care said they were listened to carefully and had their questions answered
- 84 per cent said the nurse treated them with respect and they felt the nurse cared about them
- 83 per cent said the nurse knew and understood their health needs
- 82 per cent said the nurse addressed their needs quickly



Advocating for your own safety: part of advocating for patients

By Janice Peterson, UNA Staff

Imagine you work in an acute-care facility. Your employer has purchased several portable patient-lifting devices, but only half of them work. You also have an ongoing problem getting slings for the lifts returned after laundering.

Faced with this, staff often lift and transfer patients manually rather than trying to find a lift that works. More than once, a patient has almost ended up on the floor!

Obviously, something needs to be done.

But how can you make sure action is taken? Do you file a Professional Responsibility Committee (PRC) report form?

Clearly patients are at risk. But what about staff? Back injuries are known to be reduced if mechanical lifting devices are used. You ask yourself: “Maybe I should file an OH&S (Occupational Health and Safety) form, but which one? Do I fill out the employer’s report form or do I fill out a UNA form?”

These questions are ones UNA members frequently ask themselves and their local representatives. Since many of the issues we deal with in health care affect the health and safety of both staff and patients, advocating for patients and fighting for safe, quality patient care is part of your role as an RN, RPN or LPN. Yet advocating for their own health and safety isn’t always what comes to mind for health care workers.

So choosing to fill out a PRC form is often the first and only choice.

In the scenario described above, you should fill out a PRC form and notify your supervisor of your concerns. You also should also report them as an OH&S issue. Indeed, you are obligated under OH&S legislation to report safety concerns and workplace injuries.

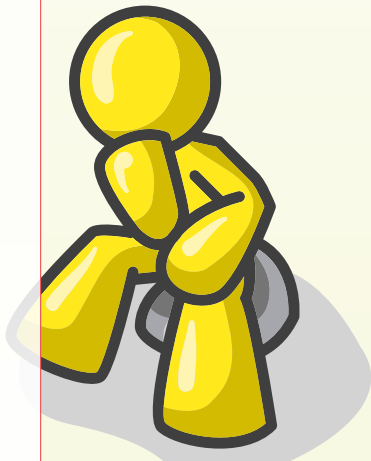
Before the former health regions were rolled into Alberta Health Services, each had its own reporting process. This situation has not changed. Other health care employers also have different processes. Most are computer based and not “user friendly.”

OH&S legislation automatically triggers a process that requires the employer to take specific corrective actions to eliminate or reduce risks of workplace injury and illness when a concern is reported.

The first step is to notify your supervisor. If you don’t have time to fill out the employer form during your shift, email or leave a quick note. You can always fill out the employer’s form later.

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“Maybe I should file an OH&S form, but which one? Do I fill out the employer’s report form or do I fill out a UNA form?”



Once the employer is aware of the issue, they are required to investigate and identify the cause of the incident and any hazards present. The legislation sets out actions the employer must take to eliminate or reduce the risk.

If your supervisor fails to follow through appropriately, it is important that you notify your local UNA representative. You are encouraged to fill out a UNA OH&S report form and give a copy to your union representative and supervisor. If you are concerned about filling out or signing a union form, your local representative can do it on your behalf.

Your local representative will then make sure that your concerns are discussed at the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee. If issues are not resolved at the committee, then the local can present the concerns and recommendations to senior managers, and then the employer's governing board.

This process allows UNA to press the employer follow the law. We can also file a complaint to the government. Government officers have to ability to force the employer to stop work or take specific corrective actions.

Although the Collective Agreement's process for dealing with PRC concerns is the same, there are very few legislative requirements related to patient care.

Health care employers should not ignore OH&S legislation, but they do and may continue to do so if we don't report unsafe or unhealthy working conditions to management and your union.

A safe and healthy workplace benefits workers and patients. Advocating for your own health and safety should be part of advocating for your patients. 🍷

Although the Collective Agreement's process for dealing with PRC concerns is the same, there are very few legislative requirements related to patient care.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code workers are required to report work related injuries and illness and unsafe or unhealthy working conditions. The employer is required to have a system in place to allow workers to file reports. In addition if you sustained a work related injury and illness that caused you to lose time from work or seek medical attention you are required to file a Workers Compensation claim for benefits.



November Parkland conference to explore the attack on unions



The Parkland Institute's 2011 fall conference will explore the attacks on working people and unions in the United States and Britain – and the warning signs a campaign against public sector workers is coming to Canada and Alberta.

The 15th annual conference – with the theme “Class Dismissed: Capital’s War on Workers and Democracy

– will also discuss the accompanying attacks on democracy and environment by corporations, and how working people from Wisconsin to North Africa are fighting back.

The conference will take place from Nov. 18 to Nov. 20 on the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton. For more information, visit www.parklandinstitute.ca. 🍷

Agreement leads to common application of arbitration award on minimum payments for meetings and in-services

More details including examples, contacts for questions and exemptions are available on UNA's website

– www.una.ab.ca. (The full link is: <http://www.una.ab.ca/news/archive/JointStatementMinPay>)

The Multi-Employer/UNA Joint Committee has agreed on a common application of a Jan. 10, 2011, arbitration award on minimum payment for meetings and in-service sessions on unscheduled days.

The common application, which was announced on July 21, covers a variety of services, including several that were not expressly contemplated by the award.

In the January ruling, the arbitrator concluded that the call-back language in Article 9.04(b) of the agreement

must be interpreted so that an Employee who is required to attend such meetings or in-services on an unscheduled day or on a designated day of rest shall be paid a minimum of three hours pay at the overtime rate regardless of the actual length of the meeting or in-service.

As a result, the parties agreed that the Employer may require an Employee to stay and perform meaningful work for the full duration of the minimum three hour shift, except in circumstances where the Employee has been called back to duty during their on-call period in accordance with Article 9.04(a) of the collective agreement.

However, the arbitrator said, this needs to be applied reasonably. For example, it may not be appropriate to require an Employee to stay for the remaining time if the purpose of the meeting was disciplinary.

Both parties also need to be reasonable when scheduling meetings with consideration given to the Employee's scheduled hours and the normal hours of work for the manager, other Employer representatives and union representatives.

This may mean that meetings are scheduled outside of regular business hours. In the case of discipline and investigation meetings, this may require the granting of extensions in order to facilitate a reasonable meeting time for all parties. However, when the Employer has provided appropriate notice of a meeting, such meetings may proceed in the absence of a union representative. 🍷

UNA members at six Revera sites ratify new agreement

More than 120 nurses represented by the United Nurses of Alberta at six worksites in Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat have ratified a new three-year collective agreement with Revera Inc.

Ratification vote results were announced July 4.

The agreement with the Mississauga, Ont., operator of private long-term care facilities includes wage parity with UNA's provincial agreement, an increase in bereavement leave to five days and seniority portability provisions.

The agreement covers members of Local 410 at Miller Crossing Care Centre in Edmonton, Local 137 at Riverview Care Centre in Medicine Hat, and Local 210 at Bow Crest Care Centre, Local 235 at South Terrace Continuing Care Centre, Local 401 at McKenzie Town Care Centre and Local 107 at Mount Royal Care Centre, all in Calgary.

The Miller Crossing contract was a first collective agreement. 🍷

Seven town halls in seven communities topped summer's Join Together agenda

Since the launch of Phase II of the Join Together Alberta campaign in late May, activists in the coalition to advocate for needed public services across the province have held town hall meetings in seven centres across Alberta.

Participants in the town halls discussed why public services are needed, and why Alberta can afford quality public services in health care, education and government services.

The largest town hall, June 23 in Edmonton, attracted more than 150 participants.

Join Together Alberta (JTA) also held mobilization meetings in seven Alberta cities at which local activists were given the tools they needed to organize to protect and enhance publicly funded public services.

In mid-August, JTA launched a photo contest. Details are available on the JTA website: www.jointogetheralberta.ca/.

Next on the agenda for JTA will be the launch of "Follow the Money," a docu-

mentary film on how the government has squandered Albertans' resources, leaving us with less to spend on essential public services.

JTA activists also be attended Progressive Conservative leadership forums throughout the province, asking the questions that need to be asked, and will engage in messaging throughout the provincial election campaign that could come as early as this fall. 🍷



Some of the participants in the June 23 Edmonton Town Hall





UNA Locals on Facebook:

Local 1

(Peter Lougheed Centre)

Local 11

(Misericordia Hospital)

Local 33

(Royal Alexandra Hospital)

Local 79

(Grey Nuns & Edmonton General)

Local 95

(Alberta Children's Hospital)

Local 115

(Foothills Medical Centre)

Local 120

(Lethbridge Regional Hospital)

Local 121

(Rockyview General Hospital)

Local 211

(Calgary Community)

Local 222

(Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury in Ponoka)

Local 301

(University of Alberta Hospital)

UNA Locals using social media to connect with their members

United Nurses of Alberta Communications Officer Dave Cournoyer travelled to Calgary in mid-July to meet executive members from Local 121 (Rockyview General Hospital) to discuss how they can use social media tools to connect and engage with their members.

“Social media tools like Facebook give the union movement a way to connect with members who, for whatever reason, are not already connected to their union or Local,” Cournoyer said.

The UNA Facebook page has attracted over 3,100 “likes” since it was launched in early 2010 and has become a vibrant online destination for UNA members.

“Facebook doesn’t replace the traditional ways we are communicating with our members, but it gives us some additional tools to use,” said Cournoyer. 🍷

UNA Locals interested in building a presence online should contact Dave Cournoyer at dcournoyer@una.ab.ca or 780-425-1025.

Calgary nurses to pilot 2011 United Way

This year’s United Way campaign in Calgary will get on board with unitedway@work, an effective on-line tool piloted last year in Edmonton, says Holly Heffernan, a UNA member who has been seconded to work with United Way of Calgary and Area since February 2011.

As United Way Labour Strategist, Heffernan’s job is to engage and educate unions and their members about United Way, she said, advising UNA members to watch their Alberta Health Services in-box this fall for more details.

Every year, AHS employees play an important role through their contributions to United Way supporting agencies in communities throughout Alberta.

Holly asks: “Did you know that next to the government, United Way is the largest funder of the voluntary sector and social services in Canada, raising upwards of \$480 million each year to improve the social conditions of Canadians?” Starting with this edition, Holly will be writing short articles in the UNA NewsBulletin that ask and answer your questions about the 2011 United Way Campaign. 🍷

211 lines opens doors to wide range of social and community services

◀ Did you know? ...

By Holly Heffernan

Did you know that 211 is a three-digit non-emergency telephone number that connects callers to a full range of community, social, government and health service information in Calgary and Edmonton – and soon elsewhere in Alberta as well?

The 211 line is one of the many important services supported by your donations to United Way.

The 211 line is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week by trained 211 Operators. It's free, confidential and available in 150 languages because United Way knows that talking to trained specialist makes it easier for people to deal with the challenges life throws at them.

Why 211? As nurses, we know we often have to discharge patients from hospitals who still require services beyond

the scope of our practice. We can help them by telling them about the 211 line.

Since it may be hard to know where to start looking for the help that patients need, let alone what help might be available to them in their community, calling 211 is a great place for them to start. A nurse can also call the line on a patient's behalf.

Among the services to which 211 specialists can direct callers are:

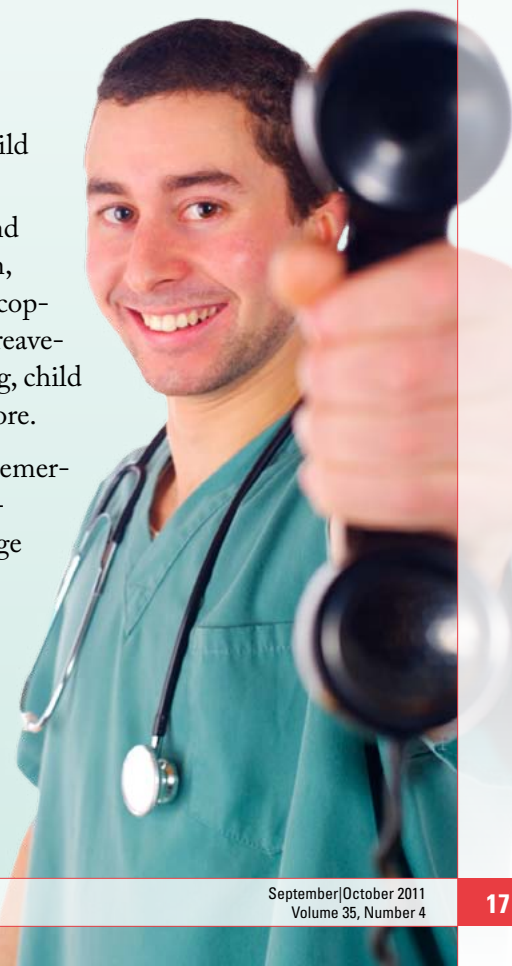
- Hot meals delivered while they are convalescing
- Rides to follow-up appointments with physicians or physiotherapists
- Counselling
- Child care
- Domestic violence support
- Or even where to enroll a child in soccer!

Operators at the 211 line respond to requests about emotional health, financial issues, family recreation, coping with disabilities, death and bereavement, employment skills, parenting, child care, seniors support and much more.

Just as you would call 911 in an emergency, call 211 in Calgary and Edmonton to connect with a full range of community, social, government and health service programs. ♥

If you have questions about this service, you can contact Holly at holly.heffernan@calgaryunitedway.org.

The 211 line is one of the many important services supported by your donations to United Way.



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North Central nurses take part in 'Know Your Rights' seminar

Eighteen nurses from North Central Alberta gathered at the Northlands Expo Centre July 12 for UNA's "Know Your Rights" workshop.

The workshop, created with both new nurses and experienced nurses new to being involved with their union in mind, was facilitated by UNA Education Officer Tim Gough and is one of many educational opportunities that UNA offers its members.

For many new nurses attending the daylong session, this was their first introduction to UNA's Collective Agreement, Professional Responsibility Committees, Occupational Health & Safety, and the grievance process.

UNA is holding "Know Your Rights" workshops on Nov. 1 in Lethbridge, Nov. 2 in Calgary, Nov. 8 in Red Deer, Nov. 10 in Edmonton, and Nov. 15 in Grande Prairie.

To learn more about UNA education opportunities, visit the Education Section of UNA's website – www.una.ab.ca - or contact your UNA Local. 🍷

Central District Representatives from left to right: Wanda Zimmerman, Dianne McInroy and Sandra Zak

More than 65 attend Central District Meeting in June

More than 65 UNA local executive members gathered in Camrose at the union's Central District Meeting on June 23 to share their concerns and conduct the district's business.

Participants in the meeting took part in a wide-ranging discussion of local issues, at which chronic understaffing at health facilities throughout the region and problems with air ambulance dispatch emerged as central concerns.

Nurses at the meeting also heard from Second Vice-President Jane Sustrik during a seminar on Professional Responsibility Committees and from Research Officer Judith Grosman on local participation in the Joint Workforce Regularization process in the current collective agreement between UNA and Alberta Health Services. 🍷





Report from Director
of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

Impact of Seniority on shift schedules has implications for members making job applications

Members of the United Nurses of Alberta who are considering applying for a new position under the Provincial Collective Agreement need to keep in mind the impact that Article 12, Seniority, may have on a position for which they make application.

Because UNA members can use their seniority to select a vacant line within a rotation in units where they work, other members need to remember that when they consider a position, they cannot assume that everything will be exactly the same by the time they get the job.

Section 12.02 of the Collective Agreement states in part that:

Seniority shall be considered in determining:

(a) (ii) selection of vacant Shift schedules of the same FTE, subject to Article 7: Hours of Work and Scheduling Provisions...

This means that a member can use her seniority to take a line that has become vacant, as long as it is in the same unit and is the same FTE.

The potential impact of this rule is made more complicated by the fact that standard practice for filling vacant positions varied from health region to health region before the creation of Alberta Health Services, and that many of those inconsistencies continue in different regions of AHS.

This can mean, for example, that in some parts of Alberta, the Employer might post a shift for applications in the knowledge that the use of Article 12 by other employees may mean the person hired may not end up working the shift pattern originally posted.

In other places, the Employer may try to resolve all internal seniority-based moves before the position is posted, meaning the selected applicant is more likely to actually end up working the shifts noted in the original posting.

Since it is not clear what the practice may be from place to place, it is important for potential internal applicants to keep this in mind before they apply to move to another unit.

To put it bluntly, if the shift pattern you expect to work is very important to you, you will have to be very careful to make sure the shift you end up working is what you expected, or otherwise acceptable.

Looking at this from another perspective, it also means that applicants who are interested in work on a particular unit, but don't see a line posted that they are interested in, should not rule out an application anyway on the assumption that by the time the dust settles, they may be able to fill a more acceptable line.

In other words, members need to file applications with their eyes wide open, and to be prepared to ask if the shift pattern advertised will be the shift pattern worked and to insist on their rights under the Collective Agreement.

As a result of the confusion caused by different practices in different locations throughout Alberta Health Services, the UNA/Employer Joint Committee is examining this situation with a view to developing consistent practice throughout the province.

Realistically, however, a quick solution to these inconsistencies is unlikely, and UNA members are going to continue taking care and exercising due consideration for quite some time yet when they contemplate moving to another unit. 🍷



GET READY FOR UNA'S 34TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

More than 800 members of the United Nurses of Alberta will gather at Edmonton's Northlands Expo Centre on Oct. 25, 26 and 27, 2011, for the 34th Annual General Meeting of their union.

The three-day AGM, the most important event of UNA's year, will include annual approval of the business of the union, important discussion of most important issues faced by unionized nurses in Alberta and a look at some of the key policy issues we face in the coming year. The theme of this year's convention is "Nursing our Future." Key daily activities include:

DAY 1: A panel on Revenue and Energy, one of the most important issues facing the province in 2011.

DAY 2: The attack on unions today, and what unions need to do about it, with Armine Yalnizan of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Stephanie Bloomingdale, Secretary Treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO.

DAY 3: Motivational presentation by Steve Robbins, the "Chief What If Officer"... The topic? "Why we love our comfort zones."

Remember, UNA members are UNA's decision makers, and many of our union's most important decisions are made at our AGM.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
KEEP AN EYE ON WWW.UNA.AB.CA**