

Events in 11 countries mark Nurses Week

Page 7

**Members praised
for pension fight**

Page 3

Bargaining:

Mediation begins

Page 6

**Scholarship
winners**

Page 14



Nurses from across the Calgary region gathered near the Peace Bridge on May 12 to celebrate Florence Nightingale's Birthday, the first day of International Nurses Week 2014. They showed their professional pride by wearing white.



Spring is here, but our fight continues for a fair contract and retirement security

By Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta

At last, signs of spring are beginning to show up in Alberta. But if the grass is finally a little greener, United Nurses of Alberta and its members continue to face significant challenges in bargaining and government policy that could have serious impacts for our working lives and retirements.

While UNA's Bargaining Committee has agreed with the employers' representatives to seek the assistance of a provincially appointed mediator to find a mutually acceptable agreement, significant and troubling differences continue to separate us. The employers continue to seek monetary rollbacks, deletion of designated days of rest and other fundamentally unacceptable changes to the Provincial Agreement. In addition, after a year of bargaining, they haven't even begun to discuss our proposals related to safe staffing.

So we will need the continued solidarity and commitment on UNA members to push this round of bargaining forward to a successful conclusion.

Meanwhile, contentious legislation that could ruin the retirement security of tens of thousands of our members and other public sector employees has been placed on hold

thanks to the efforts of hundreds of UNA members and others who protested the changes to their MLAs.

But while congratulations are due to members for their commitment and determination so far, we need to remember that when it comes to the threat of a major attack on defined benefit pensions, especially in job classifications like ours in which women predominate, plans by this government to reduce benefits have not gone away. Depending on whom the Progressive Conservative Party's members choose as their leader, pressure to enact Bill 9, the *Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014*, could well return to the agenda after the government's summer break.

So it is imperative that UNA members keep up the pressure on their constituency MLAs and remember that this development is a respite, not a total victory, for front-line health care workers like us.

So thank you for your efforts in the fight so far, and for your commitment to the future we share together.

In solidarity,

Heather Smith, President, UNA

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Heather Smith congratulates UNA members for fight against pension changes

But union president reminds members the battle against Bill 9 is not over



On March 2, United Nurses of Alberta members from across the province joined more than 2,000 Albertans at a rally for retirement security in Edmonton's Churchill Square. Despite the cold weather and a -33C wind-chill, the crowd gathered to send a strong message of their concern about the government's proposed changes to public sector pensions. At the rally, UNA President Heather Smith participated in a mock ceremony at which former premier Alison Redford was named the winner of a "Political Academy Award" for her remarkable promise-breaking performance persuading so many Albertans she would fight to protect their right to a secure retirement. Not long after that, Ms. Redford left office and the pension "reform" plans moved off the government's policy front burner.

MEMBERS of United Nurses of Alberta and other public sector unions deserve enormous credit for the lobbying effort that resulted in the May 5 decision by all parties in the Alberta Legislature to refer destructive changes to members' pensions to an all-party committee, President Heather Smith said at the time.

"This development is a true victory for our members in the Local Authorities Pension Plan and thousands of other Alberta public sector unions, but we need to remember that it is not a final victory and we will need to redouble our efforts to ensure that this bad law is not back again," said Smith, who was attending the Canadian Labour Congress meeting in Montreal when news of the agreement broke.

As a consequence, President Smith urged UNA members to continue to visit their Progressive Conservative

MLAs and tell them of their concern about the pension reductions proposed by Finance Minister Doug Horner. Assistance with talking points is available from UNA's Communications Advisors.

Smith noted that the referral to committee could not have happened without the strong support of all Opposition parties in the Legislature, and without the efforts of all unions involved in the Labour Coalition on Pensions led by the Alberta Federation of Labour.

"We are fortunate that the immediate threat to our pensions has been put aside, but we are mindful that at least for now the government says it has not changed its position on pensions," she reminded members. "So we will need to continue to remind the MLAs that represent us of the reasons why this is a bad and unneeded policy."



continued from page 3

Premier Dave Hancock and the three Opposition parties agreed on May 5 to send Bills 9 and 10, which would have a significant harmful impact on Alberta pensions in both the public and private sectors, to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for public hearings. The committee is supposed to report back to the fall sitting of the Legislature.

This provides an opportunity to fix the many problems with the bills or to see them die on the order paper and not be passed into law.

If passed, Bill 9, the *Public Sector Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2014*, would have allowed the Progressive Conservative government to gut the pensions of front-line public sector workers, including UNA members. The impact would have been most severe for younger workers entering the workforce, and would have particularly severely impacted professions and occupations like nursing care that are dominated by women.

Bill 10, the *Employment Pension (Private Sector) Plans Amendment Act, 2014*, would have allowed private companies to arbitrarily introduce changes to private sector plans similar to those envisioned for public employees in Bill 9. ❧



Presentations aim to help with pension lobbying

IN March and April, UNA Communications Advisors Dave Cournoyer and David Climenhaga made presentations on lobbying to all District Meetings – part of our union’s response to the destructive changes to the Local Authorities Pension Plan being pushed by the provincial government.

They emphasized that, done best, trying to influence elected officials to implement legislation and regulations that help working people is a long-term, non-partisan activity based on building relationships with decision makers.

“Lobbying is about persuading a government of the merits of a policy, not electing a government to implement policies we want,” they emphasized in their presentation, citing successful lobbying efforts by Alberta citizen groups that have made major gains over time frames as long as 40 years.

Their key point: “We can’t persuade anyone of anything if we don’t have a relationship.” The key takeaway from that:

“It’s important for UNA’s members to get to know their MLAs in their own constituencies, so they know who we are and what we know when we come to them looking for policies we believe would help Albertans.”

Their presentation includes discussion of how to prepare for a lobbying campaign, how to contact elected officials and make presentations to them, the need to include media in lobbying campaigns and the importance of providing background documents, with which UNA’s Communications Department can help.

They emphasize the need to continue pressing MLAs on the need for sound public sector pension policies now that Bill 9, the legislation that would have enabled the government to impose its changes, has been sent to a committee. The problem has not gone away. It has merely been postponed. ❧





NEGS
2014

In bargaining, UNA and Provincial Agreement employers agree to mediation

THE United Nurses of Alberta Negotiations Committee and bargaining representatives for employers covered by the UNA Provincial Agreement have mutually agreed to continue negotiations for a new collective agreement with the assistance of Alberta Mediation Services.

On May 1, the parties announced they had jointly agreed to David Jones as mediator.

The parties have a significant number of provisions that have not yet been agreed to, but both anticipate constructive and positive discussions will continue with the assistance of the respected mediator.

However, it is important to note that UNA and the Provincial Agreement employers are far apart on several issues, including the employer's wish to delete all references to designated days of rest, to eliminate the requirement for a nurse in charge on all units and to enable supervisors to arbitrarily change FTEs for nurses working on a unit.

On the monetary side, the employers continue to seek significant rollbacks greater than agreements with other public-sector unions. Moreover, after a full year of

bargaining, the employers have never addressed UNA's proposals for ensuring staff staffing levels.

These are fundamental differences. UNA will never willingly accept these changes proposed by the employers. So the gap will be difficult to bridge without significant compromise by employers. As a result, UNA members need to know it will be difficult to achieve an acceptable agreement without solidarity and determination on the part of members.

Dates for mediation were set then for May 29-30 and June 17-18 and 23-26, and July 2-4 and 8-10.

In mediation, the mediator arranges meetings with the parties to deal with issues in dispute and works with them to help them reach a collective agreement.

The mediator does not have the authority to make any rulings, as an arbitrator would, but does have the authority to make recommendations only.

Summaries of outstanding UNA and employer bargaining positions and other materials relevant to bargaining can be viewed by clicking the links found on UNA's website – www.una.ab.ca

The parties have a significant number of provisions that have not yet been agreed to, but both anticipate constructive and positive discussions will continue with the assistance of the respected mediator.

DATES FOR MEDIATION

May 29-30

June 17-18

June 23-26

July 2-4

July 8-10

GNU Nurses in 11 countries mark International Nurses Week

LEADING nurses' and health care unions in 11 countries held coordinated actions on May 12 and throughout International Nurses Week to promote patient safety and public health care services around the world.

Working under the umbrella of Global Nurses United, the groups in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe rallied and marched in Calgary, Washington DC, Chicago and Sacramento and locations in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, and South Africa. Later in the week, marches were also held in Australia, Ireland, the Philippines and South Korea.

The theme of the events was "Health Care is a Human Right."

Events included calls to enact new measures to protect patient safety, including the passage of legislation for safe staffing laws, an end to the privatization of health services and the harmful health effects of climate change, and a call for enactment of a "Robin Hood tax" on trades of stocks, bonds and other financial instruments to raise needed revenue for basic human needs.

GNU is an international federation of nurses and healthcare worker unions across the globe, including United Nurses of Alberta, formed in June 2013 in San Francisco. 🇺🇸

Scenes for the UNA-GNU Calgary Rally, May 12



green corner

UNA Executive Board adopts position on climate change

THE Executive Board of the United Nurses of Alberta adopted a policy statement on global warming at its meeting April 1-3 at the Provincial Office in Edmonton.

UNA executive officers adopted a position statement on climate change agreeing that “as part of nurses’ ethical obligation to promote health and well-being ... we need to be involved in educating our members and the public about climate change and we should support mitigation measures.”

“Recognizing the importance of the oil sands to the Alberta economy, we do not encourage the elimination of oil sands activity,” the statement said, “but we urge the governments to regulate production in a manner that better protects the environment, and creates greater economic diversity and value-added strategies.”

The statement also said UNA executives encourage members of the union, whenever reasonably practicable, to consider mitigation factors.

Members were encouraged to refer to “The Role of Nurses in Addressing Climate Change” by the Canadian Nurses Association. 🍷

Green corner, on environmentally friendly topics likely to be of interest to UNA members, is brought to you by the Education, Communication and OH&S Committee.

End of Health Accord means \$36M cut in medicare funding over 10 years

THE lapse of the Canada Health Accord on March 31 allowed by the federal Conservative Government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper has aroused grave concerns that the impact of the change gravely threatens Canada’s public medicare system.

The deal between Ottawa and the provinces and territories, which dates back to the prime ministership of Paul Martin, provided stable funding in all provinces and set common goals on wait times, home care and prescription drugs.

To mark the end of the accord, the Canadian Health Coalition organized a national day of action on March 31 with 40 events across Canada. The group told the CBC it aimed to alert Canadians to how the lack of federal leadership in health care could fragment services and access to care depending on location and ability to pay.

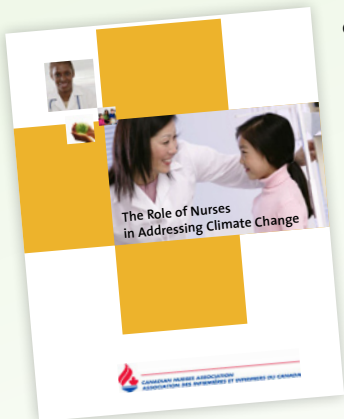
Michael McBane, executive director of the Canadian Health Coalition, said the end of the health accord means the “end of any rational planning for the [health] system,” telling the CBC on March 31, “as of today, no more planning. We lose momentum.”

McBane argued a federal voice is needed to keep some equality of access from province to province, rather than let the richer provinces get more and better care.

But that is what is likely to happen under the Harper formula, which saw this province, Canada’s richest, to get a \$1 billion increase in health funding, while all provinces combined will see funding fall by \$36 billion over the next decade.

These cuts will be more severe because of the compounding effect of cuts in health care transfers by provinces now receiving them of more than \$16 billion in the same period.

More information can be found at healthcoalition.ca. 🍷



See CFNU report on page 17.

CARNA: AHS needs to take 'giant step back' from workforce transformation

ALBERTA Health Services needs to “take a giant step back” from its various workforce transformation staffing models “to ensure any change initiatives are evidence informed, and driven from the ground up by registered Nurses and other

care providers,” the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta said in a recent letter to members.

The regulatory body for Alberta Registered Nurses said in the letter that it was pleased AHS has reaffirmed its view that the case manager role continuing care is best suited to Registered Nurses.

“CARNA’s position is that financial considerations do not

President lauds members in Nursing Week ‘email blast’

AT the close of International Nursing Week – which began this year on Florence Nightingale’s actual birthday, May 12 – UNA President Heather Smith expressed her appreciation to the union’s more than 30,000 members for their contributions in a mass “email blast.”

“I think it is appropriate that the international theme this year is ‘Nurses: A Force for Change – a vital resource for health,’ Smith said in the message.

“I thank you for your contribution to the health and well-being of Albertans, whether that is in a facility or in the community,” she said in the message.

Smith also used the message to thank UNA members who participated in the union’s annual survey and took part in the fight to preserve public service pensions. She reminded members negotiations are continuing and urged them to stay in the loop through social media, the UNA website and by communicating with their local executives.

“Each day of the year you make a difference,” her message said, “just by doing what our profession is respected for doing – caring.” 🌸

“Although we agree that the status quo is not an option, we are concerned that the current approach ‘rolls up’ a poorly evaluated initiative into a number of others,” CARNA said.

outweigh the importance of having RN case management in the delivery of high-quality nursing care,” the letter said.

CARNA, however, expressed a lack of confidence in the direction taken by AHS’s so-called Workforce Transformation Model and subsequent versions such as the Care Transformation and Path to Home Initiatives and CoACT.

“Although we agree that the status quo is not an option, we are concerned that the current approach ‘rolls up’ a poorly evaluated initiative into a number of others,” CARNA said.

“Projects need to be rigorously evaluated for their contribution to patient outcomes and implemented with sensitivity to the local context and conditions,” CARNA said, concluding: “Alberta needs to focus on those best practices that are supported by evidence, evaluate them in context and then provide appropriate support during their broad implementation.” 🌸

An employer must involve affected workers in the hazard assessment and in the control or elimination of the hazards identified...

An employer must ensure that workers affected by the hazards identified a hazard assessment report are informed of the hazards...

Hazard Assessments:

FIRST: what is a “Hazard Assessment”?

It is a document that must be developed by employers that “*identifies existing and potential hazards*” and sets out “*methods used to control or eliminate the hazards identified.*”

This directly affects your health and safety! Yours, not that of your patients. When you can’t do your job in a healthy and safe environment, how can you properly look after patients, clients, and residents?

Part 2, of the Occupational Health and Safety Code, which deals with hazard assessments, speaks in Section 8 about worker participation:

An employer must involve affected workers in the hazard assessment and in the control or elimination of the hazards identified.

An employer must ensure that workers affected by the hazards identified a hazard assessment report are informed of the hazards and of the methods used to control or eliminate the hazards.

This is part of the Three Rs enshrined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act: The Right to Know, the Right to Participate and the Right to Refuse.

What this means is that not all affected workers need to be involved, but some affected workers on the unit must be involved in the development of the hazard assessment. So some workers need to receive training in how to do hazard assessments.

Instead, many workers have hazard assessment forms slapped down in front of them, are told to look it over and sign it off at the end of their shift.

Would you sign a mortgage document without reading it? Your paycheck is tied to your mortgage, so most people put a lot of thought into that agreement.

Your hazard assessment deserves the same consideration. Your paycheck is also tied to this document, because it can affect your safety on the job. All the hazards you are exposed to need to be named in this assessment, as well as the controls required to mitigate them.



have you seen yours?

By Dewey Funk
UNA OH&S Advisor

Your employer has an obligation to educate you about the hazards in your workplace, and the means to control them. This is not a “joint responsibility” – it is the employer’s responsibility in law to inform and educate and train you on the policies, procedures and risks in your workplace.

You should not have to find this information out “when you have time.”

I had the opportunity to attend UNA District Meetings in April and make a presentation on hazard assessments and their importance to nurses. Each time I asked, “How many of you have seen your hazard assessments and it is astounding at how many of you have not seen these documents?” Many nurses had not.

The law requires that the hazard assessment is readily available to you.

OH&S Regulation Section 8(2) says: *“If an employer is required to develop procedures or to put procedures in place under the Act, the regulations or the adopted code, the employer shall ensure that a paper or downloaded copy of the current procedures is readily available for reference by workers at the work site affected by the procedures.”*

How often is the hazard Assessment to be reviewed?

Part 2, Section 7, of the OH&S Code says: *“an employer must ensure that the hazard assessment is repeated ... at reasonably practicable intervals to prevent the development of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions ... when a new work process is introduced ... when a work process or operation changes, or ... before the construction or significant additions or alterations to a work site.”*

So here’s your homework: Ask your employer to provide you with a copy of your hazard assessment, read it over and familiarize yourself with the document.

If you don’t know where the policies mentioned are located, ask your employer. It’s not enough for your employer to write policies, the employer must educate you and actually show you where the policy is for reference. There’s a difference between writing a policy and the implementation of a policy.

If you see an unidentified hazard, notify your employer and have the hazard added to the Hazard Assessment document. If your employer doesn’t want to add the hazard, have this concern brought up at your OH&S committee meeting and follow the process in your Collective Agreement.

This legislation came into effect in May 2004, 10 years ago. It’s time to ensure it’s obeyed. It’s your right!

Work Healthy, Play Safe! 🍷

**An employer must
ensure that the
hazard assessment
is repeated...**

International Women's Day 2014: 'Women's rights are workers' rights'

UNA enthusiastically marked International Women's Day on March 8.

As members of a profession in which women predominate, nurses are especially conscious of the need to continue the effort everywhere to secure justice and equality for girls and women that International Women's Day symbolizes, UNA President Heather Smith said at the time.


The United Nations theme for International Women's Day 2014, which was celebrated by women and men throughout the world, was "equality for women is progress for all."

UNA emphasizes equality for all working people regardless of gender in its representation of its members and in the broader positions it takes in society.

"International Women's Day is an occasion that began with the trade union movement and the struggle for workers rights, which are the same as women's rights," Smith said in an IWD statement. "It is entirely appropriate that unions like United Nurses of Alberta should carry on this work when there is still so much to do in Alberta and Canada, and throughout the world."

"On International Women's Day, we celebrate the achievements of all women, regardless of national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political differences," Smith added. "It is a great opportunity for all of us, regardless of our gender, to look ahead to the potential and future opportunities that our sisters, daughters and granddaughters can experience."

The origins of International Women's Day have been traced to labour disputes in New York City in 1857 and 1908, where workers protested the dangerous, overcrowded and exploitive working conditions of women in the garment industry.

The first International Women's Day was celebrated in 1911. In 1977, the United Nations urged all countries to set aside a day to celebrate women's rights. The symbols of International Women's Day are bread and roses – the bread representing women's struggle for economic equality and the roses their women's continuing efforts for a better quality of life. 

From the Mailbag: putting the verse in nurse

The things that show up in NewsBulletin's mailbag include unsolicited notes of thanks to nurses from users of the health care system.

Recently we received such a comment from Calgarian Michael Sidorenko, who had the occasion some time ago "to spend hours overnight next to a busy nursing station at Peter Lougheed Hospital in Calgary" where he could see and hear the nurses at work.

He praised those nurses' "empathy, commendable consideration, synergic promptness and general professionalism to every call," and contributed several haiku – traditional Japanese short verses of 17 phonetic units – in thanks. Here are a few:

Hospital room lights out
Corridor traffic subdued
Call lights still flash

Hushed whispers at nursing station
Ears keenly attuned
Pain still filters

Night nurse comforts
Anticipates a call
She is there

UNA leaders, members and staff mark April 28 Day of Mourning

LAST year in Alberta, 188 working people died on the job or as the result of workplace injury or work-related disease.

As UNA Occupational Health and Safety Advisor Dewey Funk pointed out, if the same number of Albertans died of infectious disease, it would be classified as an epidemic.

“It astounds me how many employers focus on the monetary cost of injuries when so many injuries happen because of lack of funding,” said Funk.

Leaders, members and staff of UNA marked April 28 – formally known as the International Day of Mourning for Workers Killer or Injured on the Job – with a small candle lighting ceremony at the union’s Provincial Office in Edmonton.

The seriousness of this year’s ceremony was brought home to participants because UNA has a member whose claim was accepted post-mortem by the Workers Compensation Board of Alberta – she died at 77 from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease as a result of exposure over eight years to second-hand cigarette smoke in her workplace.

An investigation by WCB’s Special Investigation Unit confirmed “extensive exposure to second hand smoke” caused the death of the Registered Nurse, who was not a smoker.

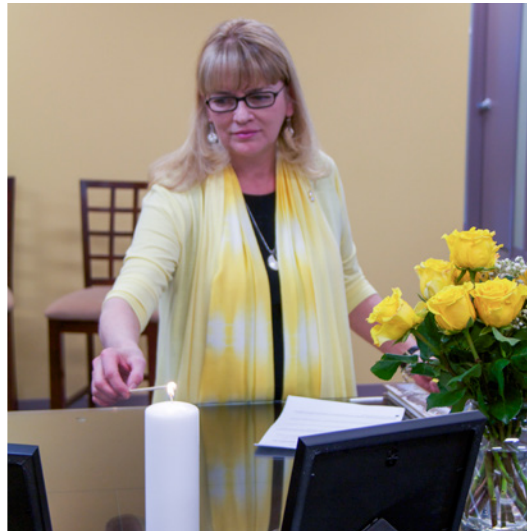
Funk noted that what’s important about the ruling is the reminder that “conditions of your workplace today can impact your health tomorrow. When you go to work each day as an RPN or RN, you face many hazards.”

Smith reminded participants in the Day of Mourning ceremony of the fundamental role unions play safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all workers.

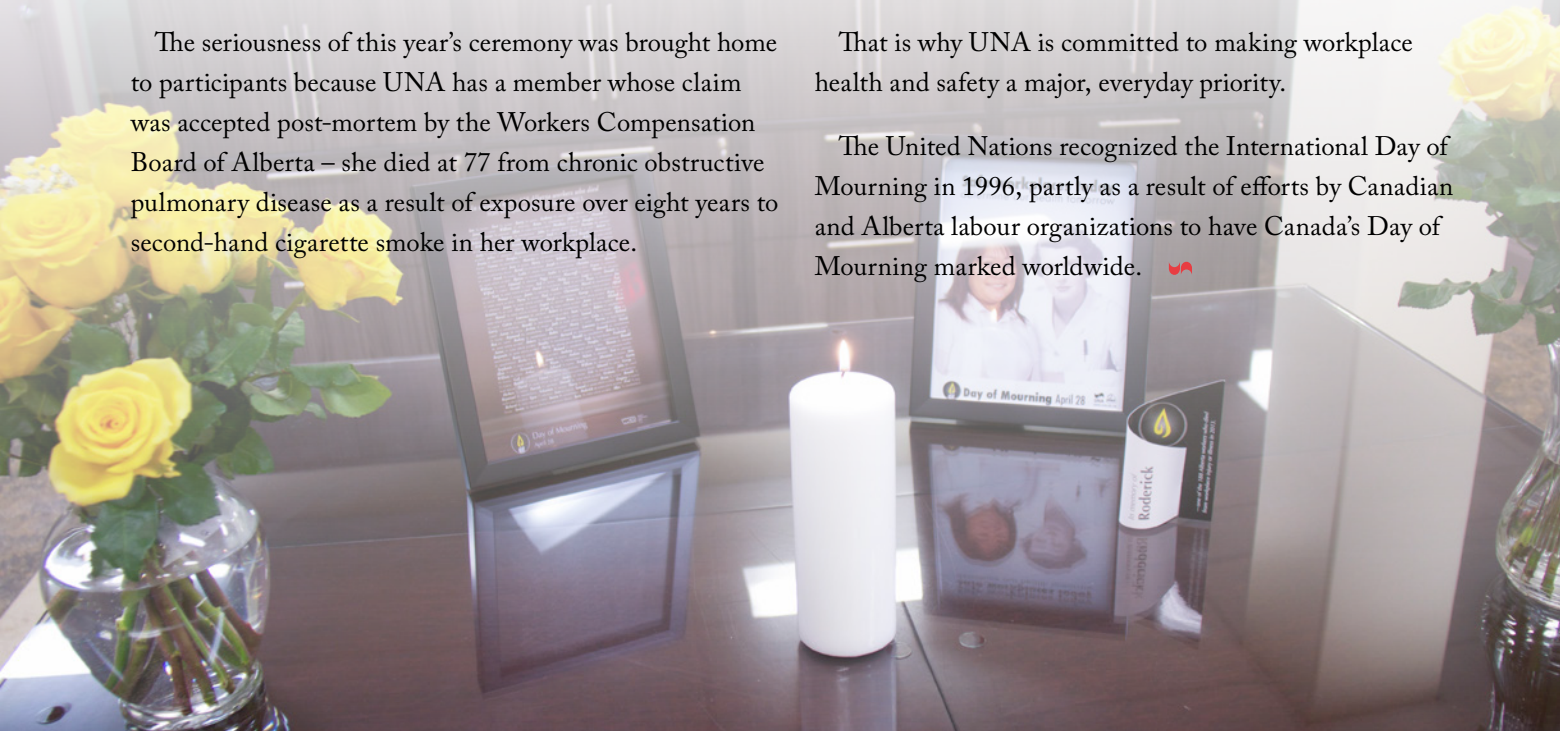
Albertans need to remember that because of the unpredictable nature of the work, nursing is in fact a more dangerous profession than many – with a higher rate of injury, for example, than the mining industry.

That is why UNA is committed to making workplace health and safety a major, everyday priority.

The United Nations recognized the International Day of Mourning in 1996, partly as a result of efforts by Canadian and Alberta labour organizations to have Canada’s Day of Mourning marked worldwide. 🇨🇦



Heather Smith lights a candle in remembrance.




Seven nursing students awarded UNION'S ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP

UNITED Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith and the other members of UNA's Executive proudly presented seven UNA scholarships to nursing students enrolled in approved programs at Alberta post-secondary institutions in March.

Applicants for the scholarships had to be related to a UNA member in good standing, to have completed an application form and written a short essay responding to the question "How does United Nurses of Alberta advocate for Members?"

This year's scholarship recipients were:

- 
Jenelle Ference, Grant MacEwan University
 sponsored by her sister-in-law, Ashley Ference
 UNA Local 76 (*Cold Lake Health Centre*)
- 
Samantha Keitges, Mount Royal University
 sponsored by her mother, Ruth Keitges
 UNA Local 1 (*Peter Lougheed Centre*)
- 
Osayomwanbo Ekunwe, Grant MacEwan University
 sponsored by her mother Mary Ekunwe
 UNA Local 117 (*Extendicare Eaux Clares*)
- 
Sarah Rapley, Grant MacEwan University
 sponsored by her mother, Adele Rapley
 UNA Local 301 (*University of Alberta Hospital*)
- 
Nadeane deGuzman, University of Alberta
 sponsored by her mother Florabel deGuzman
 UNA Local 11 (*Misericordia Community Hospital*)
- 
Nicole Kuzio, Grant MacEwan University
 sponsored by her mother, Rose Kuzio
 UNA Local 97 (*David Thompson*)
- 
Kennedy MacLowick, Grant MacEwan University
 sponsored by her mother, Shelley MacLowick
 UNA Local 85 (*Sturgeon Community Hospital*)

See UNA's website – www.una.ab.ca - for instructions on how to apply for the 2014 UNA nursing scholarship. 



Introductory website connects new nurses with their union



UNITED Nurses of Alberta is making it easier for new nurses to learn about how their union operates and the services it provides.

A new web “microsite” – introduction.una.ab.ca – is part of UNA’s new member orientation and includes easy to access information about how the union can help new members.

The website outlines UNA’s mission for fairness in the workplace, its role in professional advocacy, and the benefits of union membership. The website includes an online membership form and important links that new members can use to access union services.

Every day, UNA fights for a fair work place for all of its members. UNA advocates for Alberta’s nurses in their workplaces through professional responsibility and occupational health and safety concerns.

UNA provides a wide range of services to its members, including negotiating excellent Collective Agreements that regulate salaries, benefits, schedules and working conditions of members. 🍷



UNA Communications Advisors Dave Cournoyer (left) and David Climenhaga (right) with Jarrah Hodge of CALM



wear **white** Wednesdays

WWW campaign wins media group prize

UNITED Nurses of Alberta’s “Wear White Wednesday” campaign has won an award for the Best Campaign of 2013 from the Canadian Association of Labour Media.

The CALM judge praised the campaign’s “clear, compelling messaging,” and said that visible support by nurses wearing white “opened opportunities for face-to-face conversations and meaningful outreach to those whose support is crucial to successfully combating planned staffing changes by Alberta Health Services.”

UNA Communications Advisors Dave Cournoyer and David Climenhaga learned of the award at the CALM Awards dinner on May 2 in Montreal.

The credit, of course, goes to the nurses who devised the idea and made it effective at worksite rallies across Alberta throughout 2013. 🍷




wearing WHITE to protect OUR profession



FLORENCE Nightingale, whose birthday fell on May 12 - the first day of National Nursing Week 2014 - which this year is the first day of National Nursing Week 2014, reminded us in her writing that nursing is about patient advocacy.

In good times and bad, that's exactly what United Nurses of Alberta and its 30,000 members do: Advocate for quality care when Albertans require it, properly funded and universally accessible.

UNA nurses continue to advocate for their patients, clients and residents by wearing white on the job - a powerful reminder to patients, families and our colleagues in health care of how few Registered Nurses are in the health care system, and of the important work we do. 

wear white Wednesdays

As Health Accord expires, nurses rally in support of public health care

By Anil Naidoo, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

NURSES and health care advocates across the country raised their voices against the federal government's abandonment of health care.

The 10-year Health Accord expired on March 31, 2014, allowing the Conservatives to implement health care transfer cuts to the provinces (reducing the rate of transfers by \$36 billion over the next 10 years).

There were nearly 50 events across the country, organized by the Canadian Health Coalition and supported by its partners including Canadian nurses' unions. In Ottawa, Linda Silas, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, joined CUPE President Paul Moist and the Canadian Health Coalition's Mike McBane at a press conference on Parliament Hill. The three highlighted the concerns shared by many Canadians and front-line health care workers for the future of medicare.

CFNU also supported the petition launched by Leadnow, which has gained close to 50,000 signatures. All of these responses show that health care is a key priority for Canadians. It should be a similar priority for our federal government. Instead we are witnessing the 'slow strangulation' of medicare, which Tommy Douglas warned of decades ago. Unfortunately, under this government the recent changes have quickened the pace.

The end of equalization in health care: Budget 2014

One critical aspect of health transfers has always been a recognition that not all regions are equal. Some provinces have greater challenges than others and need more financial assistance to ensure citizens have access to quality health care. The federal government, on page 279 of their latest Budget, killed the idea that any Canadians should receive more support based on their need. These changes to equalization will reduce health care transfers by as

much as \$16.5 billion more over the next five years, compounding the \$36 billion cut over 10 years. Worse still, this shift will benefit provinces with growing economies and younger, healthier populations at the expense of poorer, older and more rural parts of Canada. Alberta, already the country's wealthiest province, ends up getting almost \$1 billion more in transfers under this new formula.


The result is a far more fragmented, patchwork system of health care where the level of care depends on where you live.

Laws under attack

Through the introduction of a number of bills over the past year, the Conservative government has clearly stepped up their attacks on workers and workers' rights. Here's where things stand:

Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (requirements for labour organizations) – this bill is still stuck in the Senate and looks unlikely to move forward quickly. The bill has been deemed a violation of their constitutional rights by at least five provinces and is an attempt to administratively burden unions to negatively impact their overall effectiveness to advocate for their members.

Bill C-525, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Labour Relations Act (certification and revocation – bargaining agent) – some amendments were accepted, but moving forward toward becoming law makes it harder to certify unions and easier to decertify unions.

Bill C-4, the government's latest omnibus budget bill – this bill has passed, and there are aspects within the massive law that fundamentally harm the ability of federal workers to strike or protect themselves from dangerous work conditions. 



CANADIAN
FEDERATION
OF NURSES
UNIONS

WHEN KNOWLEDGE MEETS KNOW-HOW

In historic first, delegates choose new CLC president over incumbent



UNA First Vice-President Jane Sustrik, President Heather Smith, Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik and Second VP Daphne Wallace with CLC President-elect Hassen Yusseff.

DELEGATES to the Canadian Labour Congress elected a new president on May 8 for the first time in 14 years.

Hassan Yussuff, the CLC's secretary-treasurer since 2002, defeated incumbent Ken Georgetti by 40 votes in a hard-fought election at the organization's convention in Montreal.

Yussuff made history – he was the first person to defeat a sitting CLC president in the history of the organization and will be the first person of colour to hold the office.

Yussuff ran on a campaign of change, promising to bring grassroots action back to the CLC. Another candidate, Hassan Hussein, dropped out of the race earlier in the week in order to back Yussuff's bid for presidency.

Barbara Byers was elected as the organization's new secretary-treasurer and Marie Clarke Walker and Donald Lafleur as executive vice-presidents.

There were 4,837 delegates eligible to vote in the election, the CLC's largest ever convention. The CLC, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 3.3 million Canadian workers and brings together Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 111 district labour councils.

UNA was represented at the convention by President Heather Smith, Secretary Treasurer Karen Craik, First Vice-President Jane Sustrik and Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace, as well as close to 50 local members.

Georgetti was first elected to the post in 1999 and has been the CLC's longest-serving president. 🍷

Know *your* Rights

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



For your own sake and the wellbeing of your patients

Article 8 aims to ensure you can get sufficient rest

IT may seem as if our reluctant Alberta spring has barely arrived, but it will be summertime before we know it. And in health care, summer means the need for more overtime shifts for those of us who are not on vacation – and thus it’s time for reminder about Article 8, Overtime, in the UNA Provincial Agreement.

Article 8.07 says:

- (a) *Where an Employee works overtime immediately following her or his Shift and there is not a minimum of eight consecutive hours off duty in the 12 hours preceding the Employee’s next Shift, at the Employee’s request, the Employee shall be entitled to eight consecutive hours of rest before commencing his or her next Shift, without loss of earnings.*
- (b) *The Employee in the above situation will advise the Employee’s supervisor in advance of the fact that the Employee will not be reporting for duty at the scheduled time.*

The article was included in the Provincial Agreement because both UNA and the employers agreed that our primary purpose had to be to deliver safe, quality patient care. Since


It is up to each employee to determine if the amount of overtime they are being asked to work is reasonable.

both parties agreed that can’t be done if an employee is impaired due to a lack of sleep, this provision was included to ensure employees are able to get the sleep they need.

UNA members also need to be aware of Article 8.04 (b), which says:

The Employer may request an Employee to work a reasonable amount of overtime. Should the Employee believe that the Employer is requesting the Employee to work more than a reasonable amount of overtime, then the Employee may decline to work the additional overtime, except in an emergency, without being subject to disciplinary action.

It is up to each employee to determine if the amount of overtime they are being asked to work is reasonable. Moreover, what is reasonable will vary from person to person. So it is up to members to speak up and insist on their rights under the Provincial Agreement if they believe they are being pressured to work an unreasonable amount of overtime.

Remember, it is important – for their own wellbeing and that of their patients – that nurses exercise these important safety provisions in our collective agreement. 

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