



United Nurses of Alberta  
**NewsBulletin**

May 2013



# Stand up for non-union workers

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Anne Keville (left) – Local 37 Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and Nancy Muir (right) – Local 415 South Health Campus

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for our members

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By Heather Smith  
President, United Nurses of Alberta

## Message from the President

# Stay in touch with UNA as bargaining begins and a summer of challenges looms

**THE** big news for this NewsBulletin is that UNA's provincial negotiations officially start on May 30.

While we have additional bargaining dates in June, I expect the actual negotiations will commence in the fall. As always, I encourage members to stay in touch and provide feedback for our negotiating committee. Confidential information will only be posted in our internal network, which any member can join from our website – [www.una.ab.ca](http://www.una.ab.ca). Our Facebook and Twitter accounts will also be sources of ongoing information.

Several pages of this edition of NewsBulletin are dedicated to Professional Responsibility Concerns (PRC), including the quick information card you can carry with you at all times. With Alberta Health Services pushing ahead with “workforce transformation” and changing “models of care,” it is vital that nurses identify situations that compromise patient safety. Failing to challenge inappropriate or short staffing decisions will create a new “normal” that undermines our safety and quality of care. Check with your Local Executive if you do not know whom to call about a Professional Responsibility Concern.

More than 80 UNA members attended the biennial convention of the Alberta Federation of Labour at the end of April. A host of speakers provided valuable insights into the challenges facing unions and the realities of Alberta's economic roller coaster. You can view speakers' presentations on the AFL website – [www.afl.org](http://www.afl.org).

In early June more than 180 UNA members will be attending the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions biennial convention in Toronto. The threats to our professional practice are not confined to Alberta. The CFNU convention will be an important opportunity to share experiences and solutions to the challenges facing nurses and health care.

So as we start negotiations and are about to enter another summer with staffing challenges, I repeat my earlier request: please stay in touch with your Local Executive and UNA provincially. Together with your colleagues and union representatives we are stronger.

In solidarity,

Heather Smith, President, UNA

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## AFL Biennial Convention

# Union members urged to stand up for non-union workers' rights

**UNIONIZED** workers need to stand up for non-union workers' rights, economist Armine Yalnizyan told delegates during one of the high points of the 2013 Alberta Federation of Labour conference in Edmonton.

"Stand up for workers rights as if our democracy depends on it ... because it does," said Yalnizyan in a passionate presentation on April 25, the first day of the four-day biennial AFL convention at Edmonton's Shaw Conference Centre.

Yalnizyan, Senior Economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, told about 350 delegates, including 80 from the United Nurses of Alberta, that it is important to keep fighting against undue corporate influence in Alberta's political scene. "There is no surer route to attacking workers rights – unionized or non-unionized – than attacking unions," she stated.

The award-winning economist praised the federation for its important recent work in exposing attempts by anti-union construction executives to tie large political donations to political promises to revise Alberta's Labour Code.

She repeatedly emphasized the theme – "Unions Stand on Guard for Thee" – of the April 25-28 convention of "The Fed," which is made up of 29 Alberta unions, proudly including UNA, that represent about 145,000 working people in the province.

The convention's keynote speaker, well-known pollster Allan Gregg, ripped into the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper for what he termed its "systematic attack on evidence-based research."

A labour convention might seem like an odd place for a person best known as a federal Conservative political strategist to speak, but concern about

the Harper Government's agenda now spreads across the political spectrum.

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**"Stand up for workers rights as if our democracy depends on it ... because it does."** - Armine Yalnizyan

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“It seems as though our government’s use of evidence and facts as the basis of policy is declining, and in their place, dogma, whim and political expediency are on the rise,” said Gregg, who worked as a pollster for the governments of Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney.

“Even more troubling, especially from the perspective of a public opinion researcher, is that Canadians seem to be, if not buying it, certainly accepting it,” he said, accusing the federal government of “a deliberate attempt to obliterate certain activities that were previously viewed as a legitimate part of government decision making, namely, using research, science and evidence as the basis to make public policy decisions.”

Other important speakers in the busy convention included Canadian Auto Workers union senior economist

Jim Stanford, who told delegates “collective bargaining is needed more in Alberta than it is anywhere else in Canada;” New York State Nurses Association Executive Director Jill Furillo, who warned that the anti-union campaigns funded by billionaires in the United States are crossing the border into Canada; and environmental journalist Andrew Nikofoeruk, who paraphrased the late premier Peter Lougheed’s advice for protecting democracy while developing our natural resource: “Behave like an owner, save for a rainy day, collect your fair share, and add value.”

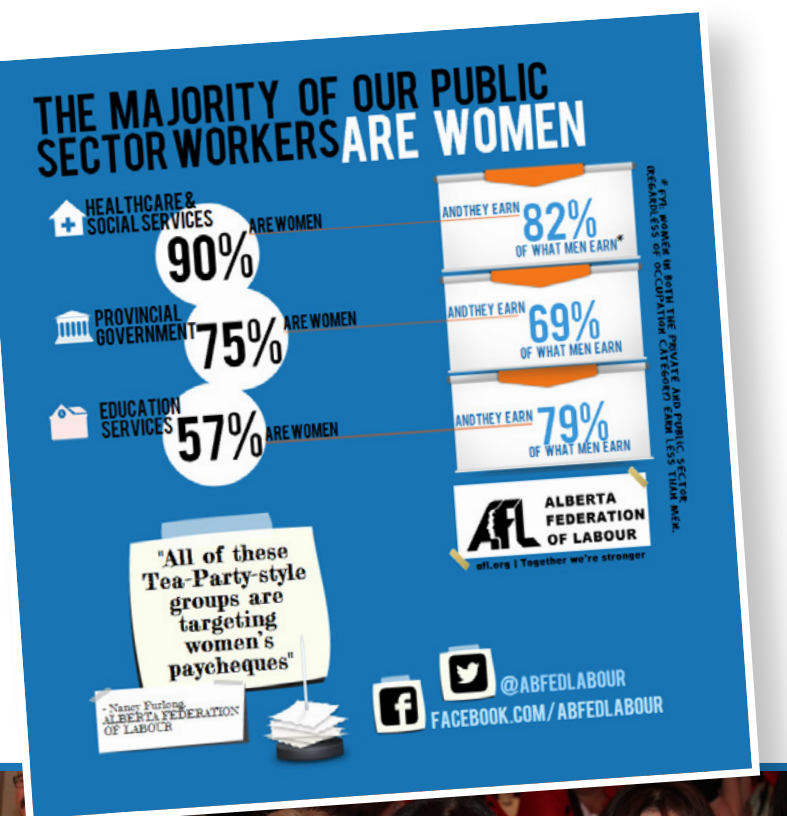
Other speakers during the busy four days included Alberta NDP Leader Brian Mason, independent B.C. economist Robyn Allan, Parkland Institute Executive Director Ricardo Acuna and labour historian Winston Gereluk. 🍷



UNA Members at the AFL Convention







## Former UNA LRA honoured for work with Temporary Foreign Workers

**RETIRED** UNA Labour Relations Advisor Yessy Byl was honoured at the AFL 2013 convention for her work in defence of Canada's Temporary Foreign Workers – a timely development just as the federal policy finally got on the public's radar days before the convention.



Byl could not attend the convention to receive the 2013 May Day Award, but the honour was accepted on her behalf by Ernie Jacobson, co-chair of CUPE Local 3319, who read her letter of acknowledgment.

"TFWs are Canadian workers too and deserve the same rights and respect as other workers here in Canada," wrote Byl, a lawyer who before joining UNA worked for the AFL on the TFW file. She retired in February.

"We must argue that no more foreign workers should come here under this exploitative guest worker program," she said. "If Canada needs more workers, then they should come as permanent residents.

"But we should always remember that the workers who are here in Canada should not be blamed for this appalling program," Byl said. "We should be working hard to ensure TFWs are brought into our communities and into our unions and ... most importantly granted access to permanent residency rights."

"Blaming the victims," Byl warned, will do no good. "Racism and divisiveness will only serve to fragment and weaken the labour movement and diminish the rights of all workers." 🐾



Siobhan Vipond and Gil McGowan shortly after the vote.

## McGowan re-elected leader of AFL; Siobhan Vipond becomes Treasurer

**THE** 2013 AFL convention saw re-election by acclamation of President Gil McGowan to his fifth term as president of the organization.

McGowan, 45, who was raised in rural northern Alberta, worked for the Alberta labour movement as a researcher, communications officer and community organizer for a decade before being first elected as AFL president in 2005.


As president, he has been instrumental in putting many important issues on the public agenda in Alberta, including workplace safety, the use and abuse of the federal temporary foreign worker program and the loss of jobs due to increasing export of raw bitumen instead of creating upgrading and refining jobs in the province.

He is a member of Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union Local 445. He is the father of three children.

Convention delegates bade a fond farewell to Executive Secretary Treasurer Nancy Furlong, who did not run for re-election after three terms in the key office. Furlong is moving to Toronto to take over a new position as executive director of the Canadian Society of Energy Professionals.

In her place, delegates elected Siobhan Vipond, a 12-year veteran of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees to replace her.

Vipond served as President of IATSE Local 210 for one term and VP of the local for two, representing 1,100 entertainment industry technicians, artisans, and craftspersons in the northern half of Alberta.

The 36-year-old mother of one has worked as a props director on critically acclaimed Canadian television shows and movies such as *Blackstone*, *Mixed Blessings* and *FUBAR 2*. 



# Politics and oil prices continue to impact 2013 bargaining

**POLITICAL** maneuvering continues to affect bargaining for many groups in Alberta – although so far it appears to have had little impact on the early stages of UNA's 2013 round of bargaining.

The provincial government continues to argue the impact of reduced revenues from the impact of the so-called "Bitumen Bubble" will mean public sector employers must hold the line at several years of zero-per-cent pay increases in negotiations with their unionized employees.

Deals signed by the government with the Alberta Teachers Association representing the province's public and Catholic school teachers and the Alberta Medical Association representing the province's physicians each contain three years of zeros.

However, in the case of Alberta's teachers and the doctors, said UNA President Heather Smith, both groups' negotiations resulted in significant achievements that may not have immediate monetary value but are very important to their members.

In the teachers' case, the ATA received a "comfort letter" that ensured the ATA's continued role as both a union and a professional association, she noted. As for the Alberta Medical Association, physicians received monetary enhancements as early as 2014, plus far more significant direct influence over the future structure of health care delivery in Alberta. In addition, the continued role of the AMA was assured.

"It's not just about money for us either," said Smith. "It's about the rights of patients, residents and clients to

have care provided by Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses."

Nevertheless, in mid-April, Deputy Premier and Advanced Education Minister Thomas Lukaszuk advised post-secondary institutions in a letter to freeze faculty and employee salaries for three years, and Premier Alison Redford has argued other public sector unions were going to have to accept the same approach.

So it would be unrealistic to expect the same demands will not be directed at UNA members when bargaining begins – even though the effects of the much-touted Bitumen Bubble already seem to be dissipating.

Thus expectations remain the 2013 round of bargaining will be challenging, Smith said. "But we went from stable good times to a crisis in 12 months,

so we could go from a crisis to stable good times in 12 months as well," she observed.

At press time, UNA and employer bargaining committees were scheduled to exchange "ingoing" proposals at the end of May.

UNA's Provincial Agreement covers Registered Nurses employed by Alberta Health Services as well as Bethany Group, Covenant Health, and the Lamont Health Centre. It is also expected to set the pattern for 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. 

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**Expectations remain that the 2013 round of bargaining will be challenging.**

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# UNA wants answers from AHS about nurse layoffs

**UNITED** Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith has written a letter to Alberta Health Services President and CEO Chris Eagle asking for answers as to why Registered Nurses are being laid-off at Alberta health facilities. Recent layoffs at acute care, long-term care and community care are a cause of concern for nurses, patients and their families.

In the letter to Eagle, Smith requested an immediate breakdown of all the layoffs, position eliminations and previously posted positions that will now go unfilled affecting nurses represented by UNA since April 1, 2013.

Smith also requested that AHS immediately disclose to UNA all anticipated changes that are expected to be made within the next year and a

detailed estimate of the anticipated financial savings to AHS as a result of these staffing changes.

No clear indication of the expected scope of these personnel changes has been communicated to UNA by AHS senior management.

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**UNA is extremely concerned by the pace and extent of the changes that are being revealed on a piecemeal basis.**

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UNA is extremely concerned by the pace and extent of the changes that are being revealed on a piecemeal basis. These changes have an impact on the working lives of UNA members and their ability to deliver safe quality health services to Albertans.

If you have any concerns about these changes, or how they might affect patient safety at your worksite, please contact your UNA Local Executive or Labour Relations Advisor. 🐾

## Stollery RN layoffs spark concern

**UNA** President Heather Smith expressed concern in late March that layoffs of Registered Nurses planned at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton could impact the quality of patient care and safety at the hospital.

Alberta Health Services confirmed a dozen RN positions at the Stollery Children's Hospital are being eliminated and replaced with Licensed Practical Nurses, but claimed the change is not related to budget considerations.

AHS also said it hopes none of the workers will be left without jobs.

But Smith said UNA is certain the move is a money-saving measure and health care advocates also expressed fears that cuts would impact care at the facility, which is connected to the University of Alberta Hospital



“The cuts that are going to be having the most effect are in the oncology and cardiology, very specialized areas,” said Friends of Medicine Executive Director Sandra Azocar. “It’s shameful, I think, that children are going to be the ones that are going to be suffering.”

Officials admitted to journalists AHS would save money as part of the change, but couldn't give an exact figure on how much would be saved. 🐾



# Patient plays greater role in 'Fifth Estate' CBC series than in the health system

**GOVERNMENTS** and hospital administrators have a responsibility to address the problems created when chronic under-funding has an impact on the ability of nurses to provide quality health care, Canadian Federation of Nursing Unions President Linda Silas said in response to the findings of the CBC's The Fifth Estate "Rate My Hospital" series.

About 60 per cent of the Registered Nurses who responded to the CBC's online survey said there was not enough staff for them to properly do their jobs.

Nearly 40 per cent of respondents said they suffered from a high degree of burn out.

According to the CBC, many of the problems hospitals face are the result of our overreliance on the already overburdened hospital system.

In a joint statement April 15 by the CFNU and the Canadian Nurses Association, Silas and CNA President Barb Mildon characterized the CBC's findings as unsurprising, but proof of the need for fundamental change and a collective effort to improve health care at the system, provider and bedside levels.

"Governments and hospital administrators are constantly asking nurses to do more with less – less budget, less staff and fewer supplies even," Silas said. "They too have a responsibility to address and resolve problems when the quality of care we can provide to patients suffers. They must make allies of nurses — the largest group of health-care providers and the best frontline resource — because we are a voice for patients with insights into the issues and ideas for the solutions."

"This series shows nurses are concerned with their ability to provide that safe and competent care in today's workplace," said Mildon. "Their workplace situation is



a microcosm of what is happening with many different provider groups in all care settings. For the sake of the patients, action must be taken on all fronts."

The first step in transformation is to look outside the hospital for solutions, they said.

Expanding support and resources to community health centres, nurse practitioner-led clinics and home care will help relieve the backlog of hospital patients, allow RNs and other care providers to focus on the serious and complex hospital cases, and ultimately, help Canadians access the care they need.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the number of RNs in management positions has been on the decline since 2010.

This decline is a particular concern given the fear voiced by nurses during The Fifth Estate's program. Some respondents feared reprimand, bullying and even job loss for speaking out against employers. Employers need to foster an environment where nurses feel comfortable bringing forth problems, since that would give them a chance to offer solutions.

Both organizations asked that the CBC's complete research be made publicly available so it can be examined against other data, such as overtime hours, part-time and casual employment rates and staffing levels. 🍷

# United Way Calgary project cuts barriers to getting ID

By Holly Heffernan  
United Way of Calgary



**THE** Community ID Project by the United Way of Calgary and Area has delivered 10,000 pieces of ID to vulnerable Calgarians over the past three years.

Since, possessing formal government ID provides individuals and families with access to a range of services, supports and opportunities, including health care, apartment rentals and the ability open a bank account and secure formal employment, this is a significant breakthrough for thousands of families and individuals.

It's part of United Way's focus on making our cities great for everyone by reducing poverty.

For many Calgarians, there are barriers to accessing ID, and therefore barriers to accessing those supports and opportunities that depend on it.

One of the most significant barriers for Calgarians with lower incomes is the cost of securing government ID. For those households struggling to stretch their income far enough to cover their rent and food costs every month, an additional \$41 for a birth certificate can represent a significant financial strain. For others, they struggle to secure the needed documents to apply for ID and may need additional support in navigating complex systems.

It is clear that ID is a critical piece of the poverty reduction puzzle, essential to building financial stability and well-being and enabling full participation in society. We as nurses have not had an actual paper paycheque for since moving to direct deposit over 20 years ago. If you don't have ID, you cannot open a bank account and therefore cannot get direct deposit. How many companies pay by a paper cheque anymore? Very few. Even

people who work as servers in restaurants now require direct deposit.

Recognizing this as a major issue for many people, in June 2009 United Way began an initial two-year phase of the Community ID Project. A co-ordinator worked with Calgary Legal Guidance to provide access for vulnerable Calgarians to temporary and formal ID at mobile clinics around the city.

After the initial two-year phase, the second phase of the project focused on supporting a number of community agencies to deliver ID services to their clients.

To ensure the community has the resources it needs to continue to have meaningful impact on the issue of ID, United Way and the Community ID Working Group launched the "*Do it Yourself Guide to Identification: Accessing the Identification You Need.*" This guide is designed for agencies, government, financial institutions and registries to provide accurate information on the requirements and costs of accessing ID, as well as the supports in the community that can provide additional assistance. The ID Guide is available on our website [calgaryunitedway.org](http://calgaryunitedway.org), under Guides.

After 2014, the focus will shift to supporting continued funding for key agency partners delivering ID. 🍷

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**For many Calgarians, there are barriers to accessing ID, and therefore barriers to accessing those supports and opportunities that depend on it.**

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**Give. Volunteer. Act.**





# Cut to Canadian Health Council cause for serious concern

**TERMINATION** of federal funding for the Canadian Health Council should be cause for serious concern for Canadians.

The Harper government announced April 16 it was cutting its funding to the body, formed in 2003 on the recommendation of the Romanow Commission on Health Care to act as a watchdog for standards and universal access to care for all Canadians regardless of where they live.

The Canadian Medical Association termed the decision “a failure of its responsibility to protect and strengthen Canada’s health care system.”

The CMA said in a statement “cutting the Health Council also means the loss of an important tool to monitor the performance of the health care system. How are we to transform the health care system to improve patient care if we can’t measure what we’re doing well and what we need to improve?”

The announcement, said Michael McBane, National Co-ordinator of the Canadian Health Council, “signals Harper’s intention to withdraw essential federal leadership from health care.”

Among the council’s achievements to date are reduced wait times and encouragement of innovation in the public health care system to ensure access to care across the spectrum and across the generations.

“National surveys consistently show that Canadians and the provincial and territorial governments want federal leadership,” added McBane. “Instead Harper is choosing to cut and run – cut the funding and then put distance between his government and universal health care.”

The group called on provincial and territorial premiers to step into this leadership vacuum, protect the vision of a national strategy and maintain the financial support of the Health Council of Canada. 🍷

Michael McBane at the Beyond Acute Care conference in February 2012



# The assault on unions: reinforcing the low-wage strategy

By David Climenhaga  
UNA Communications Advisor

**WITH** the government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper ensonced in Ottawa with a comfortable majority, radical anti-union forces are on the march in Canada.

Evidence is everywhere, with anti-union legislation passed or proposed in many jurisdictions, widespread vilification of the benefits won by public sector employees, daily attacks by market-fundamentalist “think tanks” and “AstroTurf” groups, and the heavy influence by the corporate-financed Tea Party right in the United States.

This should concern members of unions like United Nurses of Alberta – because this amounts to a campaign against the rights of working women in particular. As Nancy Furlong, outgoing Secretary-Treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour put it recently, “all these Tea-Party-style groups are targeting women’s paycheques.”

The attack by the Harper Government and other groups that share its low-wage agenda takes place in the context of declining union coverage in North America – particularly in the private sector – a factor that has emboldened anti-union radicals.

Indeed, the economic policies of the Harper Government that have hollowed out Canada’s once-healthy manufacturing sector coincide with declining rates of unionization, says Canadian Labour Congress Senior Researcher Chris Roberts.

The nursing and teaching professions – both dominated by women – remain among the areas with the highest union coverage rates, he points out, factors that account both for the ability of nurses and teachers to command fair com-

pensation and the fact they are now being targeted by anti-union groups.

A sluggish recovery from the recession, continued economic pressure on social programs caused by tax cuts for the wealthy, volatility in the financial markets and the loss of Canada’s low-dollar exchange rate advantage all reinforce efforts to drive Canadian wages lower, Roberts argues.

Roberts says groups attacking union members’ rights include:

- Right-wing media, like Sun News Network
- Market fundamentalist “think tanks” like the Fraser Institute
- “AstroTurf” pressure groups designed to appear to represent ordinary citizens, like the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the National Citizens Coalition, LabourWatch, the Merit Contractors and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business
- Federal and provincial conservative politicians

They have attacked EI benefits, expanded the temporary foreign workers program, pushed back-to-work legislation that interferes with collective bargaining, implemented legislative rollbacks in union security in several provinces and advocated proposals for the same thing in several more.

Says Roberts: “The crisis in manufacturing and the shakeout in forestry and pulp and paper, alongside the general buoyancy in public-sector job growth, have allowed the right to mobilize a politics of resentment against public-sector workers – think ‘pension envy’ about supposedly ‘gold-plated’ public-sector pensions.”

“Vilification of public-sector workers is also facilitating the austerity push and the worrying drift toward driving wages down, rather than public investment-led growth designed to bring up productivity and incomes,” he concluded. 🍷







UNA South Central District Representative JoAnne Rhodes presents a Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions scholarship to University of Calgary Nursing student Tara Mailloux. Tara's scholarship was sponsored by her mother-in-law, Dianne Mailloux who is a member of UNA Local 38 at the Wainwright Health Centre.



UNA is proud to have awarded a Nursing Education Scholarship to Lethbridge College nursing student Robyn Donst.



Mount Royal University Nursing student Allison Zadunayski was presented with a UNA Scholarship this week by UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik. Allison's scholarship application was sponsored by her aunt, Cher Zadunayski, who is a member of UNA Local 2 at the Red Deer Health Centre.



Mount Royal University Nursing student Kristina Le May was presented with a UNA Scholarship last week by UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik. Kristina's scholarship application was sponsored by her mother, Rosemarie Le May, who is a member of UNA Local 307 at Strathmore Community.





## Royal Alex nurses wear traditional caps to mark Florence Nightingale's birthday

**NATIONAL** Nursing Day falls on May 12, the date of Florence Nightingale's birthday in 1820, and since 1993, Canadian nurses have celebrated National Nursing Week in the week that includes that date. This year, National Nursing Week ran from May 6 to May 12.

Nurses at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton, members of UNA Local 33, celebrated the birthday of the English social reformer often credited with being the founder of modern nursing by wearing their traditional white nursing caps to work.

UNA members throughout Alberta marked Nursing Week by doing what they do all year 'round: Advocating for their patients in hospital wards, nursing homes and other care sites, and advocating to protect and enhance Alberta's fair and effective system of public health care.

UNA President Heather Smith recorded radio advertisement that could be heard in most parts of Alberta throughout Nursing Week that expressed the thanks of our union's leadership to the nurses who work every day in hospitals, home care, clinics and other health care sites. 🍷

**"THERE'S A NURSE IN MY LIFE."**

"I have a nurse in my life. Someone with a huge heart, dedicated to helping people in difficult times. A professional who never stops learning. An advocate for the well-being of her patients, our family and our community."

*Almost everyone has a nurse in their life. May 6 to 12 is Nursing Week. It's a great time to recognize the nurse in yours.*





# Victory in Grande Prairie case will help nurses refuse unsafe work

**NURSES** at Grande Prairie's Queen Elizabeth II Hospital have achieved a significant victory for workplace safety in Alberta's health care system.

Represented by United Nurses of Alberta, eight Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses won an important appeal to the Occupational Health and Safety Council that protects the right of health care workers to refuse to work in situations where they are placed in imminent danger.


On the night of Jan. 17, 2011, the nurses informed their manager they would not treat a violent patient, who had threatened violence against hospital staff in the past. The patient, admitted to the hospital's psychiatric unit after returning from lockup at the local RCMP station, was being held in a seclusion room the nurses believed to be insecure. When able-bodied security staff had to take physical control of the patient, some security staff suffered injuries. Following the incident, one security guard was placed on modified duties by the Worker's Compensation Board.

For failing to treat the patient and place themselves in imminent danger, the nurses were suspended without pay.

Following the incident, the employer was obligated by law to produce a written investigation and report of employee complaints. The employer failed to do so, hampering the nurses' ability to report the incident to a provincial OH&S inspector.

Appealing to the provincial OH&S Council, the UNA nurses argued they had reasonable grounds to believe they faced imminent danger and the employer did not meet its responsibility under the OH&S Act.

After considering the evidence, Appeal Panel Chair Peter Schaefer ordered the employer to cease all disciplinary action against the nurses, pay them what they would have earned if they had not been disciplined, and remove any reprimand or other reference to the matter from their employment record.


During the recent wildcat strike by Alberta Correctional Officers, nurses working at the Edmonton Remand Centre invoked their right to refuse to be placed in imminent danger. In this case, Alberta Health Services co-operated to ensure no nurse would be exposed to harm during the strike. 



## Alberta nurses cannot appeal discipline in drug case

**TWO** Alberta nurses who fought disciplinary action after they pilfered painkilling narcotics to feed personal drug addictions have been denied a last chance to appeal by the Supreme Court of Canada, which did not give a reason in a statement on March 28.

UNA was disappointed the Supreme Court refused to hear the case but continues to advocate for a positive non-disciplinary approach to mental illnesses such as alcohol and drug addictions. UNA remains concerned that taking a harsh disciplinary approach will make nurses reluctant to seek treatment for their mental illness by self-reporting to their regulatory college.

Nine out of 10 Registered Nursing Colleges in Canada, with the exception of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, have already adopted a non-disciplinary approach to dealing with addictions. 



# Occupational health & safety more than slogans and a commitment for more than just one day

By Dewey Funk  
UNA OH&S Advisor

**CONSCIOUSNESS** of occupational health and safety is the result of the sacrifice by the countless workers who have been injured or killed by workplace accidents or disease.

April 28 – formally known as the Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured in the Workplace – is Labour’s day each year to recognize the past but to also look into the future on how we can change the workplace into a safer and more healthy place.

This year on April 28, UNA members like other unionists throughout Alberta and Canada, marked this solemn occasion with a re-commitment to health and safety in their workplaces.

But our commitment needs to be more than just talk, once a year – but an everyday attitude. There are catch phrases out there like “fight for the living, mourn for the dead,” or “an injury to one is an injury to all,” but what do they mean?

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**Take a look at the root causes of the workplace injury, not ‘just’ the person.**

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Look around your workplace. There is a good chance that you are working with someone who has suffered an injury in the past year.

Look into their eyes, see what they are seeing. It might be fear – of not getting well again, of not being able to provide for their families or other loved ones. You might see pain, as Workers Compensation Board does not compensate for pain. You might see psychological pain, due to working in a fast-paced, uncaring environment that allows injuries to continue. The list goes on.

Are the injured working a modified work program now? Was their injury due to being pushed to work faster and harder due to being short staffed, inadequate equipment, a needle stick, being attacked by a patient?

Now, for a moment, take a look at the root causes of the workplace injury, not “just” the person.

You could be the injured person one day that has been described above.

This year, please make a commitment to yourself that when you go to work as a nurse you will take the time to do your job in a healthy and safe way.

Do this for yourself, your kids, your significant other, and your friends. Do this because you’re worth it! 🍷



**Work Healthy, Play Safe**



# New OH&S legislation allows ticketing

## Employees, employers can face safety violations

By Dewey Funk  
UNA OH&S Advisor

**BILL 6**, the Protection and Compliance Statutes Amendment Act, became law on Dec. 10, 2012.

As a result, the Occupational Health and Safety Act now gives OH&S officers the ability to levy “administrative penalties” on companies and allows them to ticket workers.

Implementation will come into effect this fall.

OH&S officers, technical advisors and lead investigators are all required to obtain a Level 2 Peace Officer appointment from Alberta Justice and Solicitor General. By obtaining the designation, OH&S officers will have the authority to issue tickets.

Unconfirmed reports indicate there are 73 offences for which tickets may be issued. About half are for employers and half for workers. The tickets are expected to be in the range of \$200 for workers and \$500 for employers.

If you are issued a ticket, you will have two options. You can pay the fine, or you can appeal the ticket. If you appeal, a court date will be set and you will have to plead your case before a judge.

So, imagine a nurse is observed by an OH&S officer not using a sharps container. The Officer should talk to the nurse and find out why she was not using the container. Reasons might include the fact none was provided.

If no sharps container was provided, the officer could talk to the employer about providing a container and could ticket the employer. If the employee had no sound explanation for not using the container, the officer could ticket the nurse. There should be an educational component before issuing a ticket.

Once a list of ticketable activities is available, I will publish it in NewsBulletin.

Administrative penalties may also be levied on employers. These penalties have come about through

non-compliance by employers with Alberta’s OH&S legislation. For example, employers have denied OH&S officers access to worksites for inspections and investigations. Employers have also failed to comply with letters of acceptance, orders and approvals. Some have a history of not providing safe workplaces.


When an OH&S Officer recommends an administrative penalty, the officer must speak with the “regulative manager” and decide if a penalty is applicable. Should the regulative manager agree, a base penalty will be assessed based on degree of risk. Penalties can range from \$1,000 to \$10,00 per contravention.

In such a situation, the employer will be asked to meet to discuss the administrative penalty. If the employer agrees and pays, the employer’s name will be published. If the employer disagrees, the penalty can be appealed to the OH&S Council.

How will this affect you on the job? Will it make your workplace safer? We’ll see.

This new legislation makes OH&S legislation more enforceable, but heavy-handed OH&S officers could save time by giving tickets to workers and employers without proving the required education.

The present system emphasizes reaction. When a complaint is received, an OH&S officer goes to the worksite. However, there are not enough OH&S officers to inspect all worksites in Alberta.

We now seem to be moving from an educational system to a system that penalizes people with monetary sums. This may well be counterproductive because OH&S has a human element where face-to-face communication can change work procedures and other factors to make the workplace safer. 





## Former Governor General Michaëlle Jean to address Canadian nursing leaders June 6 in Toronto

**FORMER** Governor General Michaëlle Jean and renowned demographer David Foot will be among the speakers when more than 800 nurses from across Canada meet in Toronto June 4-7 at the biennial convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

With the theme “*Taking the Lead*,” the convention is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday at Toronto’s Westin Harbour Castle Hotel and marks the 32nd anniversary of the organization, which represents nurses throughout Canada.

Jean, who was Canada’s Governor General from 2005 to 2010, will address a plenary session of the convention from 1:30 to 2:30 on the afternoon of Thursday, June 6.

Her remarks will be preceded that morning by the formal opening of the convention’s business sessions at 8:30 a.m. and an address to the convention by CFNU President Linda Silas, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Foot, a PhD economist and demographer who was co-author in 1996 of *Boom, Bust and Echo, How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift*, will address delegates at their final session on Friday, June 7, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Nurses at the convention will also attend two days of education sessions on such important issues as sustaining Canada’s public health care system, improving the social determinants of health for Canadians and the future of the country’s health care system beyond acute care.



Portrait of the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, on September 26, 2010. Photo By: Sgt Serge Gouin, Rideau Hall, OSGG

Conference delegates will also have the opportunity to participate in 30 workshops on such diverse topics as ending workplace violence and standing up to bullying, retirement preparation, using social media responsibly, dealing with addictions and this history of the labour movement.

In addition, a majority of conference delegates are expected to take part in a rally for the preservation of mental health services, commencing at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 5.

Education days are scheduled for June 4 and 5, with the business of the convention and keynote speakers following on June 6 and 7.

In addition to Silas, delegates will be joined by nursing leaders from throughout Canada and the presidents of most Canadian nursing unions.

A full agenda will be posted on CFNU’s website, [www.cfnu.ca](http://www.cfnu.ca). 🇨🇦





### UNA Local 33 donates to Youth Empowerment and Support Services

Members of UNA Local 33 at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton gathered to present a \$10,000 donation to the Youth Empowerment and Support Services (formerly known as the Youth Emergency Shelter Society). Each year, UNA Local 33 makes a significant donation to a local charity or non-profit organization in Edmonton.

## green corner

# Make vacation time a green time

**BEFORE** we know it, summer vacation time will be upon us. It's exciting to think about where your vacations may take you this year – but, if you do plan to travel, there are a few things you can do to make your time away from home a “greener” affair.

For starters, you can prep your house or apartment to use less energy in your absence and even save a little money. Some of the simple measures you can take to prepare your residence for your time away include:

- **Turn down the thermostat** – the most obvious way to save money and reduce your environmental footprint when you're not at home. Many thermostats have a “vacation” setting.
- **Power down every room in the house** – unplug your appliances to reduce their use of instant-on “vampire power,” and don't leave chargers and adapters plugged in.
- **Don't needlessly create garbage** – use up your perishables before you go.
- **Reduce the risk of damage** – shut off your main water valve and remove the circuit breaker for the stove and oven.
- **Improve your vacation security with a green edge** – put lights on timers to mimic an occupied house, plus use less power.

### You can contribute to a greener planet when you travel, too, with such simple ideas as:

- **Walk or bike when you get to your destination.**
- **Use reusable drink containers.**
- **Book non-stop flights whenever you can.**
- **Recycle your trash – just because you're in a hotel is no reason to stop thinking green.**
- **Rent a fuel-efficient car.**
- **Eat local – you'll be eating out a lot, but you can help a little by eating at places that use local produce.**

These are just a few thoughts that can make a small contribution to keeping our planet green.

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

# Ending teacher negotiations with bill amounts to bad-faith bargaining

**ALL** Albertans should be gravely concerned by the Redford Government's plan to impose a legislatively mandated contract settlement on school boards and teachers throughout the province.

United Nurses of Alberta Secretary Treasurer Karen Craik responded to the legislation announced May 13 by Education Minister Jeff Johnson by saying it undermines the entire collective bargaining process, a system that has worked well and continues to work well for Alberta.

"Trying to reach the result you want through collective bargaining, then resorting to public pressure and finally using legislation when you can't get your way is really nothing more than bargaining in bad faith," Craik said.

What is particularly troubling, she added, is that there was no legislative, regulatory or practical need for a single province-wide collective agreement to cover the province's 62 school boards and the 40,000 teachers represented by the Alberta Teachers Association.

School boards were given an arbitrary deadline of May 13 to ratify the deal. When there was a holdout – the Calgary Board of Education, the province's largest school board – Johnson announced the government would impose it through legislation. One other board has not yet voted on the deal.

"The deadline set by the minister and the notion the deal would fail if there were a few holdouts is not factually correct," Craik said. "The government's agenda seems to be driven by politics, not sound labour relations practice."

Until recently, it was virtually unheard of for governments to impose settlements on ongoing contract negotiations without attempting to reach an agreement through processes such as mediation and arbitration, Craik said.

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**"The government's agenda seems to be driven by politics, not sound labour relations practice."** – Karen Craik

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"This development, which we have also seen recently from the federal government, appears to be designed to undermine the entire collective bargaining process throughout the public sector," she said.

"As a union currently involved with Alberta Health Services, UNA is very concerned about the bad-faith implications of this tactic by the government," Craik said.

"This is extremely disappointing from a government that indicated it was committed to public services and valued its public employees," she added.

In professions like nursing where there is an international shortage of skilled practitioners, this kind of tactic will make health care employers' problems with recruiting and retaining skilled employees much worse, she predicted. 🍷

## Marilyn Coady Retires

Long-time UNA activist Marilyn Coady announced her retirement at the April 2013 Central District Meeting in Red Deer. Coady is the President of UNA Local 68 at the Wetaskiwin General Hospital and served on numerous UNA bargaining committees during her time as a Registered Nurse. At the meeting, UNA President Heather Smith thanks Coady on behalf of all UNA members for her hard work and dedication to advancing the nursing profession in Alberta.









## Rap video wins \$2,000 CLC prize

**RAPPER** Michael Rouse is the 2013 winner of the Canadian Labour Congress “One-Minute Message” video contest, taking home a \$2,000 prize.

The objective of the annual contest is to come up with the best message and best video in just under a minute about how unions stand up for fairness, deliver good jobs and better lives, and fight for a better deal for everyone.

To see the video for yourself, as well as the runners up, visit [oneminutemessage.canadianlabour.ca/](http://oneminutemessage.canadianlabour.ca/).  

A scene from the video that won the CLC One Minute Message Contest. Michael Rouse is a member of IATSE Local 891.


## Taking care on line protects professional responsibility

By Dave Cournoyer  
UNA Communications Advisor

Are you frustrated about something that happened at work?

### Avoid venting your frustration online!

**AFTER** a long shift at work, it is easy to let your guard down on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, but it is important to remember that anything you post or Tweet could be seen by your employer, a co-worker, or a patient and their family.

So when you log in to your social media accounts, remember that you are representing both yourself and the entire Nursing Profession. 

## Here are some helpful tips to help nurses online:

- Know your legal and ethical responsibilities to maintain privacy and confidentiality as a nurse.
- Respect the privacy of your patients, residents and clients and protect your own privacy.
- Avoid making remarks that could be seen as disparaging or embarrassing about your employer, your coworkers or your patients, residents and clients.
- Remember that words written on social networking sites have the potential to live on forever.
- Educate yourself about the privacy settings and policies of the social networks you are interested in joining.
- Respect professional boundaries – becoming a patient’s online “friend” or having communication with them through social media sites may exceed the scope of professional responsibility.
- Create strong passwords and change them frequently. Do not share passwords with others. Log off or turn off your computer or laptop when not in use.



## Kids' camp reminder: AFL still needs nurses

**THE** Alberta Federation of Labour is still looking for nurses who can volunteer at its 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 such as UNA that are affiliated with the AFL.

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

## Proposed changes to grad nurse qualification rules 'needless and expensive'

**PROPOSED** changes to how graduate nurses become Registered Nurses will create needless and expensive roadblocks while doing nothing to enhance patient safety, says Heather Smith, president of United Nurses of Alberta.

In a letter responding to the changes proposed by the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA), Smith outlined UNA's opposition to the changes which, if passed, would not be in any way beneficial to the public or to the nursing profession.

"Nothing in the proposed change assists graduate nurses to make a transition to practice," wrote Smith. "In fact, the proposal does the opposite and places needless expensive roadblocks."

"The proposal merely punishes graduate nurses if they are not supervised — something over which they would have no control," wrote Smith. 🍷

### Here is the text of CARNA's Proposal:

*The Registered Nurses Profession Regulation be amended to require all new graduates and IENs applying to CARNA for licensure as a registered nurse be required, at minimum, to be on the temporary register under supervision for the equivalent of 4 months of full time employment and provide a satisfactory reference before being able to apply for full registration and licensure as a registered nurse.*



# Know your Rights

Report from Director of Labour Relations **David Harrigan**



## AHS agrees to reimburse some Undergraduate Nurses for benefit expenses

**IN** June 2011 and February 2012, Alberta Health Services posted employment opportunities for Undergraduate Nurses for worksites across the province. All of these jobs were posted as casual positions.

It is UNA's belief that in both years some of these positions should have been posted as temporary positions since employees were being regularly scheduled for a specific job for greater than three months.

Under the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement temporary employees hired to work for less than six months are eligible to participate in the Alberta Blue Cross Usual and Customary Dental Plan and the Supplementary Benefits plan, which includes coverage for vision care and prescribed medication.

As a result of this difference, UNA and AHS recently agreed to resolve these matters.

Pursuant to the Agreement, AHS has agreed to reimburse Undergraduate Nurses employed in a regularly

scheduled capacity for greater than three months but less than six months from 2011 to 2012 for expenses that would otherwise have been covered by their benefit plan.

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**In order to be reimbursed, employees must provide a receipt for eligible services or products by no later than Aug. 1, 2013.**

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In order to be reimbursed, employees must provide a receipt for eligible services or products by no later than Aug. 1, 2013. Employees accessing this option will also be expected to pay the applicable benefit premium in order to be reimbursed.

In addition, if you are an Undergraduate Nurse Employee currently classified as a casual employee and you are regularly scheduled for greater than three months then you might wish to discuss your eligibility with UNA.

If you believe that you qualify, if you think you have been denied benefits to which you are qualified or if you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact your UNA Local Executive or Labour Relations Advisor. 🍷

## UNA supports AUPE members at Waterford

**UNITED** Nurses of Alberta supports members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees on strike at The Waterford of Summerlea in West Edmonton.

The 65 AUPE members at the supportive living facility in west Edmonton seeking a first collective agreement served notice to go on strike on Friday, April 5. They have been trying to negotiate a first agreement since December 2011 with British Columbia-based private-for-profit owner Chantelle Management.

AUPE reports that support staff at the facility are paid 25 to 30 per cent below the industry standard, while nursing staff at the top of the pay range are paid 25 per cent below the standard.

UNA encourages its members to support the striking AUPE members by joining them on the picket lines outside The Waterford of Summerlea. Picket lines are located at 9395-172 Street NW., Edmonton 🍷





April 28  
**Day of Mourning**

**145 working Albertans lost to workplace injury or illness in 2012**

**WORKING** people throughout the world paused on April 28 to remember workers killed or injured on the job.

Nurses in particular used the United Nations-declared International Day of Mourning to advocate for safe work environments for all working people.

As the final day of the 2013 Biennial Convention of the Alberta Federation of Labour, about 200 activists including many UNA members gathered at Edmonton's Grant Notley Park to honour the memory those hurt and killed at on the job. 🍷

Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel, Right, and EDLC President Brian Henderson

