



10030-107 ST.
United Nurses of Alberta
NewsBulletin



'We're not alone!'

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ON STRIKE



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five times a year
for our members

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By Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta

Message from the President

Budget uncertainty? Tough talk? Courage and solidarity are the answers!

WELL it's NewsBulletin time again. Here I am writing my column on a day I expected to be spending with our Provincial Negotiating Committee preparing for our imminent exchange of contract proposals. But following our province-wide ratification vote on Jan. 30, UNA was informed that the lead negotiator for Alberta Health Services has submitted her resignation. In addition, uncertainty about the upcoming provincial budget and the implications for health services resulted in agreement to postpone the start of negotiations until early May.

The financial situation facing Alberta is certainly a topic of much discussion. What exactly is a "bitumen bubble"? How large will the deficit be? Is it a spending problem or a revenue conundrum? Some of those who believe it is a spending problem call for deep cuts to provincial spending, such as we experienced during the 1990s. Those who consider the issue to be an over-reliance on volatile non-renewable resources (a revenue problem) want to see changes to our tax regime.

At the recent Alberta Economic Summit in Calgary, both views (the spending versus revenue dilemma) were evident. The revenue solutions came with two options, either eliminate the flat tax and establish fair progressive taxes or introduce a harmonized sales tax (HST), which would be a provincial sales tax

combined with the federal goods and services tax (GST).

It appears for this year neither drastic cuts nor tax changes will occur, but a "hold-the-line budget" still has implications for a province that grew by nearly 100,000 people in 2012. It is unlikely Alberta Health Services will get the promised 4.5-per-cent increase, so the question is, Just what will the budget provide? By the time this NewsBulletin is delivered, we should know the budget numbers if not how they will impact health services.

As the pictures in this NewsBulletin indicate, this is the time of year when we distribute scholarships to first-year nursing students. Even now, professional pride and optimism for a rewarding career seem evident. Pictures also tell the story of the courageous actions by nurses at the Devonshire Care Centre in January this year and others remind us of the last Alberta hospital strike 25 years ago.

As we face fiscal constraints and tough talk from governments, we are reminded that solidarity and courage won the day in 1988 and again this year at the Devonshire Care Centre. They can do so again.

In solidarity,

Heather Smith, President, UNA

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Devonshire's brave nurses negotiate their first collective agreement: "We know we're not alone!"

By David Climenhaga
UNA Communications Staff



WHEN the Registered Nurses at Edmonton's Devonshire Care Centre look back at the two-week strike that started on New Year's Eve, the thing they remember most vividly is the support they received from other nurses and unions.

The small group of nurses at the private, for-profit nursing home knew they were doing the right thing when they joined UNA, RN Careen Matias recalled recently, but they expected to be lonely, cold and bored on the picket line.

After all, she explained, there was a core group of only about 15 nurses at Devonshire that after a year and a half of negotiations felt they had few options left but to strike.

"There was uncertainty for us," remembered Helen Lichtner, another of the Devonshire RNs.

In the lead-up to the strike during the holiday season, managers for Park Place Seniors Living Inc. of Vancouver, which owned the Devonshire facility, tried to make it



Photos on pages 3-5 show scenes from the strike at Devonshire Care Centre

sound as if they were willing to let the nurses strike and leave them out in the cold for two years. But the members of UNA Local 417 never wavered.

Still, said Matias, when they had compared their wages to those at other worksites and found they were far behind, and later when their employer seemed to think it could lean on them and get its way, they decided to approach UNA. "We really needed someone we could lean on!"

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE ►

“We were really surprised when there was lots of support, from the other UNA locals and from other groups,” said Matias.

Lichtner agreed: “Please thank all the supporters, those locals that came out every day and helped us. Devonshire really appreciates that. We are really grateful for the support you gave us.”

In the end, the strike by the Devonshire nurses and the first collective agreement they won was an important victory for every Registered Nurse in Alberta, said UNA President Heather Smith, who spent part of almost every day during the strike on the picket line.

“All UNA members should be very proud of these brave nurses, who stuck together in a long and difficult struggle, picketed daily in cold weather, and showed real grit to win this fair first agreement,” said Smith.

“All UNA members should be very proud of these brave nurses, who stuck together in a long and difficult struggle, picketed daily in cold weather, and showed real grit to win this fair first agreement.” – Heather Smith

She said the first contract “provides a solid base to build on for future agreements and gives our members at Devonshire Care mechanisms to advocate for themselves and the residents they care for.”

She added: “It also protects us all against private sector, for-profit companies that would use these tactics to try to lower the wages and weaken the benefits enjoyed by all Alberta nurses.”

Once their steadfast reaction to the company’s hard-nosed negotiating tactics were clear, company negotiators returned to the table and a tentative agreement was signed Jan. 15. The nurses ratified the agreement on Jan. 17 and have since returned to work.

The three-year agreement includes pay raises of 4 per cent in the first year, 3 per cent in the second year and 3 per cent in the third year. The increases will bring wages



paid to Registered Nurses at the long-term care centre on Edmonton’s south side to parity with UNA’s 2012 provincial wage rates.

The first agreement also includes shift differential pay equivalent to that paid at another Edmonton facility operated by the same employer and improvements in long-service pay and leave.

Park Place Seniors Living, which also operates the Hardisty Care Centre in Edmonton where the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees successfully fought a difficult strike last year, had originally proposed a settlement that would have meant the Devonshire nurses were paid as much as \$9 per hour less than their counterparts at public, not-for-profit and private workplaces throughout Alberta.

The company also ratified the agreement, which was reached with the assistance of a provincially appointed mediator. In the end, both negotiating teams had recommended ratification of the collective agreement.

Now back on the job, Devonshire’s nurses look back at their strike with a certain amount of satisfaction – and a lot of hope for the future.

“We feel relieved, and we feel secure and we know we’re not alone,” Matias concluded. 🍷





UNA members province-wide ratify bargaining positions

WITH approval of the bargaining goals set at November's Demand-Setting Meeting, United Nurses of Alberta and Alberta Health Services have moved ahead toward an exchange of bargaining proposals for the 2013 round of negotiations for a new Provincial Agreement.

UNA members and their locals throughout the province voted Jan. 30, giving their approval to the negotiation positions established by 400 delegates at the Nov. 27-29 Demand-Setting Meeting in Edmonton.

However, the UNA bargaining committee and the bargaining representatives for AHS and the other employers covered under the Provincial Agreement – Bethany Group, Covenant Health and the Lamont Health Centre – do not expect to exchange their “ongoing” negotiating proposals until May.

The eventual agreement is expected to set the pattern for most other UNA collective agreements, including those with the Bethany Care Society, Capital Care, Carewest Col. Belcher, Clifton Manor, the Good Samaritan Society, St. Michael's Edmonton, Salem Manor and the Shepherd's Care Society, said UNA President Heather Smith.

“So this makes our success in this round of bargaining incredibly important for all UNA members,” Smith reminded members.


“Success in bargaining will require solidarity and determination by all UNA members” - Heather Smith

With the recent downward turn in the province's resource-based economy and the pressure for austerity measures within the provincial government, she warned, success in bargaining will require solidarity and determination by all UNA members.

“There is no question that we expect this to turn out to be a difficult round of bargaining,” she said. “We are confident

we will succeed, and we will negotiate an agreement of which UNA's members can be proud, but we can only do that with the commitment of all members.”

Once an agreement has been reached, all directly affected UNA locals will have the opportunity to vote on the final provisions.

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

Proportion of Alberta RNs to population still lags 1990 levels

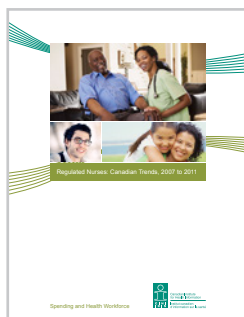
By Judith Grossman
UNA Researcher

DESPITE a higher proportion of Registered Nurses compared to other regulated nurses in Alberta's nursing workforce, the current ratio of 800 employed RNs per 100,000 Albertans is still well below the ratio attained in the early 1990s, new figures from the Canadian Institute for Health Information show.

In other words, Alberta has not yet recovered fully from the effects of health care spending cuts in the mid-1990s.

Compared to other jurisdictions, Alberta is among the three provinces with the lowest ratio of RNs to population, according to CIHI's annual report on regulated nurses, which was released on Jan. 10, 2013. Only in British Columbia and Ontario have fewer working RNs per capita.

The CIHI report, entitled *Regulated Nurses: Canadian Trends, 2007 to 2011*, was based on registration data provided by nursing regulatory bodies. It provides trends and analysis of the total regulated nursing workforce:




RNs, Licensed Practical Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

In Canada as a whole, RNs make up 75 per cent of the regulated nursing workforce, LPNs 23 per cent, and RPNs 1.5 per cent. These proportions have not varied significantly over the past five years.

In Alberta, RNs make up 77 per cent of the regulated nursing workforce, higher than in other provinces. The remainder of the regulated nursing workforce in Alberta consists of LPNs (20 per cent) and RPNs (3 per cent), CIHI reports.

As more of those employed approach retirement age, a frequently raised concern is the sustainability of the current workforce.

CIHI reports that more than 40 per cent of employed RNs in Canada are over 50 years of age. However, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador where only 29 per cent of employed RNs are 50 or older, Alberta has the lowest percentage of RNs 50 or older of all the remaining jurisdictions at 38 per cent. 

Alberta has not yet recovered fully from the effects of health care spending cuts in the mid-1990s.

'Bitumen Bubble' blamed for Alberta's budget woes

WARNINGS of tough times and calls for austerity sparked by lower-than-forecast energy prices provided a troubling backdrop in the first days of 2013 to the upcoming round of bargaining for a new UNA Provincial Agreement.


In a televised "State of the Province" message Jan. 24, Premier Alison Redford coined the phrase "Bitumen Bubble" to explain the province's unexpected shortfall in revenues – a change in fortunes she said can be expected to result in a loss of about \$6 billion in anticipated revenue.

Political opponents of all stripes howled, and the likelihood of calls for the province to hold the line on

pay increases for all public employees seemed increasingly likely in the first weeks of the year.

Premier Redford described raising taxes as "the easy way out," but also pledged not "to simply take an axe to government spending across the board."

In the days after the speech, the government took strong positions against big pay increases for Alberta teachers and physicians in their ongoing negotiations directly with the government.

Even after the provincial Budget Speech on March 7, uncertainty related to economic conditions and especially petroleum prices can be expected to have an impact on UNA's negotiations. 

Unions have been pursuing sustainability of LAPP since 1991

MEMBERS of Alberta's Local Authorities Pension Plan are currently being exposed to debate about the sustainability of the plan that is being driven by the provincial government.

Unfortunately, the government's strategy for attaining LAPP sustainability is to reduce pension benefits.

The government's biggest targets for reductions are the early retirement option, the 85 factor and cost of living adjustments for retirees, commonly known as the COLA.

The government says the plan's future funding must be addressed, and the province has directed the LAPP Board, which includes representation from UNA, to make recommendations to control LAPP costs.

The reality is that the LAPP has \$20 billion in assets and current forecasts suggest it will need about \$24 billion to keep its pension promises. In other words, the LAPP is about 80 per cent funded. This predicted shortfall is the foundation of recent increases in the contribution rates of employees and employers.

So this is a challenge – but it is not a crisis.

Consequently, unions have taken the position that plan benefit changes should not be considered without meaningful discussions about the governance of the plan.

In fact, unions have been pushing for LAPP sustainability discussions since 1991, when the Crown held the plan's assets and the LAPP was only 78 per cent funded.

Concerned that LAPP funds were controlled by the government, unions pressed for control to be transferred

so that the plan was jointly governed by employees and employers.

An agreement was reached that employees, employers and the government would pay a combined total of 1.5 per cent higher contributions for 40 years to cover the funding shortfall. The original agreement was endorsed by unions because the government agreed to facilitate the transition of the LAPP from its control to a plan jointly trusted by employers and employees. A sum of \$4.3 billion was transferred in 1993 from the province's Pension Fund to the LAPP Fund.


Members have been paying increased contributions for almost 20 years but a succession of 11 finance ministers have maintained their absolute control over the LAPP.

What's happening today is a manufactured crisis with employers and unions being stampeded into accepting preordained solutions to a "problem" that may not exist.

Should there be changes to the LAPP? Perhaps. But the fundamental issue is that the groups that pay for the plan have already paid millions for the right to have control in the administration and investments of the plan.

Until the governance issue is substantially resolved, members can expect benefit reduction overtures on an ongoing basis as governments try to reduce pension costs and obligations.

The union position is that a decision on plan design changes may only be made if greater control of the LAPP is given to the people who have already paid for it.

The sustainability issue will continue as long as the Alberta government pursues a cost-cutting agenda. Be prepared to be active to support of your pension! 

Members have been paying increased contributions for almost 20 years

A longer and more detailed version of this article is available online at UNA.ab.ca/.

UNA members sharpen their skills at labour school

MORE than 70 United Nurses of Alberta members gathered with other members of the labour movement in Jasper for the Alberta Federation of Labour Winter School held from Jan 14 to 20, 2013.

Participants of the annual school were immersed in a wide-range of course topics, including Women in Leadership, Workers' Compensation Essentials, Generational Diversity in the Labour Movement, Labour Law and Collective Bargaining.

On the UNA Local 115 blog, member Heather Dean reflected on her experiences in one of the workshops. "The Women in leadership course explored the styles of leadership, skills of leaders, common obstacles women

face, equality, conflict resolution, public image and the power of social media including digital story telling," she wrote.

During the workshop, participants shared solutions to the challenges facing women in leadership positions today, including such serious issues as violence in the workplace.

"Over the four days of classes, friendships are formed, goals are set, information is shared, plans are formulated and best of all your fellow classmates help you to see yourself, by allowing you to be yourself," wrote Dean.

Read more about Heather Dean's experiences at the AFL Winter School on the Local 115 blog at local115.wordpress.com. 



UNA participants in the 2013 Alberta Federation of Labour Winter School, held in January.



Twenty-five years later

Remembering the 1988 Nurses' Strike

By Dave Cournoyer
Communications Staff

DRESSED like Arctic explorers in parkas and scarves, they braced themselves for a cold and desolate winter on the Prairies. For the next 19 days, a group of brave union members fought an unreasonable employer and the most brutal deep freeze in years for their right to a fair collective agreement.

They were UNA nurses.

On the morning of Jan. 25, 1988, more than 14,000 nurses at hospitals across Alberta walked off the job, beginning the last province-wide strike by UNA members. This was the fourth strike by nurses represented by UNA and the first-ever strike by nurses employed at the three Crown Hospitals – the Foothills Hospital, the Alberta Children's Hospital, and the Glenrose Hospital.

Faced with months of turbulent negotiations and employers demanding rollbacks, UNA members had no choice but to take this drastic action.

In late 1987, UNA began negotiations with employers who, at the outset, demanded massive takeaways and

rollbacks that union members would not accept. Following the previous hospital strike in 1982, the government had removed the legal right of hospital nurses to take strike action.

When the employers were unwilling to compromise on their rollback proposals at the negotiating table in 1988, strike action became inevitable. UNA members had reiterated the long-held position their union accepts no rollbacks, no concessions, no regressions, and no takeaways.

On Jan. 22, UNA members were asked to vote on the question: "Are you willing to go on strike for an improved offer?"

Despite an attempted intervention by the employers, who persuaded the Alberta Labour Relations Board to charge the union with bargaining in bad faith and order a stop to the vote, UNA held the vote anyway.

Photos on pages 10-11 show scenes from UNA's 1988 strike. At right below: Heather Smith, David Harrigan and Sandy Rentz with a certified cheque for \$450,000 to cover UNA's fines.





UNA members voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action. Nurses walked off the job and into the cold at 7:30 a.m. on Jan. 25, 1988.

The same day, the LRB presented UNA with a cease-and-desist order, then filed rulings with the courts accusing the UNA of “threatening to strike” and “causing a strike.”

At this point, some employers applied to the LRB for the right to cease collecting of union dues for six months. The LRB hearing to address this application was not held before the end of the strike. Unions from across Canada sent letters of support to UNA, followed by financial support. Alberta Federation of Labour president Dave Werlin vowed, “Alberta workers would not let UNA go under financially.”

Two days after the strike began, acting Attorney General Elaine McCoy charged UNA with criminal contempt of court and individual nurses began to be served with civil contempt of court charges. At the conclusion of the strike more than 75 individual charges would be heard.

On Jan. 29, UNA was served with notice to appear at a criminal contempt hearing on Feb. 1. The Alberta government demanded a \$1-million fine and the seizure of UNA’s funds and assets, the latter based on a seldom-used action from Common Law.

On Feb. 4, a court found UNA guilty of criminal contempt of court and fined it \$250,000 to be paid within five days.

Individual nurses were also threatened with discipline, including termination, if they did not return to work immediately. Undeterred by the threats, nurses insisted

they would walk the picket lines until they secured a fair negotiated collective agreement.

UNA paid the \$250,000 criminal contempt fine on Feb. 9, and was immediately served, at the courthouse, with a notice of motion of a second criminal contempt charge.

Individual nurses began to receive termination notices on Feb. 10. In late night negotiations, UNA and the employers had all but agreed to the terms of a settlement, but the employers refused to withdraw their application to hold back union dues and no settlement was reached.

Fines of up to \$1,000 each for civil contempt began to be imposed on individual nurses on Feb. 11, the same day the employers tabled an improved offer and an agreement to withdraw their applications to the LRB.

The next day, hearings on the second criminal contempt charge began, and UNA was eventually fined \$150,000. The same day, UNA members voted to accept the employers’ latest improved offer and a settlement was reached.

Nurses returned to work Feb. 13, 1988, with a negotiated collective agreement. With the help of donations from other unions and individuals, UNA paid approximately \$426,750 in fines.

The results of the 1988 strike were not immediately evident in the negotiated settlement, because the most important victory was forcing the employer to remove the takeaways from the table. The 1988 strike set the stage for UNA to make significant gains for nurses in the 1990 contract negotiations. This strike helped define UNA members as a force that would not hesitate take a stand for positive change in our health care system. 🍷





By Holly Heffernan
United Way

United Way's message to labour: roll up your sleeves and get involved!

In 2012, United Ways in North America celebrated the 125th anniversary of their founding. **How did United Way start?**

In fact, the start of the story sounds like it comes from a bad a joke. In Denver, Colo., in 1887, a woman, a priest, two ministers and a rabbi recognized the need for co-operative action to address their city's welfare problems.

This small but influential group put their heads together to plan the first united campaign for 10 health and welfare agencies. To accomplish the goal they created an organization to serve as an agent to collect funds for local charities, as well as to coordinate relief services, counsel and refer clients to cooperating agencies, and make emergency assistance grants in cases that could not be referred.

That year, Denver raised \$21,700 and created a movement that would spread throughout the United States and Canada to become the United Way.

Now, 125 years later, United Way is still focused on mobilizing the caring power of communities and making a difference in people's lives.

In 1913 America's first modern Community Chest was born in Cleveland, Ohio, where a program for allocating campaign funds was developed.

The United Way-Centraide movement began in Canada in 1917, when charities in Montreal and Toronto started community collectives to raise money for charity.

They were inspired by the activities in Denver, and adopted the joint fund-raising approach during the turmoil of the First World War.

Other charity collectives were initiated in other parts of the country over time, under a variety of names, including Red Feather Community Chest, Fédération des oeuvres de charité and the United Appeal. In the 1970s, these organizations took the name of United Way-Centraide.

In Canada today there are over 100 United Ways/Centraides that are more than just fundraising umbrellas. We want to improve lives and build communities by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action.

Each United Way is an autonomous non-profit organization governed by a volunteer-led local Board of Directors.

The Canadian Labour Congress and its affiliate unions became officially involved in 1988. Labour and United Way agreed to a number of principles and endorsed several practices, including the role of social and public services, volunteers, and labour groups to deepen the partnership

From the very beginning unions have been about mutual help, co-operation, quality of life and solidarity. Fighting misery, poverty and hardship of every kind has always been our work. There is no healthy labour movement without a good grounding in the community. We are stronger together.

I encourage UNA members roll up their sleeves and get involved in their local United Way. Become a board member, join cabinet, become a member of your labour partnership committee, volunteer for a day of caring, and of course when campaign comes around donate and encourage your fellow co-workers to donate also. 🍷



Give. Volunteer. Act.

Student nurse conference aimed to cultivate passion, motivate action

By Sarah Stad
Student Nurse

Sarah Stad is a first-year nursing student at the University of Alberta. She has recently returned from the Canadian Nursing Student Association's Annual National Conference, Jan. 23-26 in Halifax, which she was asked to attend by UNA. Sarah filed this report with UNA NewsBulletin upon her return:



IT was a chilly day in January when I received an unexpected phone call from United Nurses of Alberta. "Sarah, you're going to the CNSA National Conference!"

What an honor. As a first-year student, receiving funding for such an event was so very exciting. It seemed like only days until I was packing my bag for Halifax.

Going to the CNSA National Conference was such a wonderful experience. I had the opportunity to meet nursing students from across the country, and take in the sights of beautiful, chilly Halifax. It was such an encouragement to hear from nursing students in their second, third or fourth years and gain their insights.

The theme of the conference this year was "Cultivating Passion, Motivating Action." Keynote speaker Dr. Sheri Price opened the conference with a session about stories. What about my story will motivate me to be a good nurse? The conference carried on with thought-provoking workshops.

One day there was a big focus on suicide awareness and removing the stigma around the issue of suicide. Nursing students had the opportunity to complete Safe-TALK training: a three-hour workshop on how to have the conversation about suicide.

Later that afternoon, Scott Chisholm spoke about his work in founding the Collateral Damage Project: Images of Those Left Behind by Suicide. I am very grateful to have attended these workshops.



Going to the CNSA National Conference was one of the most uplifting experiences! It was so encouraging, as a first-year student in the middle of midterm season, to hear stories from students who are close to graduation. It was also inspiring to hear from speakers who have been nursing for decades.

I felt confident listening to their stories that I am in the correct program of study.

Having the opportunity to attend this conference sparked my passion for what I will do. It also motivated me to action. It motivated me to actively research the CNSA, and other nursing unions such as UNA. It encouraged me that I will get through nursing school, and I will make a difference, if I follow my passion.

I am so grateful that the UNA sponsored me! National Conference 2013 was a milestone in my nursing school career.

I have come away from this conference to return to midterms, assignments, and many things expected of me. During a conference, surrounded by other nursing students, it is easy to be inspired. It is easy to focus on what drives me. Coming home however to midterms, research and deadlines, it is harder to maintain that passion.

Going to this conference has motivated me to focus in on what matters most to me; to grow into the nurse I am called to be. 🍷

Two new LRAs join UNA staff in Edmonton and Calgary

By David Climenhaga

TWO new names have been added UNA's staff list as Labour Relations Advisors.

Tamara Chivers, a lawyer and human resources specialist, has started work in the Provincial Office in Edmonton, and Lucy Anderson, a nurse with a background in human resources, has taken up duties in the Southern Alberta Office in Calgary.

Chivers received a business degree with a major in human resources from the University of Alberta, and later a U of A law degree. She practiced labour law with Chivers Carpenter in Edmonton, and was the in-house legal counsel for Civic General Service Union Local 52 from May 2008 to January 2013.

She was also chief negotiator for the five bargaining units of CSU 52, which represents more than 5,000 technical, professional, administrative and clerical employees of the City of Edmonton.

Anderson was trained as a nurse in the United Kingdom, where she became active in her union and held an elected position. Upon arriving in Canada in 2006, she was employed as a human resources manager with the Calgary Health Region.

Joining UNA in a temporary position brings Anderson back to her roots in health care and the union movement.



Tamara Chivers



Lucy Anderson

Can mower magic make your lawn 'greener'?

SO far, electric motors are no threat to internal combustion engines for automobiles.

At least until battery technology can be improved – right now, according to the Globe and Mail, a tank of gasoline contains more than 60 times as much usable energy as the equivalent weight of the best available electric vehicle battery.

green
corner

What's more, the power to change the battery has to come from somewhere and, in most locations in Canada, that means carbon output at the electricity generation plant.

But what about using small electric motors to replace gasoline power – say, for use on lawn mowers?

With spring around the corner, this is something to think about.

There's little question electric mowers reduce carbon inputs because gas mowers typically use dirty two-stroke engines that spew a higher percentage of "volatile organic compounds" into the atmosphere than automobile engines.

Back in 2003, the U.S. Environmental protection Agency estimated that lawn and garden equipment accounted for 5 per cent of all ozone forming emissions. The same report indicated that one hour of lawn mower

Court rules employers must accommodate child care requests

A landmark Federal Court decision in early February says workplaces must accommodate reasonable child-care requests from their employees.

The ruling signals significant changes ahead for the country's employment law landscape, according to lawyers quoted by the Toronto Globe and Mail.

The decision by Justice Leonard Mandamin stated explicitly that requests for child care accommodations stem from genuine need and are not simply the product of lifestyle choices.

The Globe said the ruling was made in the context of parents grappling with irregular shift work, but quoted experts who said it "could pave the way for much more broad based discussion on the role family life plays in the workplace."



The ruling upheld a successful human rights case launched by Ottawa resident Fiona Johnstone, who with her husband worked as a full-time employee of the Canada Border Services Agency.

Johnstone worked irregular, rotating shifts before the couple's first child was born in 2003. When she asked the agency to accommodate her child-care needs by allowing her to work more stable shifts, her employer said no, telling her the only way she could maintain a static schedule was to cut back to part-time hours.

Johnstone filed a complaint that came before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in 2010. The tribunal ruled in her favour, saying the employer discriminated against her because of her family status. February's federal court ruling supports the tribunal's findings.

The decision is qualified, forcing employers to accommodate family status requests up to the point of "undue hardship," a concept not clearly defined in the ruling.

"The courts and tribunals want to maintain discretion to look at every individual case," one of the Globe's expert sources said. "But the most important factor in determining undue hardship is probably going to be cost." As a result, large employer with more significant financial resources will likely be expected to be more flexible than a smaller employer.

The ruling also puts the onus on employees to prove they have made reasonable efforts to deal with their family obligations before requesting help from their employers, the newspaper reported.

The Globe story suggested cases involving elder care will also surface in court before long.

UNA members who believe they have been discriminated against by their employer's failure to reasonably accommodate their child care needs are urged to contact their Labour Relations Advisor. 🍷

use created as much air pollution as driving a car 20 miles – a ratio that is probably worse now because auto engines have been improved more than mower motors.

In addition, there are the questions of neighbourhood noise pollution, which is considerably reduced with an electric mower, less chemical pollution from fuel spills, a lower average cost of operation and more efficient use of energy.

So there's no question, while electric mowers may not be for everyone, replacing gas with electric will cause fewer harmful inputs.

And then there's always the option of the humble push mower, which is quiet, completely green and even contributes modest exercise benefits. This is a good way to compromise between food safety and environmental responsibility. 🍷

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



What UNA members can do to improve rural health centre security

By Dewey Funk
UNA OH&S Advisor

SECURITY at health care worksites in rural Alberta is a huge concern that needs to be addressed immediately by Alberta Health Services

The potential for violence is a real and constant threat at rural health care workplaces and employee concerns about security are a constant theme at United Nurses of Alberta committee meetings at AHS facilities.

In particular, the role of private security officers and AHS's own Security Watch staff, also known as Constant Watch, upsets and worries UNA members and other rural hospital employees.

Among the specific issues raised by UNA members at these meetings are:

- Why don't employees of Paladin Security, the contractor hired by AHS to provide security at rural health care facilities, show up when they are called?
- Why, if they do show up, do they leave at the end of their shift without being replaced?
- How is security handled at sites not patrolled by Paladin?

- What are the responsibilities of AHS "roving security" staff?
- What does "Constant Watch" mean and what are the responsibilities of Constant Watch officers?

AHS has informed UNA that Paladin does not always show up at rural sites. But the employer has not properly answered the important question of what our next step should be when Paladin fails to show.

Initial advice from AHS is to phone its own mobile security officers. But with many kilometres to drive, they frequently cannot get to a problem in a timely fashion, and sometimes not at all. The next step, AHS says, is to call the RCMP.

That means there is an unsafe and slow three-step process acceptable for dealing with emergencies that require security officers.

Is this appropriate? Most rural health care workers do not think so.

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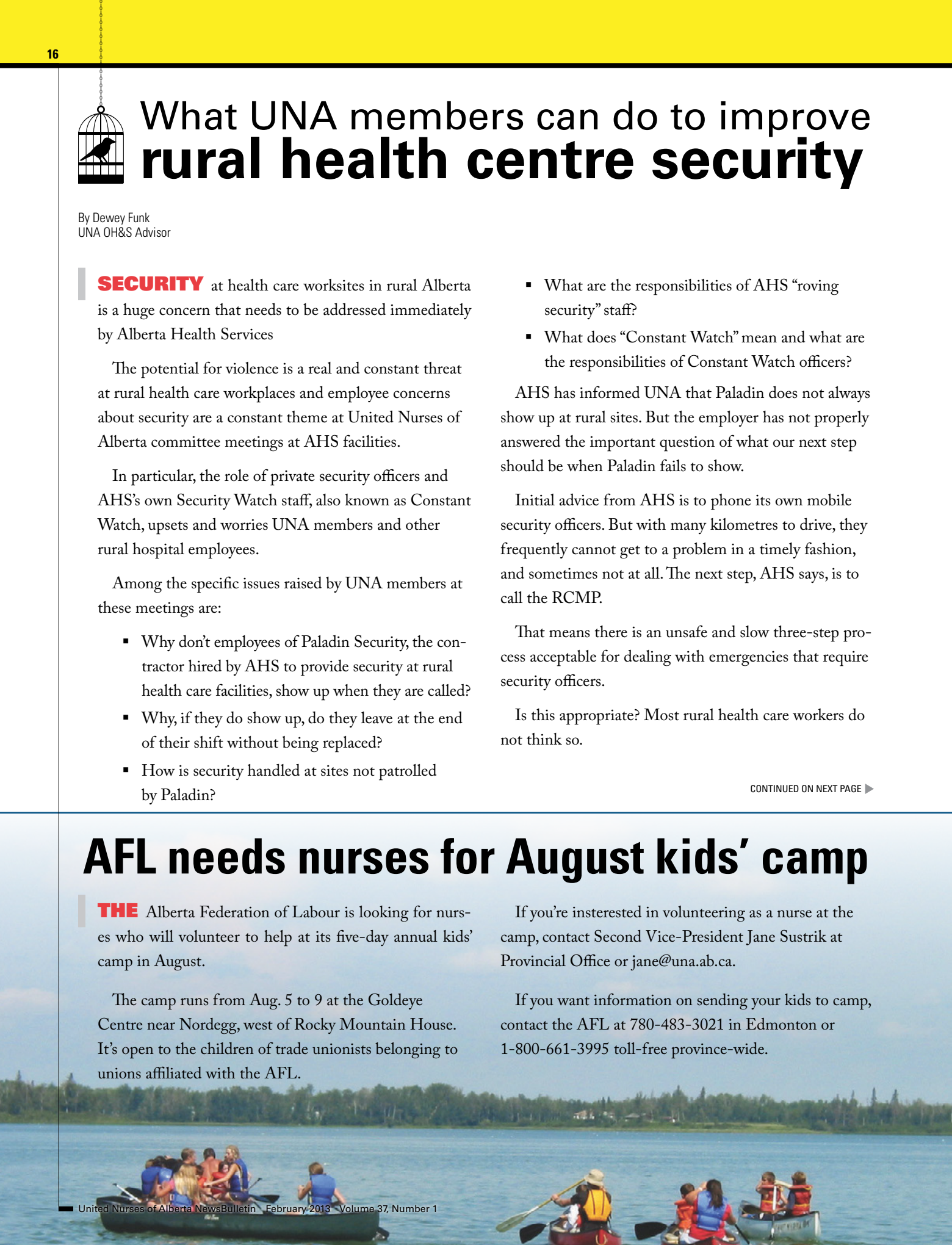
AFL needs nurses for August kids' camp

THE Alberta Federation of Labour is looking for nurses who will volunteer to help at its five-day annual kids' camp in August.

The camp runs from Aug. 5 to 9 at the Goldeye Centre near Nordegg, west of Rocky Mountain House. It's open to the children of trade unionists belonging to unions affiliated with the AFL.

If you're interested in volunteering as a nurse at the camp, contact Second Vice-President Jane Sustrik at Provincial Office or jane@una.ab.ca.

If you want information on sending your kids to camp, contact the AFL at 780-483-3021 in Edmonton or 1-800-661-3995 toll-free province-wide.



So how should we respond to rectify the situation?

First, employees should look to their Hazard Assessment document, which must be made available as outlined Part 2 of the Alberta OH&S Code. Was this situation addressed in your Hazard Assessment? If not inform your employer the Hazard Assessment needs to be updated.

Record all instances of violence on an incident report and all other employer report forms. This could mean a total of five forms, but taking the time to fill them out is important.

Please be sure to also fill out a UNA OH&S form and give this to your local's OH&S Committee and ask the committee inform me at dfunk@una.ab.ca.

In addition, UNA members need to start keeping records of acts of violence that occur in our workplaces and record how the employer responds.

Remember, violence on the job is not a normal job expectation, no matter how the employer tries to frame it. A Hazard Assessment document is supposed to identify the concern and also put in place how the hazard is to be controlled through such options as:

1. Elimination of the hazard
2. Administrative controls such as policy, education or training
3. Personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves or safety glasses

Nurses are professionals who have a self-sacrificing habit of looking after everyone but themselves.

You go to work and provide excellent patient care, and give up coffee breaks and lunch breaks to provide care in the face of an ever-increasing workload. Often you don't report dangerous incidents because of the time required to do the paperwork.

Well, this needs to change – for your sake!

Start by just going to work one day in with your health and safety and that of your co-workers at the top of your agenda! Just one day in a health and safety way! 🍷

Remember, you are important!



NOTE: There's more information on the problems with Paladin Security on UNA's website – www.una.ab.ca/. Please take a look. In the next edition of NewsBulletin I plan to take a look at the administrative penalty system and the ticketing of workers under the OH&S Code, and what it can mean for you. — Dewey Funk



UNA announces 2012 Nursing Education Scholarship recipients

UNITED Nurses of Alberta has announced the recipients of the 2012 UNA Nursing Education Scholarship and the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Scholarship.

In honour of 2012 marking the 35th anniversary of the founding of UNA, 11 first-year nursing students from across Alberta have been awarded from UNA and one student was awarded a scholarship sponsored by the CFNU.

These awards were created to assist students in their first year of full-time studies in an approved nursing program in Alberta.

Recipients must be related to a UNA member in good standing and must complete a short essay responding to the question, "Over the past 35 years, how has the United Nurses of Alberta made a difference in the work lives of Alberta Nurses?"

The recipient of the CFNU Scholarships (Alberta) is:

- Tara Mailloux (*University of Calgary*)

Recipients of the UNA Scholarships are:

- Ashlynn Berg (*MacEwan University*)
- Brian Campbell (*Red Deer College*)
- Rhonda Chinchilla (*MacEwan University*)
- Robyn Donst (*Lethbridge College*)
- Janelle Gervais (*MacEwan University*)
- Mira Harb (*U of A Campus St Jean – Bilingual Nursing Program*)
- Kristina Le May (*Mount Royal University*)
- Nathan Nadolski (*MacEwan University*)
- Katelyn Toal (*MacEwan University*)
- Allison Zadunayski (*Mount Royal University*)
- Christina Zavers (*MacEwan University – Psych Nursing*)

UNA congratulates the scholarship recipients and wishes them good luck in their first year of nursing studies. 🍀



Laurie Gervais, scholarship recipient Janelle Gervais, President Heather Smith and First VP Jane Sustrik



Margaret Chinchilla, recipient Rhonda Chinchilla and Sustrik



Sustrik with recipient Mira Harb and Nelly Harb



Shelley Nadolski, recipient Nathan Nadolski and Sustrik



Sustrik, recipient Ashlynn Berg and Smith



Local 2 member Janet Davis, recipient Katelyn Toal, Smith and Sustrik



Employers can't force UNA members to put 75% of vacation request in planners

PLANNING vacations presents challenges both for employees and employers.

Sometimes our employers' responses to this challenge are not appropriate or allowed by our UNA collective agreements. UNA members need to watch out for such circumstances and report them to their Labour Relations Advisor when they take place.

Managers for employers governed by the Provincial Agreement between UNA and Alberta Health Services, the Bethany Group, Covenant Health and the Lamont Health Centre, for example, have recently been telling employees they must put 75 per cent of their vacations into the workplace vacation schedule planner.

Moreover, these managers have been telling staff that if they fail to do so because there is no mutually agreeable time, the employer has the right to unilaterally schedule vacations.

Scheduling vacations is covered by Article 17.03 of the Provincial Collective Agreement. Article 17.03 (b) (i) states that the employer shall post the vacation schedule planner by Jan. 1 each year.

Under this Article, the employer also has an obligation to provide guidance as to the reasonable number of employees for each unit, program or site who may be granted vacation at the same time.

"Where an employee submits their vacation preference by March 15th of that year, the employer shall indicate approval or disapproval of that vacation request and shall

post the resulting vacation schedule by April 30th of the same year," the Article says.

"Where the number of employees indicating a preference for a specific period exceeds the number of employees as determined by the employer that can be allocated vacation during that period, seniority relative to other employees in the unit program or side (whichever are applicable) shall be the deciding factor."


In Article 17.03 (b) (ii), the Provincial Agreement explains what happens when an employee chooses not to submit a request until after April 30 – "the employer shall indicate approval or disapproval in writing of the vacation request within 14 days of the request."

Nowhere in this, however, does the agreement state a percentage of an employee's vacation request that must be put in the vacation schedule planner.

Provincial Agreement employers have now agreed that employees cannot be forced to put 75 per cent of their vacation requests for a year in the vacation schedule planner.

Moreover, they have agreed there will be no discipline if this information is not placed in the planned by the employer's self-imposed deadline.

Where employer's attempt to enforce this wish, employees need to inform UNA through their LRA as soon as possible.

UNA is always prepared to file grievances to protect the contractual rights of members. 

Honouring Alberta's Nurses ... it's all about advocacy!

*"Let whoever is in charge
keep this simple question in her head ...
how can I provide for this
right thing to be always done?"*

– Florence Nightingale

Nursing is all about advocacy.

Florence Nightingale, whose birthday is the final day of International Nursing Week 2013, reminds us of this throughout her writings.

So, in good times and bad, the United Nurses of Alberta stands for the care Albertans require, adequately funded, universally accessible and available when needed.


Advocacy for patients, their families and our profession is behind UNA's constant efforts to promote Professional Responsibility. Professional Responsibility Cards like the one at bottom right are being distributed to UNA members.

From May 6 to May 12, 2013, UNA and its members will mark International Nurses Week by supporting and celebrating the work and advocacy of nurses in Alberta and around the world.

What ideas do your unit, office or Local have to mark International Nurses Week 2013?

Please send your ideas, your photos and your favourite nursing stories to UNA's Communications staff at our union's Provincial Office.

**At your side...
On your side...**

 **United Nurses of Alberta**

