



NewsBulletin

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Members of
UNA Local 79



BARGAINING BEGINS:

UNA, employers
exchange
ingoing proposals

PAGE 3

Happy 40th,
United Nurses!

PAGE 4

Get ready to
welcome CFNU to
Calgary in June

PAGE 14



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Together we will move forward in 2017, as UNA members have for 40 years



It's springtime in an extraordinary year – the 40th anniversary of United Nurses of Alberta, a difficult financial year for Alberta and its government, and time for a key round of bargaining in a situation that can be described as *interesting*.

UNA came into the world as an independent nurses' union on May 6, 1977, when members of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses met in Edmonton to decide the future of collective bargaining for nurses in our province.

When the dust had settled, Alberta's nurses had created UNA, a real union prepared to fight hard for its members. What has happened since has shown creating UNA was the right move for Alberta's RNs and RPNs. In 2017, we should celebrate this!

We owe a big part of UNA's success to the way we approach bargaining, also at the very top of our agenda in 2017. That is because our Provincial Collective Agreement – the UNA contract that covers the bulk of our members' work lives, and which impacts every other agreement we sign, expired on March 31.

Bargaining a new collective agreement commenced April 3, and I was pleased to see the positions taken by

our largest employers are reasonable and modest, and that there is every reason to hope these negotiations will be conducted with mutual professionalism and respect.

But while I am optimistic we can reach a fair agreement that recognizes the difficult economic situation faced by Alberta, its government and its citizens, we must remember bargaining contracts is complex, and we cannot succeed without your visible and sometimes forceful support. So I urge you all to keep your eyes on bargaining, and to be ready to respond if things take an unexpected turn.

I urge you also to tell leaders in your own communities that nothing good – for the economy or Alberta families – comes from beating up front-line public employees like nurses, on whom so many families have been depending even more than usual in these challenging times.

Enjoy the warm weather. Remember UNA's birthday in May and the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions' Biennial Convention in Calgary in June, and keep your focus on our bargaining.

Together, we'll move forward, as we have for 40 years! 🍷

In Solidarity,


Heather Smith

President, United Nurses of Alberta

BARGAINING BEGINS:

United Nurses of Alberta exchanges proposals with AHS and other Provincial Agreement employers

■ Negotiating representatives of United Nurses of Alberta and the four employers covered by the Provincial Collective Agreement exchanged proposals on April 3, formally beginning the process of bargaining the union's most complex and important contract.

UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan, chief negotiator of the union's 13-member Provincial Collective Agreement Bargaining Committee, described the employer's opening position as "among the most reasonable, modest proposals we have seen in provincial bargaining."

He characterized the employer bargaining team and the discussions thus far as professional and respectful.

The employer's ingoing bargaining position proposes a two-year collective agreement with zero-per-cent pay increases in both years, changes to the designated days of rest provisions for part-time employees, and several less significant and technical language changes.

In recognition of the province's financial situation, Harrigan said, UNA has put forward a negotiating position designed to meet the needs of members while making it possible to reach an agreement reasonably quickly with Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care and The Bethany Group (Camrose).

"We recognize these are tough economic times and we want to get this deal done," Harrigan said.

Accordingly, UNA is seeking pay increases of 1 per cent in each year of the

agreement, a top up to cover maternity leave, and professional responsibility provisions that would speak to the need to ensure there is no dilution or reduction of nursing capacity in front-line care.

UNA's positions are based on extensive consultation with members, including a survey of the general membership by a professional pollster to ensure the union's bargaining strategy reflects the true wishes of the overall affected membership.



2017 Provincial
Negotiating Committee.

While the bargaining positions taken by both sides should make it possible to reach a timely agreement, Harrigan cautioned, bargaining a complex collective agreement is never easy and UNA depends on the commitment and solidarity of its members to support its negotiating stance.

AHS and Covenant Health employ the majority of the more than 30,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and allied health care workers represented by UNA. As a result, the Provincial Collective Agreement is of enormous significance to all of UNA's members, including those who work for other employers whose contracts tend to follow the pattern set at this bargaining table. 🍷



Together NEGS
FOR A STRONGER FUTURE 2017



Happy 40th Birthday UNA

MAY 6, 1977

By David Cournoyer
UNA Communications Advisor

More than 1,300 nurses gathered on May 6, 1977, at a tense and dramatic general meeting of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses to decide the future of collective bargaining for nurses in Alberta.


The nurses at the meeting voted to create their own independent union, to be known as United Nurses of Alberta, which would take responsibility over collective bargaining for nurses.

UNA moved into its own offices on June 14, 1977, and soon after the majority of Staff Nurse Associations, which had existed before the union was created, applied to the Labour Relations Board to become chartered Locals of UNA.

Before UNA was created, an arm of the AARN known as the Provincial Staff Nurse Committee represented nurses in collective bargaining starting in 1966.

That all changed in 1974 when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Saskatchewan Association of Registered Nurses was ineligible to be the bargaining representatives for nurses in that province. The court ruled that because the majority of the officers of the professional association were traditionally employed in management positions, a conflict of interest existed.

This decision ultimately led to the establishment of independent labour unions for nurses across Canada, including UNA.

Since 1977, UNA has been an effective advocate for nurses, the nursing profession and Canada's public health care system. Today, United Nurses of Alberta is the union for more than 30,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and allied workers in Alberta. 

ANNOUNCEMENTS. A

Births

A-1

IT'S A UNION! Alberta's Nurses are proud to announce the birth of their first union, United Nurses of Alberta. UNA was born on May 6, 1977 in the presence of more than 1,300 nurses at a dramatic meeting of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses


UNA MARKS 40 YEARS WITH 40 SCHOLARSHIPS

This year marks 40 years since the founding of United Nurses of Alberta and in recognition of this milestone, the union is funding 40 nursing education scholarships.

The 40 scholarships will be divided into groups of 10 to be awarded to nursing students in their first, second, third and fourth years of

studies at approved post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

Applicants must be related to a UNA member in good standing, complete an application form and write a short essay answering the question, "In the last 40 years how has United Nurses of Alberta advocated for its members."

Preference will be given to applicants who have not received a UNA scholarship before. Applications for UNA's Nursing Education Scholarship can be found on the UNA website and will be accepted until Oct. 15, 2017. 

Alberta government stays course in 2017 budget, won't attack health care, other public services

By David Climenhaga
UNA Communications Advisor

■ In its third budget since coming to office in May 2015, Alberta's NDP Government stayed the course of dealing with a difficult financial situation caused by low oil prices and a resource-dependent economy by refusing to attack front-line public services including health care and education.

Finance Minister Joe Ceci's March 16 Budget Speech was a dramatic change from the strategies pursued by past Conservative governments and the demands of the two conservative opposition parties in the Legislature.

Media coverage and both opposition parties described the budget in harshly negative terms, particularly the government's insistence it would not slash or privatize essential public services.

The budget includes a predicted deficit at the end of 2017-18 of \$10.3 billion – down about \$500 million from the deficit posted by the province last year – and long-term debt of about \$45 billion.

However, Ceci said in his speech, “we’re not going to make drastic cuts to the things that would only hurt Albertans to get in balance more quickly.” The government predicts a return to balanced budgets after 2020.

Ceci said the government expects to reduce the deficit to \$7.2 billion by 2019-20 by keeping operating spending increases to 2.2 per cent this fiscal year and to 2.7 per cent in each of the next two fiscal years.

In addition to refraining from major attacks on health care, education and



Finance Minister Joe Ceci.

other front-line public services, the government's approach includes significant investment in infrastructure at a time when interest rates are extremely low by historical standards. This includes building 24 new or significantly upgraded schools, a new public hospital for Edmonton's under-served south side, a court house in Red Deer and 200 public long-term care beds in Calgary for seniors with complex needs and another 145 in Edmonton. Those 345 beds are part of a planned build of 2,000 LTC beds across the province.

Operational costs will be kept within an envelope the same as the forecast combination of inflation and population growth in the 2017-18 fiscal year, Ceci said.

**New hospital
planned for
Edmonton's
south side.**

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

UNA annual membership survey scheduled for April 27 to May 19

- United Nurses of Alberta's annual membership survey is scheduled to be conducted between April 27 and May 19 this year.


This telephone survey of a randomly selected sample of UNA members is conducted each year on behalf of the union by Viewpoints Research.

When Viewpoints calls, often in the evening, the number on your telephone's call display will show the UNA provincial office name and number (780-425-1025).

If you are among those contacted, please be aware Viewpoints does not leave a message but may attempt to contact you up to five times. If you are unavailable when Viewpoints calls, you may find UNA's number listed on your call display as a missed call.

If you are able to answer but cannot take the time to complete the survey at that moment, Viewpoints can arrange to call back at an agreed upon time that is more convenient for you.

A number of measures are used by Viewpoints to ensure the information collected through the survey is confidential and anonymous.

To protect the members' privacy, dialing is computerized. This ensures the telephone interviewer, who does know the name of the person they are calling, cannot actually see the member's phone number. After responses are collected, Viewpoints Research then combines and aggregates the data before sharing results with UNA. 

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact UNA Researcher Judith Grossman at 780-425-1025 or 1-800-252-9394, or by email at jgrossman@una.ab.ca.

Alberta Government stays course in 2017 budget...


□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Alberta's forecast 2017-18 debt of \$45-billion attracted the harshest criticism from the government's foes, although at debt-to-Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rate of 3.1 per cent now rising to 7.1 per cent at this time next year according to the Royal Bank of Canada's reliable fiscal tables it seems negligible by the standards considered acceptable by professional economists.

Economists suggest advanced jurisdictions in the industrialized West can safely have debt-to-GDP of 60 per cent. Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio is about 66 per cent, the United States' is well above 100 per cent, while the province of Quebec's hovers around 50 per cent.

So Alberta's debt may be too high by the province's political standards, but as an economic measure it is positive.

Respected University of Calgary economist Trevor Tombe describes the province's debt as "entirely sustainable." Even by 2020 it will still be lower than that of all other provinces as a percentage of GDP, he said.

Alberta currently has the lowest basket of provincial taxes in Canada. If it raised taxes to the level of British Columbia or Saskatchewan, the second and third lowest-tax jurisdictions in the country, it would come close to eliminating the provincial budget deficit at a stroke. Saskatchewan raised its sales tax by a percentage point to 6 per cent in March. 



UNA President Heather Smith (centre) met with Registered Nurses and MLAs Danielle Larivee (left) and Cameron Westhead (right) at this year's Speech from the Throne at the Alberta Legislature.

Throne Speech outlines NDP government's continued commitment to health care, education

■ Nurses and other public sector workers in health care and education were doubtless relieved by the NDP Government's continued commitment to public services in the Throne Speech delivered on March 2.

"As we pursue further spending reductions, your government will hold firm to the belief that spending reductions should never happen at the expense of our schools, hospitals and those very things Albertans rely on to weather the downturn and provide for their families," said the Throne Speech.

Throne speeches are traditionally read by the Queen's representative, Lieutenant Governor Lois Mitchell, but they formally outline the agenda for the next session of the Legislature of the government, in this case the NDP led by Premier Rachel Notley.

Specific policies affecting public employees and public services were announced in the speech as well, including the promise of funds to build new schools and health care facilities, opening more long-term-care and dementia spaces, expanding whistleblower protection for public

employees, and a plan to work with medical professional organizations to find and retain professionals for rural Alberta.

To counteract the devastating impact of the continuing opioid crisis, the government said in the speech it will introduce supervised consumption sites and other harm-reduction measures.

Major policies that received the most news coverage included elimination of mandatory instructional school fees, a cap on electricity prices while the government restructures electricity markets, and continued legal efforts to encourage the development of pipelines to carry Alberta's natural resources to market.

UNA President Heather Smith attended the Throne Speech as a special guest, honoured with a seat on the floor of the Legislature. She later posed for photos in the rotunda with UNA members Danielle Larivee, now the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake and the Minister of Children's Services, and Cameron Westhead, MLA for Banff-Cochrane. 🌹

"Your government will hold firm to the belief that spending reductions should never happen at the expense of our schools (and) hospitals."

- 2017 Alberta
Throne Speech



UGANDA



- Tracey Igantius, a home care and public health Registered Nurse in Lethbridge, first travelled to Africa in 2014 with four classmates from the nursing program at the University of Lethbridge.

It was in Kampala, Uganda, she wrote recently, that she completed her final nursing preceptorship and “forever impacted my life both personally and professionally.”

It was the beginning of a journey that led to the Local 89 member to an application for a \$1,000 United Nurses of Alberta humanitarian grant to work on an aid project in Uganda she has started with her husband.

“During my three-month preceptorship, I rotated through labor and delivery, pediatric emergency/ICU, and burns at Mulago Hospital, and also spent time doing community outreach through free TB/HIV clinics in the slum areas,” Ignatius wrote. “This experience gave me the opportunity to study and practice in a totally new and unpredictable environment, and also allowed me to

immerse myself in an extremely vibrant and beautiful culture.

“When I returned home to Canada, I knew that this would not be the last time I would visit Uganda.”

As a result, a year ago in February, Ignatius returned to Uganda for a month, this time applying for and receiving a permit to practice as an RN through the Uganda Nursing and Midwives Council. This, she said, “allowed me to volunteer and give back to the hospital and community that had given me so much.”

Working in public health – just as she does in Lethbridge – Ignatius had the opportunity to take part in the department’s introduction of HPV vaccine funded by the Ugandan Government, she wrote.

“It was such a rewarding experience to be able to share my knowledge and teach young children and their parents about the importance of health prevention and making educated and healthy lifestyle choices,”

impacted Lethbridge member's life, personally and professionally



Ignatius said. She observed, as do many UNA members who volunteer overseas, “we are very fortunate to live in a country where health prevention and promotion is so easily accessible.”

With her husband, who was raised in Uganda, Ignatius's commitment to the landlocked East African country led to her most recent trip, in July, working in partnership with a registered charity called Bridges of Hope in Lethbridge to start the Kigowa Youth Farming Project. Mugagga Ignatius, a medical student, is currently living in Uganda while the couple completes the process of his immigration to Canada.

The village of Kigowa “has a special place in our hearts because it is where my husband has lived most of his life,” she wrote. The project aims to take vulnerable youth off the street and gets them involved in chicken farming and agricultural-related projects, such as improving local wells. “With the revenue earned from chicken farming, we will also help these kids’ go back to school

and have the life skills they need to work and grow,” she said. A few of the older youth are also given the opportunity to earn money by learning to run the chicken farm.

“Our final goal is to build a facility that allows more young people to come and gain from this opportunity,” she said.

“I will continue to travel back to Uganda to volunteer at the hospital and in the community, and oversee our youth project,” Ignatius wrote.

“‘My Heart Beats for Africa,’ is one of the most common phrases seen on souvenirs in Uganda,” she said. “In my case that statement couldn’t be more true.”

More information on Bridges of Hope can be found at thebridgesofhope.com. Donations to the youth farming project can be made through Bridges of Hope and the activities of the Kigowa Youth Farming Project can be followed at facebook.com/KYFPCan2Uganda/



Nursing Week ad campaign to highlight 40 years of service

- During International Nursing Week, from May 7 to May 13, United Nurses of Alberta will be using outdoor and radio advertisements to celebrate the service our members provide to Alberta patients year round.

This year's advertising campaign will mark the 40th anniversary of the union's creation on May 6, 1977.

For four decades, UNA's members have been advocating for their patients in hospital wards, nursing homes and other care sites, and advocating to protect and enhance Alberta's fair and effective public health care system.

Further details of the advertising campaign will be shared on UNA's website and social media accounts during Nursing Week. 🍷

Local Authorities Pension Plan online tool includes helpful features

- United Nurses of Alberta members who are enrolled in the Local Authorities Pension Plan as well as LAPP retirees who are receiving pension income now have the ability to view and update personal pension information through the LAPP's MyPensionPlan.ca website.

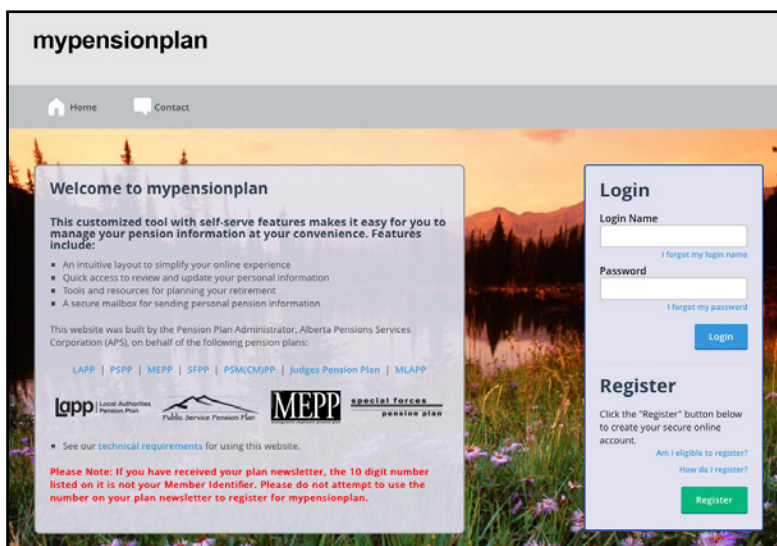
Members must register to use the secure parts of the site at MyPensionPlan.ca.

The website includes:

- A secure mailbox to submit information requests and documents
- A pension projection calculator
- Retirement planning tools and resources
- Access to your LAPP client information number
- Details of annual cost of living adjustments
- Access to tax slips and forms
- Ability to see your service and salary history

In addition, members can use MyPensionPlan.ca to update information about their beneficiaries and personal information, as well as book one-on-one information sessions with LAPP representatives.

Members should also remember to review their LAPP service and salary history each year to ensure their employer's submissions to LAPP are correct. 🍷



Once despised, Alberta Health Services increasingly seen as model for other provinces

■ Strongly criticized for its cost and the confusion it created, the 2008 merger of nine Alberta health regions into a single entity appears to be becoming a model for other provinces.

The amalgamation that created Alberta Health Services has been politically rocky, and was likely one of the factors that led to the defeat of the Progressive Conservative dynasty after nearly 44 years by the New Democratic Party in May 2015.

But it's now becoming a model for other provinces – with the typical qualification by politicians they won't make the same mistakes Alberta did.

In January, Saskatchewan announced it would amalgamate 12 health authorities into a single region, just as Alberta did.

Saskatchewan's plan may stand a better chance of success, however, because the

province will plan more and is much smaller than Alberta, so the task is less complex.

Thanks to then Alberta health minister Ron Liepert, we now know the decision to merge Alberta's health regions was made in a single afternoon by the cabinet of then premier Ed Stelmach. AHS employs approximately 100,000 people and has an annual budget of more than \$14 billion, about the same as the entire Saskatchewan provincial budget. Saskatchewan's health care budget is just over \$5 billion, although it has roughly a quarter Alberta's population.

Back in 2014, Nova Scotia went through a similar exercise, merging nine health districts into one. The Nova Scotia merger reduced the number of bargaining units from 50 to four.

Other provinces are said to be eyeing similar amalgamations. 🍷

The amalgamation that created Alberta Health Services has been a politically rocky road.

UNA President, Heather Smith speaking at a CFNU pharmacare meeting on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.



PC-era report shows government knew agricultural workplace laws were necessary

Alberta Federation
of Labour

- Alberta's agricultural workers are more than twice as likely to be killed on the job than other Albertans, according to an internal government report obtained by the Alberta Federation of Labour through a freedom of information request.

The report, dated February 16, 2015, shows 18 to 20 Alberta farm workers could be expected die in work-related accidents every year.

It also shows there will be more than 4,000 work related injuries on Alberta's farms, and at least 400 workers will be unable to work for two or more months because of their injuries. "This utterly repudiates the arguments against basic workplace protections for agricultural employees," said AFL President Gil McGowan.

The report, created while the Progressive Conservative government was in power, calculates that agricultural workers lose a combined total of more than \$10 million in wages every year from injuries. For most agricultural employers, WCB coverage costs less than private insurance.

More than 50,000 Albertans work in agriculture. Until the election of Premier Rachel Notley's NDP Government, they had few legal protections.

WCB statistics since the Notley government passed the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act show the legislation has been effective, with 763 claims from agricultural workers processed, 407 involving a disabling injury. 🍷

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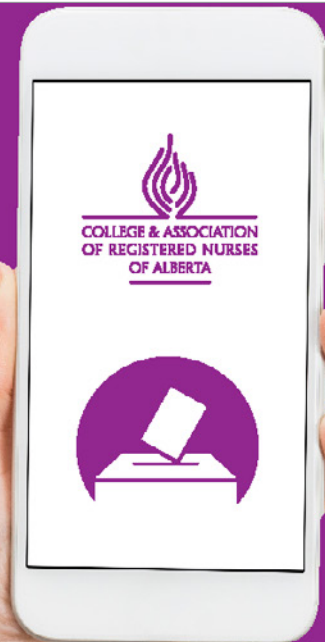
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- profession's visibility
- standards and scope of practice

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Vote online May 1-15.

Members eligible to vote will receive an email on May 1.

Visit nurses.ab.ca/elections for details.



UNA congratulates Madam Justice Ritu Khullar on appointment to Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

■ United Nurses of Alberta was delighted to learn on March 24 of the appointment of Edmonton lawyer Ritu Khullar, Q.C., to the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench.

"It brings great pleasure to us to know this fine lawyer, whom we respect so much, will be known after today as Madam Justice Khullar," UNA President Heather Smith said. "She deserves our congratulations and our best wishes as she receives this great, and well deserved, honour."

Justice Khullar has represented UNA in many cases, Smith noted, recently in the Supreme Court of Canada in December when the union received intervenor status in a case related to addictions in the workplace.

Justice Khullar was born in Fort Vermillion to parents who had immigrated to Canada from India. She grew up in the town of Morinville, north of Edmonton. She has a B.A. degree from the University of Alberta and a law degree from the University of Toronto. Early in her legal career, she clerked at the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench before going into private practice, the federal government said in the news release announcing her appointment.

Since 1998, Justice Khullar has practiced law in Edmonton with Chivers Carpenter, focusing on labour and employment, privacy, administrative, human rights, and constitutional law. She became managing partner of the firm in 2009. She has also lectured at the University of Alberta and served on numerous committees of the Canadian Bar Association.



Ritu Khullar

She has acted in a *pro bono* capacity in numerous significant cases, including representing the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund before the Supreme Court of Canada, the news release said. She will sit on the Bench in Edmonton. 🍷

UNA's lawyers appear before the Supreme Court of Canada

■ As the holiday season was fast approaching in December 2016, United Nurses of Alberta staff were not slowing down in their commitment to fight for the rights of Alberta's Nurses.

UNA Labour Relations Officer Martin d'Entremont travelled to Ottawa on Dec. 9, 2016, to advise UNA's lawyers about a legal case being heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. The union was granted intervenor status at the country's top court in a case related to addictions in the workplace, an issue UNA has been advocating about for many years.

Having intervenor status allowed lawyers representing UNA to speak to the Supreme Court Justices about arguments the union had previously made at the Alberta Court of Appeal.

In that previous case, UNA argued an addiction should be seen as a disability and not a condition that a nurse should be punished for by their employer or professional association. 🍷

Alberta nurses prepare to host CFNU Biennial Convention in Stampede City

JUNE 5-9, 2017

■ Nurses from across Canada will gather in Calgary in early June for the 18th Biennial Convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions – with members of the United Nurses of Alberta playing the dual role of genial hosts and enthusiastic hometown crowd.



“We’re very proud to have the opportunity to host CFNU in Calgary,” said UNA President Heather Smith, “and we’re looking forward to CFNU’s biennial convention with tremendous enthusiasm.”

UNA members made up one of the largest delegations to the last CFNU Biennium, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 2015. “We were warmly welcomed to Halifax by Nova Scotia’s nurses with true East Coast charm and we intend to return the favour with more than a little Western hospitality in Calgary,” Smith said.

The theme of the June 5-9 convention will be “*Canada’s Nurses Speak up!*” – a reminder to nurses the most powerful tool they possess to make change happen is their voices.

More than 1,000 nurses from across Canada are expected to be at the Telus Convention Centre. More information on who can register, and how to register, can be found on CFNU’s website at nursesunions.ca/Convention2017.

The convention will be CFNU’s usual combination of fun and hard work, with two full days of workshops on professional and trade union topics on June 6 and 7 followed by the business of the convention on June 8 and 9.

Workshops will deal with such varied topics as nursing and technology, social factors that impact health care, providing respectful nursing care to members of sexual minorities, appropriate approaches to workplace addictions, domestic violence at work and celebrating nurses in the labour movement.

Featured speakers during the business portion of the meeting will include Sir Robert Francis, the well-known British medical lawyer who has chaired several high-profile inquiries into medical controversies and scandals in the United Kingdom, Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff, and comedian and inspirational speaker Big Daddy Tazz, who calls himself “the bi-polar Buddha.”

Evenings will be filled with social activities, including a Western BBQ and rodeo on June 6. 🍷



UNA members at the Jasper Labour School.

JASPER LABOUR SCHOOL

gives UNA members a chance to sharpen their skills

| By David Cournoyer
| UNA Communications Advisor

■ More than 50 members of United Nurses of Alberta travelled to the mountain park community of Jasper in January to sharpen their skills at the Jasper Labour School.

The annual educational event organized by the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress was held January 15 to 20, 2017.

Members attending in the annual school were immersed in a wide-range of course topics, including occupational health and safety, labour history and law, collective bargaining, mental health, and communications for union activists.

Students at the school also heard from a range of guest speakers, including Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, CLC President Hassan Yussuff and AFL President Gil McGowan.

UNA Labour Relations Officer Marie Dancsok and Communications Advisor David Cournoyer shared their professional expertise with students while acting as facilitators at the school. 🍷



UNA Local 79 members at the Jasper Labour School.

The FAQs about incident reporting:

- It's very clear to me after attending Occupational Health and Safety Committee meetings across Alberta and speaking with members who are there, that we have a problem with incidents that put United Nurses of Alberta members at risk going unreported.

AHS has introduced a new incident reporting procedure called MySafetyNet

When we fail to report such incidents to our employers, they can't address the concerns raised by UNA members or their OH&S Committees.

On the other hand, when incidents are properly and consistently reported, both UNA and our employers are able to track trends and implement fixes that make our jobs and workplaces safer.

Consider the example of keeping track of splashbacks from immunization needles. Thanks to accurate and consistent reporting by nurses, it became clear to Alberta Health Services that splashbacks were a problem for nurses administering vaccinations. As a result of reports to the OH&S Committee, the employer and the needle supplier both investigated, and the loading procedure was changed. All nurses who provide immunizations were informed. There have been no incidents reported since!

So if we know reporting incidents can result in safety problems being addressed, and we also know incidents aren't being reported, that suggests it's time for a review of the reporting procedure. With help from Norma Wood and Jeff Roe from Workplace Health and Safety at AHS, I have answered some common questions about how to use MySafetyNet (MSN).

What should be reported on MySafetyNet?

Report anything that potentially impacts your health and safety negatively. For example, injury, illness, equipment failures, and motor vehicle accidents or near misses if you use a vehicle on the job. This is not an exhaustive list, of course.

Where do you report?

MySafetyNet (MSN), is an online reporting process that can be accessed through a link on the AHS main page on Insite, where it appears on the left side of the page, under "Report Safety Incidents."

The screenshot shows the MyHealth.Alberta.ca website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'About Us', 'Employee Tools', 'Our Teams / Departments', 'Our AHS', 'News', and 'Contact Centre'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area is divided into several sections:

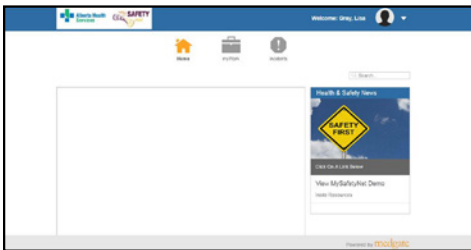
- Headline News:** Includes links for 'CEO Message: Telehealth Rescheduled for January 20', 'ELT Notables - Dec. 20 Edition', 'Holiday Greetings from the Minister of Health', 'Wildfire Updates & Resources', and 'More Headline News'.
- Report Safety Incidents:** A prominent yellow box with a warning icon and the text 'Report Safety Incidents Reporting & Learning System'. It includes sub-links for 'Submit a Report', 'Report Reviewer Login', 'Training & Resources', and 'Patient Safety'.
- Report Worker Incidents:** A section for 'MySafetyNet' with sub-links for 'Employee', 'Manager', and 'Resources'.
- President's Excellence Awards:** A section for nominating a person or team by Jan. 31.
- MyHealth.Alberta.ca:** A central banner with the text 'New home page design, same trusted information' and a '>> More' link.
- Important Updates:** A list of updates including 'Medical Assistance in Diving', 'Clinical Information System (CIS)', 'Compensation Disclosure', 'ELT Notables', 'Fontana / Nakwone', 'South East Lab Expansion', 'Operational Best Practice', 'Wildfire Resources', and 'Zika Virus Information'.
- Employee & Physician Tools:** A list of tools including 'General', 'Medical Staff', 'Managers', 'New Employees', 'Learning', 'Logos / Templates', 'Policies / Forms', 'Emergency Preparedness', and 'Safety & Reporting'.
- Contact Centre:** A list of contact options including 'Staff Directory / Edit Your Info', 'On-Call / ROCC', 'Organisation Chart', 'IT Service Desk', and 'HR Contact Centre'.
- Quick Links:** A list of quick links including 'Health Plan & Business Plan', 'Emergency Wait Times / BEPAC', 'Foundations & Trusts', and 'Locate Intranet Environment'.
- We Are AHS:** A section with the text 'Each day of 2016, We Are AHS introduced you to the people and stories behind your healthcare system. We are adventurers, animal lovers, sports enthusiasts, artists and mentors. We are family and friends. Most of all, we are passionate about helping others. We Are AHS. We love what we do because of you. (more)' and a 'View Archive | View Video' link.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW AND WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

By Dewey Funk
UNA Occupational Health
& Safety Advisor

What if I'm new to MySafetyNet or having problems?

Once you log in to MSN, there is an icon on the right hand side of the page that takes you to a demonstration of how to report. If you have still difficulty processing your report, you can ask your manager for assistance. If your manager isn't available or can't help, call your AHS WHS Advisor for assistance.



When should I report?

It is recommended you report the concern on the shift the concern took place or as soon as possible afterward. There is no time limit to report an incident. There is no 72-hour limit, and the employer is not fined if you do not report within a time line.

Reporting incidents of harassment

Harassment can be reported on MSN. The preferred method of reporting harassment or abuse is by using Document 1115, Workplace Violence: Prevention and Response. I always recommend a formal complaint in cases of harassment or abuse. If you use MSN, remember that the option (No. 6) for reporting co-worker related incidents of aggression, harassment or violence is sent for investigation to Human Resources, not Workplace Health and Safety. It also bypasses your manager in case they are the person you are reporting – so if you are not making a report against your manager, it is

important to ensure you follow-up with your manager directly as well as making the report on the MSN. Should you have concerns about this, contact Human Resources. If you lodge a harassment or abuse concern, it is strongly recommended you also contact your UNA Labour Relations Officer.

What are my employer's obligations to investigate and report back?

The employer must investigate and report back to you regarding the incident you report. If you do not receive follow-up, ask your supervisor. The employer will not always be able to resolve the concern to your satisfaction, but you have options available to you for further discussions. You can contact your OH&S Committee member to bring the concern to the OH&S Committee. You can contact me or your UNA LRO.

What if my supervisor discourages reporting incidents?

If you are told a concern has been reported already, you need to report the concern anyway. The more reports there are on a concern, the higher the level of attention it is likely to get. Should you be discouraged from reporting OH&S concerns, you should report them to me, your local's union representative, your LRO or your AHS WHS advisor. Only when concerns are reported will investigations take place to lead to resolutions.

Is there anything I should not report on MSN?

If an incident involves patient safety, report it in the Reporting and Learning System (RLS), not on MySafetyNet. 🍷



On April 28

By Dewey Funk
UNA Occupational Health
& Safety Advisor

UNA members can take pride in their contribution to making workplaces safer

- The International Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job is fast approaching. On April 28, UNA members can take pride in their contribution since last year to making their workplaces safer.

As a result of your Occupational Health and Safety Committee's use of the workplace incident resolution process at Alberta Health Services, the CEO designate, Brenda Huband, proposed a resolution that has resulted in creation of a joint union-management committee to prevent workplace violence.

The goal of the Prevention of Violence Committee is to review policies and procedures to make the AHS workplaces safer, and to provide support to workers who suffer traumatic injuries.

The committee struck four working groups that will report back on the following issues:

Incident Reporting – this group will review how incidents were reported, where they were reported, how the facts were recorded, and how to change the culture of reporting incidents.

People Supports – this subcommittee is looking at what supports are available, what's needed, and how the supports individuals needing support are informed, including developing a one-page pamphlet to allow one-stop shopping for resources.

Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVC) training – this working group is examining training issues, such as identifying which jobs require NVC training, training delivery, required training levels, and recertification intervals. AHS Protective Services has hired eight full-time trainers to provide NVC instruction.

Violence Alerts – this subcommittee is considering the appearance and placement of alerts under the Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Policy, as well as record keeping, appropriate behaviour labelling, the process and timeframe for removal of alerts, patient rights, FOIP and privacy rights. A pilot project for visual violence alerts is planned this spring.

UNA members Donna Bitz, Elaine Beirberbach, Diane Lantz, Lisa Hein and Jennifer Ward are participating in the working groups. I want to thank them for the time commitment, knowledge and dedication to working through this process.

Extensive resources have been invested into these working groups, which will present recommendations to the Executive Committee for review and implementation.

The goal is to implement change-management strategies to transform UNA workplaces from a culture in which violence is considered part of the job to one where it is considered unacceptable,

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

all incidents are reported, health care workers are trained to deal with physical aggression, and physiological supports are accessible to victims of workplace violence.

This will mean healthier and safer workplaces.

On April 28, 2017, UNA will light a candle to remember workers who have died or been injured on the job. The Day of Mourning is a time to reflect on your own workplace, think about what's safe and what's not, how to change things for the better, and to commit yourself to reporting incidents so that change is possible.

Take a moment on April 28 to remember that workers around the world deserve safe and healthy workplaces. *You are worth it!* 🍷



Lower influenza vaccination numbers spark renewed calls for mandatory flu shots

■ The lab-confirmed influenza death toll had reached 50 in Alberta by mid-March, Alberta Health Services statistics indicate.

Data released March 16 showed there had been 16 flu deaths in Edmonton and six in the north zone. The number of deaths in the south, Calgary and central zones remained the same since March 2 at seven, 14 and seven, respectively.

By March 16, more than 1,300 Albertans had been admitted to hospital with influenza in the 2016-17 season.

AHS statistics also showed close to 1.2 million doses of vaccine had been administered since October 2016, a slight increase over the

previous year's total in the same time frame.

However, statistics published earlier in the year showed only half of AHS's employees had been vaccinated against the disease, down marginally from 52 per cent the year before, leading to renewed agitation in media for front-line health care workers to be required as a condition of work to have the shot.

"Mandatory vaccination is pretty much the only way we're going to move the dial," senior AHS Medical Officer of Health Gerry Predy told a sympathetic Edmonton journalist in mid-January. The writer claimed in a

column that "flu-shot cheerleading just isn't working."

"We need all health-care workers to make the responsible choice and get vaccinated," Health Minister Sarah Hoffman said in a statement. "When this season is over, we will sit down and find out where the final numbers landed and go from there."

United Nurses of Alberta encourages its members to receive their annual influenza immunizations.

Workers in health care settings have a special role in the fight against influenza, as they are capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk. Immunization is the best defense against influenza. 🍷

ELEVEN STUDENTS AWARDED

UNA Nursing Education Scholarships

■ United Nurses of Alberta is proud to have awarded education scholarships of \$1,000 to 10 nursing students from approved nursing programs at post-secondary institutions across Alberta.

The annual UNA Nursing Education Scholarships are awarded to assist nursing students in their first year of studies. In 2017, UNA also awarded one \$1,000 scholarship sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

Applicants must be related to a UNA member in good standing, complete an application form and write a short essay. Applications for UNA's 2018 Nursing Education Scholarship will be accepted until Oct. 15, 2017. Application forms are available online. 🍷

**Applications for
UNA's 2018 Nursing
Education Scholarship
will be accepted until
Oct. 15, 2017**



UNA Local 121 Vice-President YooRee Keller, Local 121 member Heather Breadner, scholarship recipient Ashley Breadner, and UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace.



UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace, President Heather Smith, scholarship recipient Alissa Lim, and UNA Local 33 member Sooi Chan Too.



UNA Local 34 member Lynn Martens, scholarship recipient Madison Martens, and UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace.



UNA Local 211 member Michelle Cuncannon, scholarship recipient Alexander Cuncannon, and UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik.



UNA Local 415 member Penny Nickle, scholarship recipient Erin Nickle, and UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik.



UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik, scholarship recipient Gregory Cunningham, and UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace.



UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik, scholarship recipient Manvir Parmar, UNA Local 115 member Kuljit Parmar and UNA Local 115 secretary Wayne Stopa.



UNA First Vice-President Jane Sustrik, President Heather Smith, scholarship recipient Brooke Kirkpatrick, Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik and UNA Local 301 member Laura Kirkpatrick.



UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik, scholarship recipient Noah Bloomfield, and UNA Local 1 member Mandy Bloomfield.



UNA Local 301 member Tracy-Ann Miller-Chin, scholarship recipient Sadie-Ann Campbell, and UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace.



United Nurses of Alberta Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace, UNA Local 84 member Maryann Shopa, CFNU scholarship recipient Sydney Shopa, UNA President Heather Smith and UNA First Vice-President Jane Sustrik.

UNA Education Scholarship recipients

Noah Bloomfield

(University of Calgary)
Sponsor: Mandy Bloomfield, UNA
Local 1 Peter Lougheed Centre

Ashley Breadner

(Mount Royal University)
Sponsor: Heather Breadner, Local
121 Rockyview General Hospital

Sadie-Ann Campbell

(MacEwan University)
Sponsor: Tracy-Ann Miller-Chin,
UNA Local 301 University of Alberta Hospital

Alexander Cuncannon

(Mount Royal University)
Sponsor: Michelle Cuncannon,
UNA Local 211 Calgary Community

Gregory Cunningham

(Mount Royal University)
Sponsor: Connie Cunningham,
UNA Local 415 South Health Campus

Brooke Kirkpatrick

(Red Deer College)
Sponsor: Laura Kirkpatrick,
UNA Local 301 University of Alberta Hospital

Alissa Lim

(MacEwan University)
Sponsor: Sooi Chan Too,
UNA Local 33 Royal Alexandra Hospital

Madison Martens

(University of Lethbridge)
Sponsor: Carol Martens,
UNA Local 34 Didsbury District Health
Services/Didsbury Community

Erin Nickle

(Mount Royal University)
Sponsor: Penny Nickle,
UNA Local 415 South Health Campus

Manvir Parmar

(University of Calgary)
Sponsor: Kuljit Parmar,
UNA Local 115 Foothills Medical Centre

CFNU Scholarship recipient

Sydney Shopa

(University of Alberta)
Sponsor: Maryann Shopa,
UNA Local 84 Hinton Healthcare
Centre/Hinton Community



Canada's Nurses denounce \$62 billion wasted because Canada has no national prescription drug plan

By Emily Doer,
CFNU Communications

■ Canada's Parliamentarians and other health care stakeholders heard how our country has wasted \$62 billion over a decade by not having a national prescription drug plan during an event sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

CFNU President Linda Silas used the Feb. 7 breakfast attended by a full house in the Parliamentary Restaurant to present a report entitled *Down the Drain: How Canada Has Wasted \$62 Billion Health Care Dollars without Pharmacare* by economist Hugh Mackenzie.

"We believe that the very substantial waste numbers outlined in this paper represent real resources which could assist with the increasing cost of acute care, support our aging population with more home care and community care, add more front-line workers, free resources for mental health, and contribute to a needed focus on Indigenous health," Silas told the MPs, Senators, nurse union presidents and members of the Standing Committee on Health who came for breakfast. These savings, she noted, could have paid for "better overall health care outcomes for patients."

The breakfast featured a panel with Mackenzie, Peter MacLeod, Chair of the Citizens' Reference Panel on Pharmacare in Canada, and Edson Castilho, a nurse who works at IWK Health Centre's allergy clinic in Halifax.

By being the only major economy without a national Pharmacare plan, Mackenzie said, Canada wastes more than \$20 million every day – \$14,000 a minute! That has added up to \$62.3

billion from 2006 to 2015, he added, losses that continue to pile up. "A new program ... would deliver better outcomes at substantially lower costs."

He called on federal Health Minister Jane Philpott to immediately convene a panel of experts to determine the next steps to create a national Canadian prescription drug plan.

MacLeod noted that the 35-member panel of randomly selected Canadians he chairs met in Ottawa for five days last year and concluded Canadians believe now is the time to pursue significant drug coverage reforms through a universal, accountable, evidence-based, sustainable and patient-centred Pharmacare system.

The third panel member, Halifax Registered Nurse Edson Castilho, told how he sees front-line impacts every day because of the cost to patients of prescriptions.

He told the story of a child at the allergy clinic whose mother couldn't afford the \$72 cost of a puffer. Without a \$72 investment that would have lasted four months, the child had to be admitted to hospital for two days. CIHI statistics suggest that cost taxpayers \$2,420 – enough to provide the youngster with medication for 11 years!

Clearly, Silas summed up, we don't need more studies or debate. We need action. "We literally cannot afford to waste another minute," she stated.

The time for a national Pharmacare plan is now. 🇨🇦

The time for a
national Pharmacare
plan is now.

U of A Hospital Class of '92 nurses plan October reunion

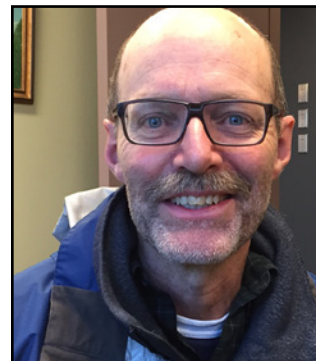
Members of the Class of 1992 of the University of Alberta Hospital's Nursing Program are looking for classmates to take part in a 25th year anniversary celebration on Oct. 21.

That may not be an easy task, said one of the organizers, Local 168 Vice-President Gord McLeod, since health care cuts implemented by premier Ralph Klein's Conservative government "laid waste" to the Class of April '92.

"About half of the class headed south within a year of graduation," he recalled, which was perhaps not the best way

to honour the members of the U of A Hospital's 100th diploma program graduating class.

The time and location of the reunion will be announced soon, said McLeod, who is also a member of Local 32. 🍷



Gord McLeod

For more information, help locate missing class members, or to let the organizers know you plan to attend, contact

Gord McLeod at g.mcleod.11@hotmail.com

Kimberly Newnham at todd.kim@shaw.ca or

Maria Klar (Gerritsen) at maria@rassociates.ca.

UNA's LGBTQ2SIA Caucus welcomes members, supporters

United Nurses of Alberta's three-year-old LGBTQ2SIA Caucus plans to embark on a mission of inclusiveness, advocacy and education within our union this year.

Caucus members see their role as providing a safe space within UNA for those who identify as LGBTQ2SIA to have an open dialogue about issues and challenges they may face as a sometimes marginalized and often invisible minority.

The goal of these education and advocacy efforts is to empower and engage members into human rights activism, acknowledge and discuss LGBTQ2SIA perspectives within UNA, and reinforce the meaning and intent of union solidarity among all members.

Caucus members plan to show their support for UNA and greater LGBTQ2SIA

communities by participating in Pride celebrations in towns and cities throughout Alberta this year, including Edmonton, Calgary and Jasper.

The LGBTQ2SIA caucus welcomes support and input from its allies in the union and the community at its caucus meetings. Interested UNA members are encouraged to attend caucus meetings at provincial gatherings or contact the group at LGBTQ2S@una.ab.ca.

The initials LGBTQ2SIA lists the various members of the community, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, 2-spirited, Intersexual and Asexual persons, and is inclusive of Allies, people not identifying as members but supportive of the community. 🍷

Caucus members see their role as providing a safe space within UNA for those who identify as LGBTQ2SIA

UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace, left, accompanied by UNA Local 196 Second VP Ruth Alexander, right, received the Robinson Koilpillai Multiculturalism Award from Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation VP Beryl Scott, centre, during the group's annual Harmony Brunch Sunday, March 19, in Edmonton.



United Nurses of Alberta honoured with multiculturalism award

■ United Nurses of Alberta was honoured with a 2017 Robinson Koilpillai Multiculturalism Award by the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation at its annual Harmony Brunch in Edmonton on March 19.

UNA Second Vice-President Daphne Wallace was on hand to receive the award for the union's support of its broadly diverse membership and its contributions to humanitarian missions throughout the world through financial grants to members who provide volunteer medical support abroad.

The organizers also noted UNA's view that access to Canada's and Alberta's publicly funded, publicly operated health care system is an essential right of all Canadian residents regardless of their citizenship or immigration status.

"Many people in the province of Alberta are unaware of the important work that UNA does for the protection of human rights and the promotion of multicultural

values," CMEF said. The award was presented by CMEF Vice-President and Harmony Brunch Chair Beryl Scott, a former UNA member and activist who retired in 2011.

The award is named for Robinson Koilpillai, teacher, vice-principal and principal with the Edmonton Public School Board, who devoted his life to building bridges among people and cultures. Koilpillai, who was born in Prakasapuram, India, died last year at 92.

UNA represents more than 30,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and allied health care workers in Alberta. CMEF is an Edmonton-based, non-profit volunteer society engaged in public education and community development. Through its projects and partnerships, CMEF advocates for a wide range of multicultural values and promotes awareness of the opportunities and benefits of Canada's evolving multicultural society. 🇨🇦

PRC process results in improved safety at Coaldale Health Centre



■ The Professional Responsibility Concern process included in United Nurses of Alberta's Provincial Agreement has shut the door on a dangerous nighttime work environment at the Southern Alberta's Coaldale Health Centre – literally!

Members of UNA Local 131 used the PRC process last year to address safety concerns including aggressive visitors, dim lighting in the parking lot, a security monitoring system that did not cover all entrances to the building, and a sliding glass main door that was too easy to open at night when they were supposed to be locked.

PRC Forms filed by local members in 2016 resulted in upgrades to the security system, but the problem with the front doors continued. Now, however, thanks to the PRC process, that concern has been addressed too.

Local members report that new, more secure doors were installed in January and are working well.

Local 131's past PRC efforts also resulted in restoration of CPR training for Health Care Aides, reinstatement of Charge Pay and an updated roles and responsibilities document for Charge Nurses.

After a long process in 2014, a senior Alberta Health Services manager informed the local that all HCAs would again receive CPR training, not just those who worked at night as the staff float. This change took effect in 2015.

In addition, when Charge Nurse Pay was eliminated on day shifts in 2015, the local met with management to discuss and create a Charge Nurse duty list. As a result, in the fall of 2015, the listed duties were approved and Charge Pay was reinstated. 🍷

Members of UNA Local 131 used the PRC process last year to address safety concerns.

Applications welcome for two Calgary and District Labour Council scholarships

■ Two \$1,500 scholarships applicable for education or training at any recognized educational institution in Alberta will be awarded by the Calgary and District Labour Council.

Members for at least one year of CDLC affiliate locals in good standing, their spouses or

dependents, are eligible to be considered for the scholarships.

Applicants must submit a short essay – maximum, 2,500 words – on one of the following topics:

- What unions mean to me
- History of the labour movement in Alberta

▪ Future of the labour movement in Alberta

An application form and the full terms of reference can be downloaded at cdlc.ca and clicking on the "Education" tab. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2017. 🍷

Arbitration ruling on **'OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES'** should not disrupt UNA members' lives

■ In late January, United Nurses of Alberta and Alberta Health Services issued a plan for the implementation of an arbitration decision resulting from a UNA grievance contesting AHS's decision to change the length of the shift cycle for Registered Nurses.

But no nurse needs to feel inconvenienced by this situation. If you adjusted your lives to cope with the changes improperly imposed by AHS, you shouldn't have to adjust it again. Under the terms of the arbitrator's ruling, nurses can return to their old shift cycle before AHS tried to implement its "scheduling optimization" scheme, or they can remain with the new shift cycle.

If there are disruptions in the workplace as a result, as is proper under the circumstances, it is the employer's responsibility to resolve such problems.

UNA members can be confident UNA's success at arbitration is intended to provide a win-win solution that allows each impacted member the ability to arrange a shift cycle most likely to suit her life and work.

Since any worksite organization problems were caused by the employer's rescheduling, they are the responsibility of the employer to resolve.

Unfortunately, from UNA's perspective allowing such a situation to continue unchallenged could have resulted in more severe problems for more employees in future.

If you are dissatisfied with the resulting situation in your workplace, or if you are feeling pressured to make additional changes you do not want to make, there is a process for ensuring every UNA member maintains or returns to a satisfactory shift schedule. UNA will do everything in its power to ensure you arrive at work arrangements that suit their current situation. 🍷



UNA President Heather Smith speaks with local media about Operational Best Practices.

The decision was an important victory for UNA in that it made it clear to all employers of UNA members that it must abide by the terms of collective agreements they sign with their unions.

AHS had violated the agreement by arbitrarily changing Registered Nurses' schedules under what they termed an Operational Best Practices program. While the employer's original changes were unpopular with members, some members have also been concerned that the arbitration decision might disrupt their lives again.

UNA has received reports of employer representatives at some worksites pressing UNA members to change their schedules again, and blaming the union for the potential inconvenience.

Beginning EI MATERNITY LEAVE

on baby's delivery date means employees can receive full 50 weeks of benefits

- Pregnant employees covered by the Provincial Collective Agreement who need to leave work before their expected delivery date for health reasons are able to use sick leave benefits, or short-term or long-term disability insurance, to replace their income.

Articles 22.04 and 22.05 of the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement address maternity and paternity/adoption leave. Employees not covered by the Provincial Agreement should refer to the contracts between UNA and their employers.

Beginning Employment Insurance maternity leave on the baby's delivery date means employees can receive the full 50 weeks of benefits after delivery. The normal health-related absence usually begins four weeks before delivery, with a doctor's note, but can be longer if there are pregnancy-related medical reasons.

It's important to apply for EI leave benefits from the date of delivery. The two-week waiting period for EI Benefits will be waived on request and, as a result, you should have no break in income.

Top up benefits to 95 per cent of income

Employees should also benefit from the Supplementary Unemployment Benefit (SUB) Plan, which covers the valid health-related absence portion of the leave and tops up the 55 per cent of average weekly earnings EI provides.


If an employee has eight weeks of sick leave in their bank after delivery, the

SUB should top up EI benefits to 95 per cent of average weekly earnings for six weeks. The six-week period can be extended if medically indicated by a doctor's note. The SUB Plan lets employees with less sick leave in their bank top up EI benefits to 66.6 per cent of average weekly earnings.

Maternity and Parental EI leave now up to 50 weeks

Combined EI benefits of up to 50 weeks are available for parents. A maximum of 15 weeks of maternity benefits are payable only to the biological mother in a period before and following the baby's birth. A maximum 35 weeks of parental benefits are payable to both biological and adoptive parents. Parental leave can be divided between parents (if each is eligible for EI) as they choose. Under UNA collective agreements, employees may take 12 months' leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

When to start maternity leave

Employees have choices about when to start maternity leave, though employees need to determine when they want to use leave time. Sick leave may be used before the delivery while keeping all or most of the 12 months leave for after the baby is born. Employees must give their employer two weeks written notice of when they will start maternity leave. It is often best to list the expected date of delivery as the start date. 



Know *your* Rights

Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

The normal health-related absence usually begins four weeks before delivery, with a doctor's note, but it can be longer if there are medical pregnancy-related reasons.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your UNA local executive or Labour Relations Officer at 1-800-252-9394.

