

# Seeking social justice at home and abroad



United Nurses of Alberta  
**NewsBulletin**

*UNA President, Heather Smith, Right, with  
Wisconsin Trade Unionist Stephanie Bloomingdale  
at the Parkland Institute's fall conference.*

*See story page 8*



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Care Conference**  
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## January 2012: A quick start to what's sure to be a busy year

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**W**ith the first office move in 20 years, it should come as no surprise January 2012 has been a busy month for most of us here at UNA's Provincial Office.

As 2011 drew to a close, over the holiday break, we moved lock, stock and barrel from the address we have occupied for two decades just east of the Alberta Legislature. Our doors opened at the start of the New Year in a new Provincial Office at 11150 Jasper Avenue, across the street from Edmonton's old General Hospital.

I am pleased to report that as this is written, our relatively smooth transition is coming to an end with most lights installed, carpets laid, locks working properly and the dust swept up! I expect our new offices to enhance the ability of UNA's staff to deliver services to members and provide a much-improved atmosphere for you, our members, and the people who provide UNA's many services.

Among our first order of business has been planning for an important conference called Beyond Acute Care: Covering Seniors and the Disabled with the Medicare Umbrella. Sponsored by several organizations with major input from UNA, the goal is to protect, enhance and extend Canada's and Alberta's fair and efficient system of publicly administered, funded and operated system of Medicare.

Major speakers will include Ralph Nader, the renowned U.S. consumer advocate, and Maude Barlow, national chair of the Council of Canadians.

Meanwhile, UNA staff are also preparing our response to the shocking news the federal government is considering an attack on the retirement benefits of working Canadians in the name of "sustainability" and "affordability."

The answer to making Canada's social programs affordable and sustainable is not reducing Old Age Security or the Canada Pension Plan, which are known to be in good shape, or raising the retirement age, which experts agree is not needed. Canada already spends far less than the OECD average on public pensions.

Early in January, I attended the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions Negotiators Meeting in Vancouver. CFNU representatives from across Canada discussed the bargaining challenges we will face in the months ahead and the strategies we can consider to overcome them.

We discussed the need for nurse-patient ratios and how we might achieve them. We heard from Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the New South Wales Nurses' Association in Australia, where nurses won set ratios through bargaining. And we heard from Jill Furillo, bargaining director for the National Nurses United Union, the newly formed U.S. equivalent of CFNU, and its success in California and other states lobbying for ratio laws.

These lessons will assist our Canadian efforts to assure patient safety.

Finally, we are getting ready for our next round of bargaining in 2013. By this time next year I expect us to be sitting down with Alberta Health Services' and other employers' bargaining teams to reach our next Provincial Collective Agreement.

Our work has been cut out for us in 2012 and beyond! But I am pleased to say we are off to a good start to achieving our professional and personal goals.

In Solidarity

Heather Smith  
President

# 2013 bargaining process gets under way, milestones outlined

The process of preparing for UNA's 2013 Provincial Negotiations is now starting to get up to speed with several important milestones scheduled to be passed in 2012.

"The Executive Board approved the timelines for the 2013 negotiations at its meeting in November 2011," President Heather Smith explained. "Now that we are into 2012, members can expect the pace of preparations for bargaining to steadily pick up.

"We will all have important roles to play in this process," she added.

Questionnaires for members will be included in the May-June edition of NewsBulletin seeking direct input from UNA's membership. The questionnaires must be returned to Local Executives and then, in June, letters will go out to UNA Locals seeking their proposals for bargaining.

By mid-June, she said, UNA expects the Negotiating Committee to have been formed after elections at District Meetings. Locals will complete their proposals and submit them to the Bargaining Committee by mid-September.

Then, a month after UNA's 2012 Annual General Meeting, the province-wide three-day Demand Setting Meeting will take place Nov. 27-29 with final proposals to be completed by the end of the year.

In January 2013, the final package of proposals will be sent from the proposal-setting meeting.

Actual negotiations will commence early in 2013 as the collective agreements expire on March 31, Smith concluded. 🍷

## Key Tentative UNA Bargaining Dates in 2012 and 2013

**June 2012**  
Questionnaires in NewsBulletin for members

**June 2012**  
Election of Local Bargaining Committees completed

**September 14, 2012**  
Local proposals received by Provincial Office

**October 23-25, 2012**  
Annual General Meeting

**November 27-29, 2012**  
Demand-Setting Meeting

**January 2013**  
Final package sent from Demand-Setting Meeting

**January 2013**  
Notice to bargain signed and negotiations commence

## Provincial office move all but complete

Workers may still be hooking up light fixtures, checking the fans and touching up the paint, but UNA's Headquarters move is now all but complete.

The bulk of the move took place on Dec. 27 and 28, while headquarters staff took a break for the holiday, said UNA Executive Secretary Sherry Shewchuk, who oversaw the project.

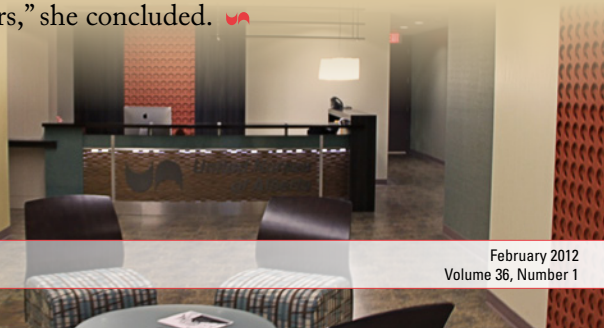
All UNA Headquarters operations moved from the Park Plaza Building just east of the Alberta Legislature to a newly renovated building at 700-11150 Jasper Avenue NW in Edmonton.

Shewchuk, for whom this was the third headquarters move with UNA, described the project this time as remarkably smooth. "Things went very well," she said. "The biggest issue was the fact work continued to be needed on the building after staff had moved in and gotten back to work."

UNA President Heather Smith called the new office "a wonderful space that will be more accessible for members, for meetings with employers and other groups, and for the conduct of our staff's professional duties."

"It provides a really good atmosphere for the important work we do for our members," she concluded. 🍷

*The reception area of UNA's new provincial office*



# Ralph Nader, Maude Barlow address Long-Term Care Conference

*It's important to speak with experts and advocates from other parts of the world about their experience with many approaches to administering health care.*

Concerned Albertans have the opportunity to hear renowned consumer advocate and former U.S. presidential candidate Ralph Nader, Council of Canadians National Chair Maude Barlow and many other experts on the politics and policy of health care for seniors, the disabled and other vulnerable citizens.

A two-day conference – called “Beyond Acute Care: Covering Seniors and the Disabled with the Medicare Umbrella” – is taking place Friday, Feb. 24, and Saturday, Feb. 25, at the Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe Conference Centre, 10111 Bellamy Hill, in Edmonton, Alberta.

“We are holding this conference because we cannot continue to wait for the Alberta and federal governments to acknowledge and act on the deficits in health care beyond the acute care system,” said Heather Smith, president of the United Nurses of Alberta, which is one of the principal organizers of the conference, which will be taking place during the period UNA Members are receiving the NewsBulletin in the mail.

“The debate in Alberta should be about expanding and improving public health care to ensure better services across the continuum of care,” Smith said. “We need to stop pretending that we have comprehensive care when we in fact abdicate responsibility for community care and long-term care for people who no longer require acute care.”

Gil McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour, another sponsor of the conference, said it's important to speak with experts and advocates from other parts of the world about their experience with many approaches to administering health care.

McGowan said the emphasis of the conference will be on positive ideas that can improve the public health care system, but that speakers will also debunk harmful and expensive policies such as private long-term care insurance being pushed by special interests in the private sector.

Other groups involved in the conference include Public Interest Alberta's

Seniors Task Force, the Alberta Council on Aging, the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association and Seniors United Now, as well as the United Nurses of Alberta, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Health Sciences Association of Alberta and the Alberta Federation of Labour.

The event is open to both the public and media.

The cost of the conference is \$75, with lunch Saturday. There is a special \$50 rate for seniors and low-income participants. Those who can't attend the conference Saturday but want to hear Nader Friday night may do so for \$25. 🍷

*Council of Canadians chairperson Maude Barlow.*



## Covering Seniors and the Disabled with the Medicare Umbrella



# Beyond Acute Care

### Nader to tell of 'grotesque waste, hyper costs, callous denials' in corporatized health

**W**hen Ralph Nader speaks to the Beyond Acute Care Conference taking place on Feb. 24 in Edmonton, he'll set out some of the "perverse incentives" that guarantee private, for profit health care would make things far worse, not better.

The renowned American consumer advocate will explain why, if a country were to dump universal health insurance for private health care, the impacts would include:

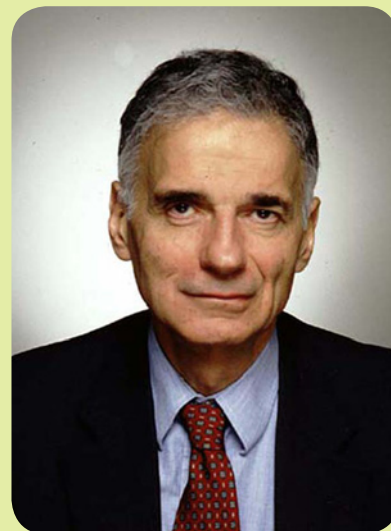
- Pay-or-die practices
- Much higher prices and the potential for vast fraud
- Loss of data that helps us determine best practices

- Creation of a powerful, political propaganda force to resist positive change

This describes the situation in the United States, where, Nader recently pointed out, "health care costs about twice that of Canada on a per capita basis with worse outcomes and with one in six Americans without any health insurance coverage."

An average 800 American citizens die every week because they have no health insurance to pay for diagnosis and treatment, Nader explained.

Nader predicts that Canadians face an intense campaign by the agents of corporatized health care and the politicians they support to



*Internationally renowned consumer advocate Ralph Nader.*

sabotage our fair and effective system, falsify comparative results and assert falsely it does not innovate.

"Canadians need to know more about the grotesque waste, hyper-costs, callous denials of care and resistance to change in the U.S.," Nader says. 🍷



# HQCA long-term care survey shows benefits of public facility operation

By Judith Grossman, UNA Research Officer

*The November 2011 Alberta Auditor General's report noted that further work is needed in the area of assessing long-term care may be needed.*

When the Health Quality Council of Alberta released findings of its second provincial long-term care family experience survey last month, one important finding was left out of the government's news release about the report.

The 2010-11 survey, which compared results with the first survey carried out by the HQCA in 2007-08, found that "on average, publicly operated facilities obtained significantly higher overall care ratings compared to private and not-for-profit or faith-based facilities." (This conclusion is found on page 7 of the report, a copy of which may be found on the council's website, [www.hqca.ca](http://www.hqca.ca))


Other findings, which the council chose to publicize in its release, showed that in most areas results have improved or remained stable since the 2007-08 report.

For example, the latest report found that those facilities that received the highest overall care ratings from family members were smaller with fewer beds and more home-like environments.

Drilling a little deeper in the HQCA data, we can also see a familiar pattern: facilities that received the highest overall care ratings also had more nurses and aides available. For example, 85 per cent of respondents in the top-performing facilities reported there were always or usually enough nurses or other staff members available, compared with 54 per cent in the low-performing facilities.

Clearly, staffing plays a role in whether family members find the care offered in a facility satisfactory. Based on this, the HQCA said in its news release, which is also available at the HQCA website, that "the survey findings suggest improvement efforts should focus on ... improving the number and availability of long-term care staff."

The November 2011 Alberta Auditor General's report noted that further work is needed in the area of assessing long-term care may be needed.

The Health Quality Council of Alberta survey was mailed to 11,690 family members of residents living in 157 long-term care facilities in Alberta between Nov. 22, 2010, and Feb. 20, 2011. 

**Highlights of the 2010/2011 Long Term Care Family Experience Survey**

**HQCA**  
Health Quality Council of Alberta

December 2011

**Why did we do the survey?**

Surveys are an important part of the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA)'s legislated mandate to measure, monitor, assess and report to Albertans about their experience and satisfaction with the quality of health services they receive. In 2007/08, we conducted resident and family experience surveys in 173 long term care facilities across the province. These were the first such surveys conducted at the provincial level and formed a baseline about residents' and family members' experiences when a loved one is living in a long term care centre.

In 2010/11, the HQCA repeated the family experience survey in 157 long term care facilities across the province. Where possible, it compares the results with those from 2007/08. The survey was designed to capture family members' observations or experiences with the care and services provided at the long term care facility. It is not intended to provide a proxy for residents' experiences.

We did not conduct the resident survey again as we found in 2007/08 that less than 30% of residents were capable of completing it. The HQCA is looking at different ways to collect this important feedback.

In this report, we use the terms long term care facility, long term care centre and nursing home interchangeably. When we use the term family member, we mean family member or the person most involved in the resident's care.

**What did we want to learn?**

As in 2007/08, the main reason we did the survey was to get information about the family experience because this is a key measure of quality and an important aspect of providing and improving care and services for long term care residents.

This information can be used to help long term care providers, health professionals, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness to:

- Improve the quality of care and services for residents.
- Improve aspects of quality of life for residents.
- Identify areas of excellence and opportunities for improvement.

**We also wanted to:**

- Get standardized and comparable data across the province, Alberta Health Services zones and service providers.
- Give those facilities successful in 2007/08 the opportunity to compare results from one survey year to the next.

Help long term care facilities meet the requirements of Alberta's Continuing Care Health Service Standards.

**Alberta Health Services Zones**

- North Zone
- Edmonton Zone
- Central Zone
- Calgary Zone
- South Zone

# Coalition takes aim at tax and royalty giveaways by governments

If you happen hear a cheeky radio ad that draws attention to the serious funding problems caused by the Alberta government's approach to tax and royalty policy, it's sure to be part of the Better Way Alberta campaign launched in on January 25 Edmonton.

The ads may be humorous, but they have a serious mission – to get Albertans asking important questions about why Alberta, Canada's wealthiest province, is running a \$3-billion deficit and saying it can't afford to maintain middle-of-the-road spending on vital public services.

Launched at a news conference led by Bill Moore-Kilgannon, Executive Director of Public Interest Alberta, and by Gil McGowan, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour, the campaign by a coalition of labour and community groups aims to get Albertans to start asking in the run-up to the next provincial election, expected to be called within the next month.

"Why in a province as wealthy as Alberta is the talk always about cuts and freezes to things that Albertans value, like education and health care," asked McGowan at the news conference.

"The truth is the only reason our government is running deficits and talking about cutbacks is because they've blown a hole in the revenue base we need to fund services," he said. "The cupboard is bare because Alberta's irresponsibly low royalty and corporate tax rates have made it bare."

"Albertans are being told they have no choice but to accept cuts to things like health care, post-secondary education and various services for the disadvantaged," PIA Executive Director Bill Moore-Kilgannon told the media at the news conference.

"The truth is we do have choices. By introducing modest increases to tax and royalty rates we could generate the money we need to maintain the kind of high-

quality services that Albertans need to face the future with confidence."

UNA members may listed to the coalition's three radio ads by visiting BetterWayAlberta.ca.

The campaign compliments the work done by the AFL and PIA to assist the publication of the book Follow the Money by Kevin Taft. 🍷



*"Why in a province as wealthy as Alberta is the talk always about cuts and freezes to things that Albertans value, like education and health care?"*

*- Gil McGowan*



Public Interest Alberta's Bill Moore-Kilgannon and Alberta Federation of Labour's Gil McGowan launch the Better Way Alberta campaign.



Stephanie Bloomingdale, Secretary-Treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO, at the 2011 Parkland Institute Fall Conference.

# New movement for social and economic justice sparked by attack on unions

Thanks to the excesses of right-wing politicians and their corporate financiers, progressive people “are in the midst of building a new movement for social and economic justice,” Stephanie Bloomingdale, Secretary Treasurer of the Wisconsin branch of the American Federation of Labour, told the closing session of the Parkland Institute’s Fall 2011 Conference in November.

“In their blind greed and arrogance, they have overreached,” said Bloomingdale in a talk on “taking back democracy.”

“When their bought-and-paid-for politicians tried to implement their outrageous schemes, a curious thing happened,” she told participants in the two-day conference by the Edmonton-based research institute, affiliated with the University of Alberta. “A spark was lit in Wisconsin that has ignited a movement!”

Bloomingdale was referring to the efforts earlier this year by the state’s Republican governor, Scott Walker, to eliminate most collective bargaining rights of Wisconsin public sector workers, and roll back wages and benefits. The outcome was huge demonstrations by up to 100,000 people in the streets of Madison, the state capital, and now a campaign to recall Walker from office.

None of this could have happened, Bloomingdale said, without public sector unions and private sector unions, citizens with union memberships and without, and people from other states and countries standing together to fight for the rights of working families in her state.


“At the end of the day, our fight is not just about collective bargaining and the right to join a union, it is about social and economic justice and rights that are

fundamental to a functioning democracy,” she said, emphasizing that the fight in Wisconsin boils down to a battle to preserve the middle class.

The wealthy Americans who are financing the attack on unions want something bigger, she said. “Their real goal is to destroy the middle class and leave us powerless.”

Unions help the middle class and because union members vote in higher percentages than other segments of society. “We punch above our weight.”

Bloomingdale was previously Director of Public Policy for the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals.

Parkland, sponsored in part by UNA, studies economic, social, cultural and political issues facing Albertans and Canadians. 

*“At the end of the day, our fight is not just about collective bargaining and the right to join a union, it is about social and economic justice and rights that are fundamental to a functioning democracy.”*



# CFNU Prairie Labour School set to go in June

This year's CFNU Prairie Labour School will be hosted by UNA in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains at Canmore, Alberta.

The two-day event at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Centre, the second biennial school sponsored by the three Prairie unions of the Canadian Federation of Nurses' Unions, will be open to about 50 participants each from UNA, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and the Manitoba Nurses Union.

The three-course program on June 4 and 5, which will include both guest speakers and workshops, will emphasize how to balance professionalism and union activism, consider the question of nurse-to-patient ratios and forecast the future of the union movement for nurses and society. Registration takes place on the evening of June 3.

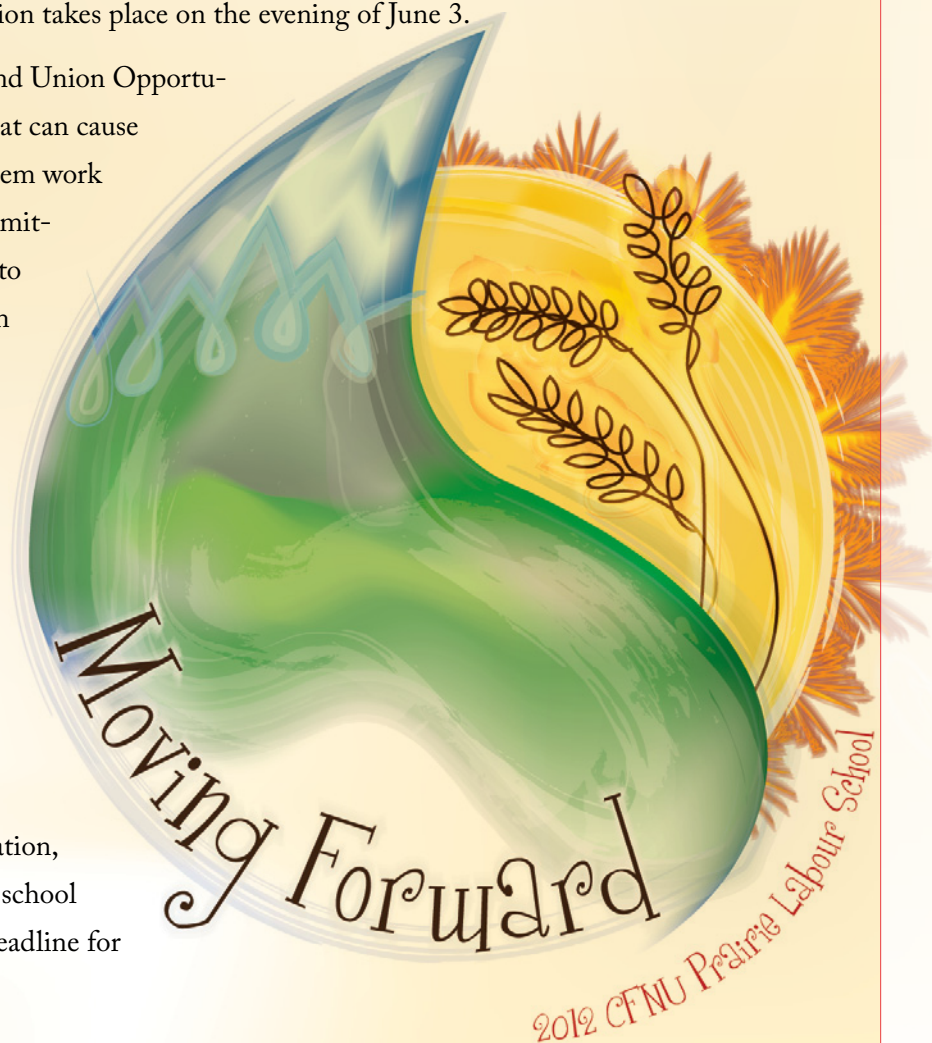
Balancing Professional Responsibilities and Union Opportunities will walk nurses through the issues that can cause moral distress in the workplace, and help them work out how to be both a good nurse and a committed unionist. Its goal is to send nurses back to work with practical solutions they can use in their jobs and their union activism.

Nurse-to-Patient Ratios will discuss the various models for achieving this goal that have been tried, and which have proved effective, elsewhere in the world.

Life After the Labour Movement: Are Unions Still Relevant explores the rights workers have won and the threats worker rights face.

For registration details and other information, UNA members interested in attending the school should contact their Local executive. The deadline for registration is April 2, 2012. 🍷

*The three-course program on June 4 and 5, which will include both guest speakers and workshops, will emphasize how to balance professionalism and union activism.*



*The National Day of Mourning, held annually on April 28, was officially recognized by the federal government in 1991.*

# Canadian working people to mark April 28 as Day of Mourning

## Word to the wise: regularly wash reusable grocery bags

**A** University of Arizona microbiologist has been testing eco-friendly reusable garbage bags and he's reached an important conclusion: They need to be washed regularly to keep bacteria down!

Dr. Charles Gerba of the U.S. university's Department of Soil, Water and Environmental Science swabbed 87 reusable bags obtained at random from grocery shoppers in California and Arizona for bacteria. The results were not promising: large numbers of bacteria were found in almost all bags and that coliform bacteria were found in half of those tested.

The solution: wash reusable shopping bags regularly in the laundry, using hot soapy water. Gerba also suggests using some bags exclusively for food, others exclusively for non-food items. If you use one bag for meat, fruit and vegetables, wash it more frequently.

This is a good way to compromise between food safety and environmental responsibility. ♡

green  
corner

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

**I**n 2010, according to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 1,014 workplace deaths were recorded throughout Canada.

In the 18-year period from 1993 to 2010, 16,143 people lost their lives due to work-related causes, an average of 897 deaths per year, the Centre reported.

This is why UNA and other unions throughout Canada will be marking April 28 this year as the National Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job.

The National Day of Mourning, held annually on April 28, was officially recognized by the federal government in 1991, eight years after the Day of Mourning was launched by the Canadian Labour Congress.

The solemn event has since spread to about 80 countries around the world and has been adopted by the AFL-CIO and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

The Canadian flag on Parliament Hill will fly at half-mast and working people throughout the country will wear ribbons and black armbands and observe moments of silence. Businesses are asked to participate by declaring April 28 a Day of Mourning and to strive to prevent workplace deaths, illnesses and injuries. ♡

# Local 137 ratifies agreement with Valleyview Care in Medicine Hat

**N**urses represented by Local 137 of the United Nurses of Alberta at the Valleyview Care Centre in Medicine Hat early in the New Year ratified a new Collective Agreement with AgeCare Ltd.

The agreement, which expires on March 31, 2014, includes pay increases of 2 per cent on the date of ratification, 4 per cent on April 1, 2012, and provides wage parity with Alberta Health Services UNA rates on April 1, 2013.

In addition, the includes an increase in evening shift premiums to \$2.75 per hour from \$2 per hour, and increases in night premiums to \$3 on the date of ratification, \$4 on April 1, 2012, and \$5 on April 1, 2013. Weekend premium pay will increase to \$3.25 from \$2 per hour.

Employer contributions to employee RRSPs will rise to 4 per cent from 2 per cent of regular salary.

Other improvements in the tentative agreement include:

- An increase in required layoff notification to 28 days from 14 days
- The addition of Boxing Day as a named holiday
- Addition of terminal care leave to leaves of absence provisions
- Removal of disciplinary records from files after one year, instead of two years
- New provisions for automatic advancement of grievances
- Improved process for reimbursement of mileage
- Improved process for recovery of overpayments

UNA LRO Jeannine Arbour thanked Local 137 Bargaining Committee members Lisa O'Brien and Tracey Martin for their hard work on the agreement. ♡

*The agreement, which expires on March 31, 2014, includes pay increases of 2 per cent on the date of ratification, 4 per cent on April 1, 2012, and provides wage parity with Alberta Health Services UNA rates on April 1, 2013.*

## UNA marks Black History Month 2012

**F**ebruary is Black History Month, an observance of the history of the African diaspora throughout the world, and UNA joins working people throughout the province in using the international event to honour the contribution of its members of African heritage.

“We recognize the contributions and the legacy made by nurses in our province who have their ancestral roots in Africa, whether they were raised here in Alberta or come from abroad,” said Second Vice-President Jane Sustrik.

In 2011, the government of Canada launched an online Canadian black history museum, which may be accessed at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/games/museum/main.asp> . ♡



*Born into slavery in South Carolina in 1845, pioneer southern Alberta cattleman John Ware ranched near Duchess after coming to Canada from the United States in 1882. He is shown with his wife Mildred and two of their five children. He's said to have never been tossed from a wild horse and lived until 1905.*

# South Health Campus to open in 2012 in Calgary

By Dave Cournoyer, UNA  
Communications Staff

**A**lberta Health Services is now seeking Registered Nurses and other health professionals to staff the South Health Campus that is nearing completion in southeast Calgary.

The huge new hospital will be the first phase of the campus. Once fully on stream by 2013, it is expected to have about 2,400 full-time staff positions working with approximately 180 physicians to support 310 beds and bed equivalents. There will be 11 Operating Rooms in the facility.

The campus is scheduled to open in the summer of 2012 with specialty outpatient clinics, followed by the Emergency Department and related services in the fall of 2012. AHS says other services will open in stages over the next 10 months.

In addition to the patients occupying beds, AHS says it expects to be able to initially handle more than 200,000 outpatient visits, 2,500 births and 40,000 Emergency Department visits each year at the new hospital.

AHS says the facility will have the capacity to expand in future to about 644 beds and 800,000 annual outpatient visits.

*Visit UNA's Website –  
[www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca) –  
for more information on  
the application process  
and on the “behavioural  
interview” techniques AHS  
intends to use to choose  
successful applicants.*

The newly constructed South Health Campus in Calgary



## Applying for jobs at South Health Campus

UNA members interested in seeking employment opportunities at the new facility can find listings on the HealthJobs website or on ePeople if they currently work at a job site in Calgary or Edmonton.

UNA has been advised by AHS that members applying for positions at the South Health Campus need to attach a copy of their full resume, including current qualifications and job experience, to their application. Applicants must highlight the completion of minimum qualifications listed in the job posting. 🍷

# President points to 1990s for source of current Alberta nurse shortage

The continued nursing shortage in Alberta is the result of massive reductions in the nursing workforce by the Conservative government of premier Ralph Klein in the mid-1990s, UNA President Heather Smith told the Calgary Herald Jan. 26 in an interview.

Smith was responding to the release that day of a study by the Canadian Institute for Health Information that revealed Alberta's nursing workforce is among the lowest per capita in the country and below the national average.

On average in Canada, there are 931 nurses for every 100,000 people, whereas in Alberta there are only 918 nurses for the same population, the third lowest in the country, CIHI reported. By contrast, in Newfoundland there are 1,521 nurses for every 100,000 people.

Alberta's nursing shortage has not improved since the Klein government slashed public services in the mid-1990s, Smith said.

"We so massively reduced our workforce . . . and conditions were such that nobody wanted to become a nurse," Smith told Calgary Herald reporter Eva Ferguson.

A booming economy and population growth at the start of the 21st Century made things even more difficult, Smith said.

Then, in May 2009, Alberta Health Services to restrict the hiring of nurses again and made the problem worse. "It sent a chill across the country in terms of

trying to attract graduates here," she explained. "Those that were graduating were going to the U.S. and other countries."

Smith said the Conservative government under Premier Alison Redford has reignited recruiting and expanded nursing programs, with a goal to graduate up to 2,000 nurses every year starting this year. But that's not enough, she said, telling the Herald that with too few nurses in Alberta, "our biggest concern continues to be patient safety."

Smith said decisions around appropriate staffing and the appropriate staffing mix can suffer when there are not enough nurses. "There's just not that same level of surveillance and oversight, or you may not have as skilled a person available." ❧

## CORRECTION

A story on the introduction of Alberta Health Services' e-People Human Resources and Payroll System in the previous edition of NewsBulletin contained some incorrect information.

The system, which previously had been in operation in Calgary, was rolled out last fall in the Edmonton region and at former AADAC worksites, bringing significant changes for affected employees in the Edmonton area.

AHS remains committed to implementing the same system throughout the rest of the province over the next 18 months. ❧



UNA members took to the streets to oppose health care cuts during the 1990s

*"Alberta's nursing shortage has not improved since the Klein government slashed public services in the mid-1990s."*



*UNA believes this is an important survey from an Occupational Health and Safety perspective.*

# Members asked to complete sharps-devices user survey

*By Janice Peterson, UNA OH&S Officer*

Alberta Health Services, working in collaboration with representatives of United Nurses of Alberta and Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA), has developed an on-line survey tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the process of implementing the use of safety engineered devices (SEDs) in 2010 and the devices that are currently in use.

Many UNA members will react to this news by thinking, “not another darn survey!” Our members often report they are suffering from “survey fatigue” and when they do take the time to fill out a survey they rarely see any outcomes from their efforts.

Nevertheless, UNA believes this is an important survey from an Occupational Health and Safety perspective.

The survey will provide you with the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of the SED implementation process, including communication with staff, training and the selection of devices.

As important is your evaluation of the effectiveness of the devices in use. We want to hear about any concerns you may have about the safety of any device, the ease of use and patient-care concerns associated with using it. In addition, if you are happy with devices we want to hear about that as well.

Unfortunately, AHS chose not to involve health care unions or staff who use SED devices in the selection process. They did eventually ask the unions to become involved in the process, but only

after the implementation process was well on its way.

Unions including UNA agreed to participate only if the employer agreed to evaluate the process and the devices selected after the implementation was completed. AHS agreed to set up a SED evaluation committee only after coming under pressure from all of the unions involved.

The UNA representatives on the committee are Carla Nelson from Local 349, Kiersten Berg from Local 1 and Janice Peterson, former OH&S Officer. The committee members identified front-line workers as the target group for the survey and developed the survey questions.

The results of the survey will go back to this committee so that the unions’ representatives may address any concerns regarding SEDs. There are a number of new and improved SEDs now available. The information from the survey will assist your union representatives in advocating for change and identify any gaps in training. In addition, the feedback we receive on the implementation process will be used in developing and improving future provincial implementation initiatives.

Your representatives on this committee will work to ensure that your comments and/or concerns do not get ignored.

So despite your “survey fatigue,” please take the time to fill out this important survey. Once the survey is available on-line we will be providing regular updates on First Class (UNA’s intranet) and our website ([www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca)). 🍷



# Significant progress seen on Calgary patient care and OH&S concerns

The United Nurses of Alberta has made significant progress working with Alberta Health Services toward resolving serious occupational health and safety issues in all urban acute care facilities in the Calgary Zone, President Heather Smith says.

UNA Locals raised concerns about the health and safety implications of understaffing, overcrowding and use of overcapacity beds in Calgary hospitals in 2009 and formally filed OH&S and Professional Responsibility complaints in 2010. When changes satisfactory to the union were not forthcoming, UNA Locals requested a meeting with the Alberta Health Services Board in accordance with the terms of the UNA-AHS Provincial Collective Agreement to present the union's recommendations.

A meeting between UNA and AHS managers took place late in 2011, and from that came several recommendations by the employer designed to resolve the situation. These include:

- The employer reissued a memorandum to managers and charge nurses confirming they have authority to call in additional staff at overtime rates when needed to ensure patient safety.
- The employer agrees to provide 24/7 staffing resources during hours staffing offices are not open for a three-month trial period.
- AHS also agrees to provide the equivalent amount of staffing in Calgary to operate 30 overcapacity beds. The employer committed to provide.

- AHS agrees to provide UNA Local Professional Responsibility Committees with information on where and when overcapacity and surge are occurring, and to provide UNA with a complete list by site of currently designated overcapacity beds.

"We consider this a major step forward to resolving these issues to the satisfaction of UNA members," said Smith. "We nevertheless are reserving our right to make a presentation to the Board, but we view the decisions made to date as real progress."

Smith noted that AHS also agreed to facilitate tours by UNA's OH&S representatives led by an AHS vice-president of current overcapacity space at Calgary acute-care hospitals if UNA's concerns remain unresolved. The employer also promised to keep UNA up to date on the employer's proposals to address overcapacity issues within addiction and mental health treatment facilities.

"There is still work to do, but we are making progress toward a resolution that UNA members are seeking," Smith concluded. 🍷

## UNA Locals involved:

**Local 1**  
(Peter Lougheed Centre)

**Local 95**  
(Alberta Children's Hospital)

**Local 121**  
(Rockyview Hospital)

**Local 115**  
(Foothills Medical Centre)

*UNA Locals raised concerns about the health and safety implications of understaffing, overcrowding and use of overcapacity beds in Calgary hospitals.*

*Furniture and equipment partly obscures a fire exit at Rockyview Hospital in 2009.*



# Grade 4 to 9 students can make contributions to Alberta labour history

By Winston Gereluk, Alberta Labour History Institute

*For more information on the regional heritage fairs, contact ALHI or the Historical Society of Alberta ([www.albertahistory.org](http://www.albertahistory.org)).*

**A**s part of the Alberta Federation of Labour's 2012 Centenary celebration, students from throughout Alberta in Grades 4 through 9 will have an opportunity to learn about the role of working people and their unions in shaping our province's history.

The students will be able to participate in the Heritage Fairs Program sponsored by Alberta's regional historical societies, which this year invited the Alberta Labour History Institute to help with project ideas for the young participants.

So students will be encouraged to use the medium of their choice to tell stories and share information about the history of labour in their community and province, and then to present the products of their efforts at the regional history fairs in May.

ALHI has worked with the Aspen Foundation for Labour Education to develop curriculum suitable for the study of Alberta labour history by Grade 4-9 students. Throughout its 17-year history ALHI also produced a range of study and background materials such as a labour history timeline, oral history interviews and a picture gallery that students could use as resources. These are available on line at [www.labourhistory.ca](http://www.labourhistory.ca).

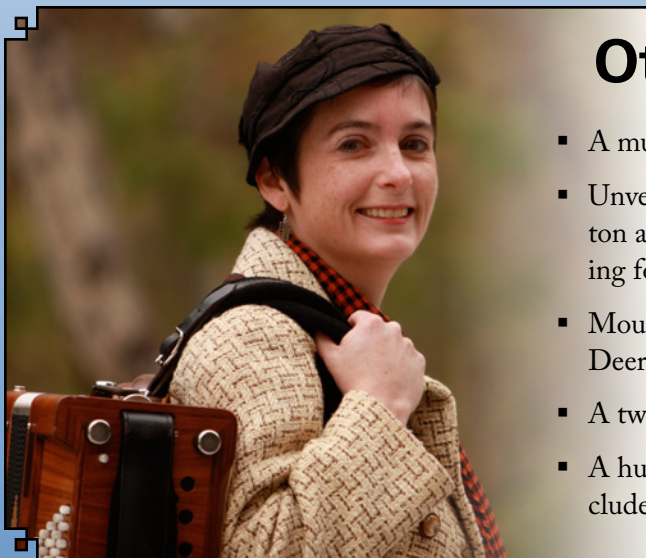


Winston Gereluk at the 2011 UNA AGM

Maria Dunn  
(Photographer: David Williamson)

## Other 2012 events include:

- A musical history tour by Edmonton folk singer Maria Dunn
- Unveiling of an obelisk entitled "Broken Families" by the Edmonton and District Labour Council on April 28, the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed and Injured on the Job
- Mounting of a steel disk with images of labour in downtown Red Deer by the Red Deer Labour Council
- A two-day labour history conference June 14 and 15
- A huge celebration on June 16 at Fort Edmonton Park that includes performances, films, kids' games and a dance







## United Way reaches goals in Edmonton and Calgary campaigns

The 2011 United Way campaign has come to a close and the Capital Region Campaign is on target to reach or even exceed its \$21.5-million goal for the year. Likewise, United Way of Calgary and Area has achieved its \$52.9-million goal and may exceed it when the dust has settled.

Union members were a huge part of this success by volunteering and contributing to the 2011 campaign.

Every day United Ways across the country have a profound impact on our communities by ensuring an essential network of programs and services that work together to achieve lasting, positive change. No other organization has the same breadth, depth, reach and history of making such a profound difference in the lives of others.

The approach taken in both Calgary and Edmonton includes working with key community partners to help change lives and social conditions. United Way focuses on three pillars:

- **All that kids can be** – this is why United Way is involved in early literacy programs that aim to help our kids have positive learning experiences and graduate from high school.
- **From poverty to possibility** – UW invests in programs that help families to stabilize, avoid or move out of the cycle of poverty.
- **Healthy people, strong communities** – UW engages and rallies residents in vulnerable neighbourhoods to act collectively to improve resources in their communities through groups such

as the Genesis Centre in Calgary, which includes a YMCA and human services centre.

United Way is planning several fundraising events for labour in 2012, including the Jim Shewchuk Labour Appreciation Night on April 14 and the April 13 and 14 Union Counselling conference covered in the story below.

In Calgary, the 2012 Labour Appreciation Event will be held Friday, April 28, and the Labour Community Advocate Course (formerly Union Counselling) will be offered at the Calgary and District Labour Council's Spring Labour School in late April. 🍷

## Did you know? ...

By Holly Heffernan



### United Way of Edmonton to hold Union Counsellor Conference

The United Way of Edmonton will hold its 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Union Counsellor Conference on Friday, April 13, and Saturday, April 14, 2012.

This year's conference will deal specifically with countering racism in the workplace.

Registration forms and details of the conference at the Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe are available on the Alberta Federation of Labour website – afl.org.

The conference costs \$90 and takes place on Friday evening and throughout the day Saturday. Fees include one ticket with each registration to attend a Labour Appreciation Night starting at 5:30 p.m. on Friday. Additional tickets for the evening event, at a cost of \$65, must be purchased by March 30, 2012. 🍷

For additional information, please contact Perri Garvin at 780-443-8330 or Gary Pucci at 780-476-5847

# Faces & friends

News about the people of United Nurses of Alberta.



Participants consider a point at the Know Your Rights Workshop in the new classroom at the provincial UNA Office on February 9, 2012.



Members of the AFL Workers of Colour and Aboriginal Workers Committee



New temporary LRO  
Ron DiPasquale

\$10,000.00 donation to the  
YMCA Welcome Village Boyle  
Renaissance Project in Downtown  
Edmonton Local #33.

## New temporary LRO joins SARO

UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan has announced the appointment of a new temporary Labour Relations Officer for the Southern Alberta Regional Office in Calgary.

The additional position, created to attempt to ease some of the SARO workload, has been filled by Ron DiPasquale, who started work on Monday, Jan. 30.

DiPasquale has a long history as a union activist, primarily in the aviation industry, and has negotiated many collective agreements, provided a full array of union services to locals and handled many grievances and arbitrations, including expedited arbitrations, Harrigan said.

“We’re really pleased to have Ron join us, and we look forward to working with him in Calgary,” he said.





Report from Director  
of Labour Relations  
David Harrigan

## *AHS Local Executive ratify two Letters of Understanding*

UNA AHS Local Executives have ratified two Letters of Understanding that will be added to the Provincial Collective agreement.

The first deals with the Transitional Graduate Nurse Recruitment Program (TGNRP).

The current UNA Provincial Collective Agreement, beginning on page 119, has a Letter of Understanding regarding Recruitment and Retention. One section deals with the TGNRP, a system where the employer creates supernumerary positions (additional positions above the baseline staff count) specifically for new graduates. These jobs are intended to ease grads' transition into the normal workforce.

Under the previous letter, the positions could last up to one year – during that year the new grad was expected to gain more confidence and apply for other regular positions.

The program has been in place for several years and has been successful. Although there is an initial cost for the employer, research by UNA, AHS and the Department of Health and Wellness has shown the program had a positive impact on participating nurses in terms of their ability to assume the nursing role (confidence), work collaboratively with other team members, improve nursing skills (competence) and provide high-quality patient care. Nurses also reported increased satisfaction with their jobs and profession.

It is expected that over the long term the employer could experience cost savings as a result of needing less external recruitment.

The previous letter states the employer “shall create up to 1,000 regular positions in each year.” Last year the employer did not hire any. UNA filed a grievance, alleging the agreement required the employer to utilize the program and create some positions – any number between 1 and 1,000.

After reviewing the available research, it was agreed the employer would commit to hiring at least 20 new grads into the project, and changes would be made to the project, based on the research.


The new Letter of Understanding is modelled after the previous one, with some changes:

- Addition of several new principles gleaned from the Research to Action project
- Agreement the employer is obligated to create 20 TGNRP positions
- Replacement of the word “supernumerary” with “These positions shall not be part of the baseline staff.” There should be no changes in the operation of the program based on this change
- Agreement by the employer it is obligated to make every reasonable attempt to assign a consistent mentor to support each TGNRP participant
- Change in the length of the additional positions to nine months from 12

The second letter deals with the Clinical Nurse Specialist classification, which before the creation of Alberta Health Services existed in only three health regions, and which continued in AHS as local conditions not applicable across the province.

On page 153 of the Provincial Collective Agreement an existing Letter of Understanding requires the employer to formalize a classification scheme. This is now complete and a copy has been given to the Joint Committee. This system, based on the previous system in Calgary, creates the additional classification across the province. This in turn created a need to negotiate rates of pay for this new classification.

The new Letter of Understanding is modelled after the existing Local conditions. The rate of pay is approximately 5 per cent higher than the Head Nurse rate and is identical to the rate in place for Clinical Nurse Specialist in the old Chinook, Calgary and Capital regions. There are also changes to titles found in the Local conditions. In addition, employees in these positions may, with agreement, work flexible hours. These positions receive vacation at the same rate as Head Nurse/Instructors.

UNA recommended the acceptance of both new Letters of Understanding. 



Thank you, Alberta.

Doing business in Alberta is one of the best decisions I ever made. Your provincial government would rather underfund its own education and health care systems than charge me and my energy company an extra penny in taxes or royalties. Now I can afford that life-size gold statue of myself.

**We're home to the second most valuable oil reserve in the world.**

And yet, Albertans are being forced to give up the basics, like health care, education and seniors' care. There's a better way.

***BetterWayAlberta.ca***