

News Bulletin

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2020 bargaining commences amid government interference

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Changes to public sector pensions prompt sharp union response

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DON'T BE FOOLED!

If we stick together, there's no limit to what we can achieve

■ **THERE'S** a piece of folk wisdom that says, *"Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me!"*

In 2020, along with most other Alberta public employees, members of United Nurses of Alberta face serious challenges to continue to do the things our union exists to do — protecting members in every part of Alberta and advancing the goals of the Nursing Profession.

In the final weeks of 2019 we received warnings the provincial government intends arbitrarily to *roll back our* wages by 3 per cent, in a way that makes a mockery of the collective bargaining process. Government leaders are also said to be eyeing our pension funds, which only celebrated "Independence Day" in 2019 after decades of unkept promises.

For those of us who have been around for a long time, this all sounds very familiar.

In the mid-1990s, the Klein Conservatives tried many of the same things — using public sector workers as scapegoats for their own bad management over many years of the province's finances, talking about the same bad ideas we are hearing again today, like privatization of public health care, weakening unions, U.S.-style labour laws, and rolling back *your* pay.

Many claims were made — the province was broke, nurses were paid

too much, there was no alternative to rollbacks, and so on. Many of us were fooled. But they turned out not to be true.

Big promises were made too — if public employees would agree to take rollbacks, there would be no layoffs. Thousands were laid off anyway.

Thousands of nurses left Alberta for careers in other provinces. Alberta's health care system was thrown into chaos for a generation. The lingering effects of those years are still being felt.

Now we're hearing the same scare stories, the same threats, and the same promises.

Albertans and Canadians have always known the work done by nurses matters. In 2020 we all have a responsibility to remind them of why it matters so much.

I thank every one of you for your contribution to the vital work we do together for each other, our profession, public health care, our patients, clients, residents and all Albertans. It is more important than ever before in 2020 that we stand together in this work.

You'll need to stay informed — please regularly check our website, una.ca, our social media accounts, and what your Local Executive has to say.

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: UNA Members participate in the November 20 rally in defence of public-sector pension rights.

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At least 750 front line RNs and RPNs to be laid off, AHS says

■ **HUNDREDS** of front-line Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses will lose their jobs in massive downsizing planned by Alberta Health Services, the public health care agency's lead negotiator informed United Nurses of Alberta on November 29.

In a meeting with UNA's senior leadership called unexpectedly immediately before NewsBulletin's deadline, AHS Lead Negotiator Raelene Fitz said the plans to eliminate an "estimated" 500 full-time equivalent RN and RPN jobs over the next three years were being disclosed in advance of bargaining for UNA's 2020 Provincial Collective Agreement so that the union would have time to absorb the information and respond accordingly.

The elimination of that many RN and RPN FTEs, equivalent to over a million fewer hours of care, will mean more than 750 front-line Registered Nurses will be laid off, UNA President Heather Smith said.

"From the tone of what we were told, we believe this is only the first wave of layoffs affecting RNs represented by UNA," Smith said. AHS officials also met bargaining representatives from other health care unions with similar messages the same day.

"There are also clear indications that AHS plans to shift many of the costs of health care onto Albertans who require treatment," Smith said.

"Premier Jason Kenney and other members of the United Conservative Party promised repeatedly during last spring's election campaigns that the cuts they planned would not touch front-line health care workers," she said. "We do not



believe Albertans will support this plan, and they should tell the premier so."

At press time for UNA NewsBulletin, the union was seeking an immediate emergency meeting with Health Minister Tyler Shandro.

The AHS announcement also made it clear there will be significant privatization of public health care services.

"AHS will continue to consider all options available to meet our organizational needs including changes to staff mix, service design including changes and repurposing of sites, relocating services, reducing or ceasing the provision of services," Fitz said in a letter addressed to UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan.

The letter also said AHS is considering "reconfiguring services provided at some smaller sites." A copy of the letter is available on UNA's website, una.ca.

Smith said UNA has prepared a list of specific questions for AHS to follow up on the letter and meeting. 🇺🇦

UNA's Executive Officers and Provincial Board Members were at the Legislature on Dec. 2 to support calls by Opposition Leader Rachel Notley and health critic David Shepherd for an emergency debate in the Assembly about the AHS decision to eliminate 750 Registered Nurse and Registered Psychiatric Nurse positions in Alberta.

ADDRESSING 800 NURSES ON STEPS OF THE ALBERTA LEGISLATURE, HEATHER SMITH ASSAILS UCP CHANGES TO PUBLIC-SECTOR PENSIONS

For details of the UCP Government's planned pension changes, see 'UCP introduces troubling changes to Alberta labour laws' on Page 6.

UNA President Heather Smith addresses the November 20 rally in defence of public sector pensions from the steps of the Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton



■ **MORE** than 800 United Nurses of Alberta members took a two-hour break from their important Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton on November 20 to gather at the Alberta Legislature and express their unhappiness with the United Conservative Party Government's health care cuts, attacks on collective bargaining rights, and in particular its plans to meddle with public employees' pensions.

Flanked by leaders of all major Alberta public sector unions and the Alberta Federation of Labour, UNA President Heather Smith reminded the noisy crowd that it was only a year ago to the day that Alberta's public-sector pension plans learned from the former NDP government they would receive independent governance, a promise that became law the following March 1.

"The integrity of our pension plans became something we didn't have to

worry about again," she said. "Today, here we are, standing in the cold outside the same building as the UCP government tries to renege on that decision and break that promise."

"We are back fighting for our retirement security as the government tries to put politics back into the decision-making process, and it's not just the LAPP that we are fighting for," she said. "The Kenney Government has also indicated it wants to remove Alberta from the Canada Pension Plan, the pension every working Albertan can pay into."

"I remind people with respect to CPP, Jason Kenney was part of the Harper Government that wanted and did raise the CPP retirement age from 65 67" — a policy reversed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals after their election in 2015.

"Today we are back fighting for our retirement security..."

—Heather Smith

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BARGAINING UPDATE:

UNA enters 2020 bargaining round conducting two sets of negotiations with the same employer group

NEGS 2020



President Heather Smith gives her report to the November 19-21 Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton. Below: Labour Relations Director David Harrigan gives his bargaining report.



ABOUT 700 United Nurses of Alberta local bargaining representatives and observers completed their Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton on November 21 — preparing for the 2020 round of collective bargaining for a Provincial Collective Agreement in a state of chaos caused by the provincial government’s interference with the bargaining process.

“We’re here to determine what will be in our next collective agreement,” said UNA Labour relations manager David Harrigan at the opening of the three-day

meeting, “a task that is made more difficult because we don’t know what’s in our current collective agreement!”

He was referring to moves by the Kenney Government that included legislation blocking contractually required arbitration of the 2019 wage reopener that was supposed to take place in June and changes in bargaining positions made by the employer after receiving orders from the government. That situation was still not resolved when the Demand Setting Meeting ended.

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UCP INTRODUCES TROUBLING CHANGES TO ALBERTA LABOUR LAWS

■ **IN** October and November, the United Conservative Party introduced three omnibus bills with troubling implications for working people, especially members of Alberta's public sector unions.

On October 28, Finance Minister Travis Toews introduced Bill 21, the *Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability Act, 2019*. Buried in its many provisions was a new law called the *Public Sector Employers Act* that would allow the government to give secret mandatory orders to employers during negotiations related to any term of the collective agreement.

Bill 21 also included a provision to lift the previous NDP Government's ban on the use of replacement workers during strikes (to which the Supreme Court has ruled workers have a right to resort) where an essential services agreement is in place. This would allow the government to hire replacement workers at the same time as it used essential service rules to force some workers back to their jobs.

As UNA NewsBulletin's went to press, neither Bill 21 nor its companion act, Bill

20, the *Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2019*, had yet been passed by the Legislature. However, with a UCP majority in the Legislature, passage is certain.

On November 18, Premier Jason Kenney's government introduced Bill 22, the *Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, 2019*, which essentially ends the independent joint governance granted to Alberta's public sector pensions by the NDP government last year after 30 years of unfulfilled promise by Conservative governments. The bill also requires management of the \$60-billion pool of money to be managed by the Alberta Investment Management Corp., commonly known as AIMCo.

Independent governance prevented the government now or in the future from helping itself to any of the close to \$60 billion in assets of the various Alberta public sector pension plans, or requiring AIMCo to invest in risky politically motivated schemes, which other legislation allows it to do.

UNA members, including President Heather Smith, have been taking part in information pickets throughout Alberta.

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A hearing into a UNA bargaining in bad faith complaint filed against Alberta Health Services for its changing bargaining positions was held by the Alberta Labour Relations Board on November 22.

On November 26 the LRB released a ruling stating that while the board had jurisdiction to address UNA's complaint, in the context of the application, AHS did not breach section 60(3) of the Code by changing its position in the wage reopener arbitration. The LRB did not release the reasons for its ruling, which will be issued at a later date.

In the weeks before the Demand Setting Meeting, the Kenney Government made it clear it was prepared to use heavy handed legislation to break the terms of existing collective agreements with public sector unions, impose settlements in violation to union members' constitutionally guaranteed collective bargaining rights, and impose wage rollbacks on most public sector workers.

The Provincial Collective Agreement, which expires on March 31, 2020, applies to UNA members employed by Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre and The Bethany Group (Camrose), making up the majority of the union's membership.

As a result of this unusual situation, two rounds of negotiations with UNA are

now underway at the same time. On the employer side, the government is pulling the strings, although it maintains the fiction UNA and other health care unions are negotiating with an arm's length employer.

Rollbacks demanded by the government are different for each of the province's major health-care unions — a 3-per-cent pay cut for UNA members compared with 2 per cent for health care members of AUPE and 5 per cent for members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. The government has never explained its logic for these differences.

2019 Wage Reopener Bargaining

Negotiations in the 2019 wage reopener included in the 2017-2020 Provincial Collective Agreement got under way last spring.

Under the terms of the 2017-2020 contract, if an agreement couldn't be reached in bargaining by March 31, either party could request binding arbitration to resolve the wage adjustment. Arbitration had to take place before June 30.

On March 31, the parties met and arbitration was set for May 13-14.

That's when things began to get complicated.



At left: UNA Member addresses the Demand Setting Meeting.

Above: LROs Tricia Gibbs and Joe Ahrens provide an update on essential services bargaining.



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In June, the Alberta government passed Bill 9, the *Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act*, which was intended to stall arbitration with public sector unions until after the report of the so-called Blue-Ribbon Panel on Alberta's finances headed by former Saskatchewan finance minister Janice MacKinnon. The panel was ordered not to consider revenue increases as part of its strategy for addressing Alberta's fiscal situation.

In July, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, with UNA acting as an intervenor in the case, sought and received an injunction that briefly prevented the government from proceeding with its plan.

Later that month, the Alberta Court of Appeal overturned the injunction, and Bill 9 came into effect, halting all arbitrations until after October.

By then, the government had introduced omnibus budget legislation allowing it to dictate secret instructions to public sector employers to “negotiate” collective

agreements on any terms the government demands.

Nevertheless, on October 29, the government announced in a press release that there would be “an updated monetary mandate” that “moves from the previous position of no increase for 2019 to an average 2-per-cent reduction for collective agreements that include a 2019 wage reopener.” (This was adjusted to 3 per cent for UNA members.)

UNA and other unions have filed various appeals to the courts and the Alberta Labour Relations Board.

Arbitration with UNA is now scheduled to commence on December 4 and 5.

So, the wage-reopener negotiation remains unresolved — which explains why UNA negotiators don't technically know what's in their own agreement as 2020 negotiations commence.

2020 Provincial Collective Agreement Bargaining

Meanwhile, bargaining for the 2020 Provincial Collective Agreement got under way with the Demand Setting Meeting on November 19 to 21.

All UNA members will receive a confidential report from the Demand Setting Meeting in early January explaining the union's 2020 bargaining proposal in detail. All locals, and all individuals, will then have the opportunity to vote on January 8, 2020 to accept or reject the detained bargaining proposal.

If you are a Registered Nurse or Registered Psychiatric Nurse employed by Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre and The Bethany Group (Camrose), you should look for this package and let UNA know if you do not receive a copy. 🍷

A complete timeline is included with this story on pages 12-13

UNA will be vigorous and determined in defence of members' free speech and collective bargaining rights: HEATHER SMITH

■ **ALBERTA** unions including United Nurses of Alberta were informed on November 22 of a “labour relations consultation” meeting the following Saturday by Shawn McLeod, the deputy minister of labour and immigration.

The purpose of the proposed meeting was to discuss legislation intended to “protect workers from being forced to fund political parties and causes,” McLeod’s email said.

The government is holding meetings “with a number of parties” to discuss its campaign promise “to bring back balance to labour legislation,” McLeod said in the email.

United Nurses of Alberta declined to participate in the meeting, due to the short notice and lack of a discussion document outlining the questions the government wishes UNA’s representatives to address, what the government’s proposed policy changes will be, its goals, and a framework of how the government proposes to accomplish them.

It was not immediately clear why the Alberta Government scheduled a short “consultation” on the weekend during which the United Conservative Party was holding its annual general meeting in Calgary.

More scenes from the November 20 pension rally at the Alberta Legislature Building.

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There may be more to come, and nurses need to be prepared to push back to protect their pensions — and write politicians to tell them how unhappy about this they are.

Since the independence promise was kept for only eight months, LAPP pensions are less safe than they were during the time the plan was fully independent, nevertheless, it is currently safe, said UNA Pension Advisor Richard West. “LAPP currently has \$49 billion in assets, more than enough to pay the current pension commitments made to all members.”

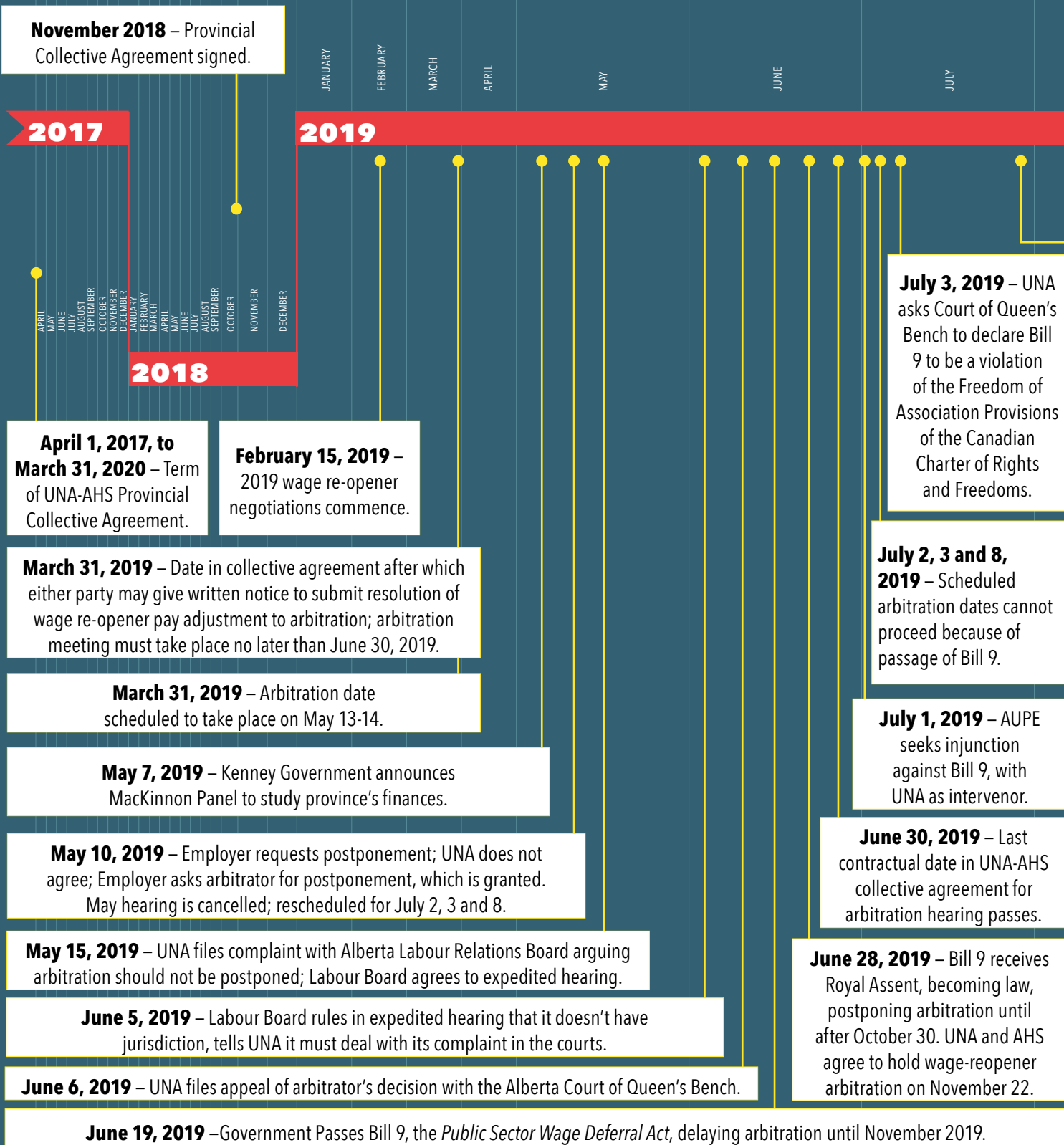
However, he warned, “the legislation now enables the government to interfere

in the plan in the future. Controlling the board of directors could result in manipulation of future board members, and having no choice in selecting service providers undermines their relationship and accountability to the LAPP boards.”

The 800 nurses at the November 20 rally also heard remarks by AFL President Gil McGowan, Opposition Leader Rachel Notley, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees President Guy Smith, Health Sciences Association of Alberta President Mike Parker, Canadian Union of Public Employees Alberta President Rory Gill and Alberta Teachers’ Association Past President Greg Jeffrey. 🇨🇦



TIMELINE: United Nurses of Alberta 2020 BARGAINING ROUND



AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

March 31, 2020 – Provincial Collective Agreement expires, along with the agreement of job security for UNA members in the 2017 agreement.

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

2020

October 28, 2019 –

Government introduces omnibus budget legislation that would let it give secret mandatory orders related to any term of the collective agreement to employers during negotiations.

September 6, 2019 – Alberta Court of Appeal overturns AUPE's injunction, allowing Bill 9 to be implemented.

September 3, 2019 – Recommendations of "Blue Ribbon Panel" led by former Saskatchewan finance minister Janice MacKinnon are made public.

July 30, 2019 – Court of Queen's Bench justice grants injunction to AUPE, preventing implementation of Bill 9.

December 4-5, 2019 – Rescheduled Wage-Reopener Arbitration hearing.

November 22-23, 2019 – ALRB to hear UNA bargaining-in-bad-faith complaint.

November 19-21, 2019 – UNA Demand Setting meeting for 2020 bargaining.

October 31, 2019 – UNA files complaint asking Alberta Labour Relations Board to order AHS to bargain in good faith. Conference call with arbitrators results in cancellation of November 22-24 arbitration dates; wage reopen arbitration rescheduled for Dec. 4 and 5

October 29, 2019 – UNA is informed by AHS that the Government of Alberta has directed it to change its position in wage-reopener arbitration from a zero-per-cent wage freeze to a 3-per-cent rollback.



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“They want to silence us because they have given themselves through Bill 21 the ability to interfere in collective

bargaining, before we start, during bargaining, and even afterward,” President Heather Smith said.

“They don’t want us advocating about health care, pharmacare, safe staffing, or ending workplace violence,” she said. “We have already demonstrated that we will stand up for our members and for the public, and that is why they are in a hurry to silence us.”

“As is the case with all Albertan and Canadian unions, United Nurses of Alberta will be vigorous and determined in its defence of members’ fundamental rights to free speech and free association, including the right to bargain collectively,” she concluded. 🇺🇦

Bill 207, which could have restricted reproductive rights, suffers setback

■ **NURSES** represented by United Nurses of Alberta raised serious concerns in mid-November about Bill 207, the *Conscience Rights (Health Care Providers) Protection Act*, a private member’s bill that could have restricted women’s reproductive rights, LGBTQ2S+ community access to health care services, and Medical Assistance in Dying in Alberta.

The day after delegates at UNA’s Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton voted to send a letter to Health Minister Tyler Shandro objecting to the bill, it was dealt a setback on November 21 by the Legislature’s Private Members’ Bill Committee, which voted 8-2 vote to drop Peace River MLA Dan Williams’ controversial legislative proposal.

The tally included the votes of four UCP members, which strongly suggests the visceral public reaction against the bill, which was supported by the UCP’s large

anti-choice caucus, got through to many other government MLAs.

However, at press time, it remained possible the UCP Caucus in the Legislature could ignore the committee’s recommendation and bring back the bill.

UNA argued that since there are already powerful protections in place for the protection of health care providers’ conscience rights, Bill 207 was unnecessary and created the potential for interference with the rights of patients seeking approved medical services.

In addition to restating the existing *Charter* right of physicians and other medical practitioners not to provide services to which they had a conscience-based objection, Bill 207 would have allowed them to ignore policies that require them to provide full information and referrals to patients wanting a procedure. 🇺🇦

OPINION:

If you want to reduce nurses' overtime, hire more nurses

■ **WE** have a solution to the overtime problem that Postmedia columnist Danielle Smith lamented in her Calgary Herald column of Nov. 1: Hire more nurses.

Smith is not wrong that Alberta nurses working too much overtime can be a problem, but the solution to this is not to simply ban overtime, rather for Alberta Health Services to hire more Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses to provide the level of patient care Albertans depend on.

Yes, overtime is being paid, but it in no way reflects the amount of overtime that is actually being worked by Alberta nurses every single day. In fact, the United Nurses of Alberta has some of the highest rates of unpaid overtime in Canada.

According to a recent UNA survey of front-line nurses, 39 per cent said they work overtime on every shift and 69 per cent said they never claim overtime for the overtime they actually worked.

The large amount of overtime being paid out by AHS is a direct result of a decades-long nursing staffing shortage across the province. Part of the problem is that the employers will not post vacant positions, choosing instead to do “just-in-time staffing.”

Asking shift-workers like nurses to change their schedules on short-notice can create big challenges. This is especially the case for nurses with young families requiring childcare or those

caring for elderly parents or vulnerable family members.

The answer to the overtime problem is simple: fill vacancies and hire enough nursing staff.

UNA members have worked hard to help AHS and other health-care employers understand this problem.

This was demonstrated last year when UNA and AHS reached an agreement to resolve a critical nursing staffing shortage in the emergency department at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre that led to the creation of 11.7 full-time-equivalent RN positions.

Before that situation was resolved, RNs in the Red Deer emergency department worked more than 230 hours of overtime in one weekend alone. Increasing the number of RNs dramatically decreased the amount of overtime being worked without sacrificing safe patient care; indeed, it improved it.

Referring to documents produced by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Smith stated the maximum compensation for a Registered Nurse on an hourly basis is \$58.81. It is unclear to us where this number comes from. A quick look at the UNA provincial collective agreement will show an RN at the very top of the salary grid would earn \$49.34 per hour. This is a difference of about \$20,000 per year.

This opinion piece by UNA President Heather Smith appeared in the November 13 edition of the Calgary Herald, in response to a column by former Wildrose Party leader Danielle Smith in the same newspaper on November 1.

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Heather Smith on UCP's 2019 austerity budget: 'Nurses go forward, they do not go back'



UNA Members and supporters rallied at the Legislature on November 20.



UNA was deeply concerned but not surprised when Alberta's United Conservative Government put Registered Nurses right in the centre of its bull's eye in its October 24 austerity budget.

"Registered Nurses are the backbone of the health care system," President Heather Smith said in a public statement on the day the budget was introduced in the Legislature by Finance Minister Travis Toews. "We are still recovering from the attack on RNs in Alberta during the mid-1990s. It's outrageous and tragic that this government appears to want to repeat that mistake."

Clearly stating UNA's determination to fight hard to protect RNs and the vital work they do, Smith reminded Albertans the government promised repeatedly in the long lead-up to the budget it would not target front-line health care workers in its budget process.

Highlighting hard-won provisions of UNA's Provincial Collective Agreement as targets in the 2019-2023 Fiscal Plan shows the government was not sincere when it made these promises, Smith said.

She noted that these provisions were bargained over many years and the collective bargaining process is protected by Canada's Constitution.

The Fiscal Plan document cherry picks a number of articles in UNA's agreement that are superior to similar provisions in some other jurisdictions, she said. Among those provisions, unsurprisingly, was the hourly pay range for Registered Nurses, which reflects the reality that wages are high in all job categories in Alberta because of the historically higher costs and relatively high inflation rate in the province.

Smith said UNA is proud of its work negotiating fair collective agreements for its members that rightly reflect the economic realities of Alberta and its health care system. "I have said many times before, 'Nurses go forward, they do not go back.'"

The Fiscal Plan also identified RNs' contractually designated days of rest and overtime rates for budget action and stated that the recent expansion of Licensed Practical Nurses' scope of practice would allow long-term care operators to "lower

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the number of Registered Nurse (RN) funded hours per weighted resident day with no impact on residents' quality of care."

"We do not accept the claim such a policy would have no impact on the quality of care, and we will work hard to educate the public on why RNs play such a crucial role in any health care system that puts the health of patients and residents first," Smith said.

"Anyone with a loved one in an Alberta nursing home should be concerned by the implications of such changes to the Nursing Home Regulations," she said.

Beyond those specific issues, Smith said, the cuts outlined in the Budget and Fiscal Plan do not bode well for the health care system or the long-term health of Albertans.

While health care spending will rise marginally at a rate that does not account for increases in population and inflation, she noted that important capital projects have been deferred, including the new south

Edmonton Hospital and the proposed Child and Adolescent Mental Health Building at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton.

Saying that overall budgets will be cut by "only" 2.8 per cent per year over four years adds up to a cut of about 17 per cent over the same period when the combined effects of inflation and population growth (about 3.5 per cent a year) are included in the calculation.

"That puts these Kenney cuts right in the same zone as the cuts by premier Ralph Klein in the mid 1990s, from which Alberta has barely recovered," she said.

Combined with the Kenney Government's tax cuts for profitable corporations, this budget is irresponsible and dangerous, Smith concluded.

UNA will be digging into the details of the health care implications of this budget in the days ahead and will communicate its findings to members and the public. 🍷

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The correct numbers are easy to find: They are on Page 287 of the current UNA collective agreement with AHS and other health-care employers, a public document available on UNA's website and from the Alberta Labour Relations Board.

Demand for nurses in Alberta is increasing due to the steady growth of our population and an aging workforce, which will lead to many retirements in the coming years. As a result, employment growth in nursing is expected to be among the highest of all occupations.

According to the government of Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook, demand will continue to outpace supply in nursing and our

province could have a shortage of 5,234 nurses by 2025.

Banning overtime while not filling vacant positions (vacancy management) as Alberta is faced with a growing shortage of nurses would be foolish at best and dangerous at worst.

The misinformation included in Smith's column and in the CTF document she refers to is an attempt to devalue the work of nurses who deliver care to Albertans every single day. Safe patient care is a priority for Alberta nurses, but that can only be accomplished through proper staffing levels.

Hiring more nurses will decrease overtime and improve patient care. It's not complicated. 🍷

Demand for nurses in Alberta is increasing due to the steady growth of our population and an aging workforce, which will lead to many retirements in the coming years.



Members of Local 67 participate at an info picket outside the Devon General Hospital.

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Bill 22, which directly impacts management of the Local Authorities Pensions Plan, which provides retirement security for most UNA members, passed its final reading in the Legislature on November 21. It received Royal Assent and became law the next day.

Risk to LAPP and other public sector pensions is higher now, and more legislation impacting public sector pensions is anticipated.

In June, the government had used its Bill 9, the *Public Sector Wage Deferral Act*, to interfere directly with the collective

UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik and Local 415 President Cheyenne Camus.

bargaining process and overturn provisions in UNA’s Provincial Collective Agreement as well as other public sector unions’ contracts to delay bargaining until the UCP’s “Blue Ribbon Panel” on Alberta’s finances made its report recommending pay rollbacks for public employees, which it did in early September.

Those developments were combined with statements by Toews that public employees collectively would face an average 2-per-cent wage rollback — 3 per cent for UNA members.

In addition to nurses, workers affected by the planned rollbacks will include teachers, social workers, health care support staff, paramedics, medical technical professionals, and guards in provincial jails.

In response, President Heather Smith made an automated call to all UNA members on October 31, informing them of the union’s concerns and promising to take measures to try to address them. “Today, UNA filed a complaint with the Labour Relations Board seeking an order directing Alberta Health Services to bargain in good faith as required by law and not propose a 3-per-cent rollback,” she said in the message. “We have legal counsel reviewing the statements included in last week’s budget to help us determine the implications of the proposed changes.”



Cancer does not wait, nor should cancer care, says UNA's Karen Craik

■ **CONCERNED** about the impact provincial budget cuts will have on the construction and staffing of the new Calgary Cancer Centre, United Nurses of Alberta Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik joined Opposition Leader Rachel Notley and Health Critic David Shepherd at an October press conference near the construction site.

“Cancer does not wait, nor should cancer care,” Craik said. “It’s critical that the government ensures that AHS receives the necessary funding to complete the project on schedule as well as ensure there are enough funds to properly staff the new facility.”

After years of promises and delays, construction of the Calgary Cancer Centre finally began in 2017. The shifting of infrastructure funding in the budget released on October 24 raised concerns that the construction project might not be completed on time.

Craik was joined by concerned members of UNA Local 302-S at the Tom Baker

Cancer Centre and Local 115 at the Foothills Medical Centre.

“The Calgary Cancer Centre is desperately needed to relieve pressure on the patients and families. Cancer is a family disease and the staff at the Cancer Centre is essential in providing the appropriate care,” Craik said.

In some cases, overcrowding has been so serious that staff have had difficulty meeting their triage requirements as they faced patient volumes they have never seen before.

“Providing safe patient care is a priority for all UNA members, but that will only be achieved at the Calgary Cancer Centre if it is properly and fully staffed” Craik said.

Craik urged all Calgarians and Albertans from the southern parts of the province to let their MLA know that the Calgary Cancer Centre must be completed, properly funded, and adequately staffed. 🍷

“It’s critical that the government ensures that AHS receives the necessary funding to complete the project on schedule...”

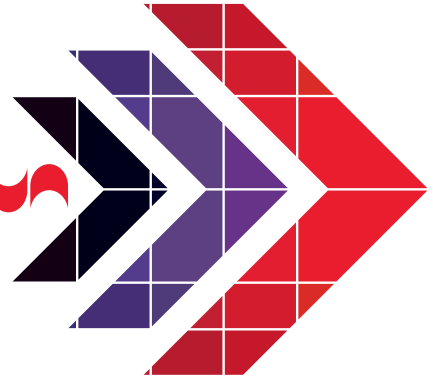
– Karen Craik



Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik and UNA members with Opposition Leader Rachel Notley and Health Critic David Shepherd near the Calgary Cancer Centre

challenge

2019 AGM



President Smith addresses AGM on Alberta's budget, the federal election, and pharmacare

■ **THE** election of a Liberal minority government the day before the opening of United Nurses of Alberta's annual general meeting in October means Canadians at last have an opportunity to see a national pharmacare program created, President Heather Smith said in her report to delegates on October 22.

The crucial development the night before that could at last make pharmacare a reality was the fact the federal New Democratic Party was suddenly in a position to hold the balance of power on progressive policies Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals had promised, but so far failed to deliver.

"The Liberals promised pharmacare, but seemed to waver," Smith said in her remarks. "The New Democrats have the opportunity to make the government's achievement on this file their achievement."

"So this is good news, or it may be if we nurses and other advocates can keep the pressure on the new government."

The results of the October 21 federal election also meant "there is the opportunity for pushback against provincial governments that want to weaken enforcement of the Canada Health Act, or that plan to introduce unconstitutional laws to weaken unions like UNA."

This was a reference to legislation in Alberta introduced by the United Conservative Government of Premier Jason Kenney to interfere with the constitutionally protected collective bargaining process.

But it also means Canadians could soon find themselves facing an election again, she warned — and therefore could again risk finding themselves with an ideological government determined to roll back what Canadians have created in health care and other public services.

"So we need to keep our powder dry, and push for meaningful reforms while the conditions allow them," she said.

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Turning to the provincial budget later that week, Smith said that despite the Kenney Government's pledges front-line services will not be impacted, "it has also made it clear that essential public services such as health care and education are targets for government cost cutting."

The details of the budget introduced by Finance Minister Travis Toews on October 24 showed that Smith's concerns were justified.

"For anyone who understands the workings of the health care system generally

... as Alberta's nurses certainly do, it is very hard to believe that front-line services will not be impacted by 'restraint' of the kind the government is suggesting," she said.

As for the UCP Government's interference in UNA's collective bargaining by using legislation to break the terms of our collective agreement in order to give the MacKinnon Panel the time it needed to make its recommendations, Smith argued, it isn't just a small delay, as the government claimed.

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

UNA WELCOMES Danielle Larivee and Cam Westhead as First and Second VPs



UNA's new Executive Officers – First Vice-President Danielle Larivee and Second VP Cam Westhead – soon after their election at the 2019 UNA AGM in Edmonton.

■ **LAST** month United Nurses of Alberta bade farewell to two retiring vice-presidents.

This month, we welcome two new ones — Danielle Larivee as First Vice-President and Cam Westhead as Second VP.

Larivee and Westhead were sworn into office on October 24, the final day of UNA's annual general meeting, and commenced their duties immediately.

Both Registered Nurses returned to UNA, where they have been longtime activists, after four years of public service as Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly.

Larivee, the mother of three children, has lived in the town of Slave Lake since the age of 5.

Her mom was a Registered Nurse and UNA member and her father was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, so she was able to get some experience walking a picket line while she was still in elementary school.

With a little help from a UNA scholarship to attend nursing school, Larivee studied for two years at the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton and completed her BSc in Nursing from the University of Alberta — graduating just in time for the Klein Government's devastating cuts in the mid-1990s. "It was difficult to find work," she recalls.

After working in public health for several years, she earned a BSc in Midwifery at the University of Utah, and began studies toward a Master of Business Administration.

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Larivee first worked as a home care nurse for the Driftpile First Nation, and later as a Public Health Nurse for Alberta Health Services for almost 20 years until the 2015 election. During that time, she also worked as an instructor in the LPN program at Northern Lakes College, which offers courses throughout Northern Alberta.

An active member of Local 315 Community in the Slave Lake area, Larivee served at various times as Local President and Secretary Treasurer.

In government, Larivee was minister of Municipal Affairs, Children's Services, Status of Women and played a key role in managing the aftermath of the 2016 Fort McMurray Fire and the community's recovery.

Westhead's nursing career was primarily spent in the operating room at Foothills Medical Centre, where he worked on the neurosurgical team from 2006 to 2015.

After attending his first UNA AGM in 2009, he recalls, he became hooked on labour activism to protect and promote the highest standards of patient care and the rights of working people.

He served three terms as Treasurer of Local 115 and two as UNA's Executive Board Member representing the South Central District.

After being elected as the MLA for Banff-Cochrane in the 2015 provincial election, Westhead was Deputy Government Whip and Chair of Alberta's Endangered Species Conservation Committee among other positions of responsibility. In August, 2019, Westhead returned to clinical practice in the operating room at South Health Campus in Calgary.

He holds a BScN from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Arts in

Psychology from Nipissing University. Originally from Whitby, Ont., Cam and his wife Marcella call the hamlet of Bragg Creek home.

In his leisure time, Westhead enjoys mountain biking, snowboarding, cross country skiing, hiking, kayaking, reading, and music. 🍷

DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

Elected at October 2019 UNA Annual General Meeting

NORTH DISTRICT

Kelly Thorburn
(Local 37 Queen Elizabeth II Hospital - Grande Prairie)

Emily Lozeron
(Local 51 Beaverlodge-Hythe General Hospital)

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Donica Geddes
(Local 15 St. Mary's Hospital - Camrose)

Heather Venneman
(Local 43 Olds Health Centre)

Sandra Zak
(Local 218 David Thompson Health Region - Community)

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

Terri Barr
(Local 413 Edmonton Corrections)

Tim Bouwsema
(Local 301 University Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital, Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute)

Eva Brown
(Local 11 Misericordia Community Hospital)

Teresa Caldwell
(Local 301 University Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital, Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute)

Jennifer Castro
(Local 301 University Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital, Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute)

Christina Doktor
(Local 302-N Cross Cancer Institute)

Jenna Knight
(Local 33 Royal Alexandra Hospital)

Nicole Van Dijk
(Local 196 Edmonton Community)

Ros Gullickson
(Local 301 University Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital, Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute)

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

Marie Aitken
(Local 228 Claresholm Centre for Mental Health and Addictions)

Barbara Campbell
(Local 415 South Health)

Marie Corns
(Local 80 High River Health)

Wanda Deadman
(Local 115 Foothills Medical Centre)

Ken Ewanchuk
(Local 415 South Health Campus)

Susan Fisk
(Local 1 Peter Lougheed Centre)

Claire Galoska
(Local 95 Alberta Children's Hospital)

JoAnne Rhodes
(Local 211 Calgary Community)

SOUTH DISTRICT

Sharon Gurr
(Local 131 Coaldale Health Centre)*

John Terry
(Local 70 Medicine Hat Regional Hospital)

* Sharon Gurr resigned effective December 11, 2019. The position will be filled at the next regular South District meeting.

YOUR INNER VOICE CAN SAVE LIVES, UNA PRC advisor tells AGM – listen to it and file a PRC!

“This is a silent epidemic, If we do nothing, 1.2 million Canadians will die from preventable patient harm in the next 30 years!”

– Josh Bergman

■ **“YOUR** inner voice can save lives,” Professional Responsibility Advisor Josh Bergman told delegates to UNA’s AGM during his report to members.

That’s why one of the key aims of UNA’s ongoing effort to include and then strengthen contract language ensuring nurses can identify and report Professional Responsibility Concerns (PRCs) is “to battle systemic silence within the health care system,” Bergman said.

He noted that 28,000 Canadians are expected to die from preventable health care harm this year. “This makes patient safety incidents the third leading cause of death in Canada, behind cancer and heart disease. One in three Canadians has had patient harm affect themselves or a loved one, yet the public is collectively unaware that this problem exists.”

“This is a silent epidemic,” Bergman stated. “If we do nothing, 1.2 million Canadians will die from preventable patient harm in the next 30 years!”

A big part of the problem, he noted, is government and employers ignoring the well-understood connection between adequate numbers of Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses on staff and patient outcomes. “This is why we see staffing and workload issues as the No. 1 issue reported by our members year after year through the PRC process.”

“A rich body of evidence indicates that RN care is directly linked to positive outcomes on numerous patient, organizational and financial markers,” he explained. Of 675 studies of 70 years of research into RN effectiveness found by



researchers for the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, he noted, 95 per cent indicate the presence of RNs have a positive effect on outcomes for patients, health organizations, and the bottom line.

These measures include everything from patient satisfaction to lower mortality rates, decreases in infections, falls and other injuries, improved general organizational safety and lower financial costs.

“We can’t ignore this evidence,” Bergman said. “Just like safe surgery checks and medication reconciliation, we know that having the right number and mix of nurses working on a unit or in a program is a critical factor in ensuring quality and safety of patients.”

Registered Nurses are uniquely trained to thoughtfully be aware of all factors affecting patient health and safety, he said. If something looks wrong, feels wrong or obviously is wrong, nurses need to speak up and PRCs are a key way to do so.

“We must continue to use the PRC process to conquer silence and speak up for patient safety,” he said. 🎧





□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

“I’m sorry,” she said to the cheers of the approximately 1,000 delegates, observers, staff and guests in the Edmonton EXPO Centre, “but I don’t think taking away our contractual right to an arbitrated wage-reopener isn’t a big deal!”

“We will need to push back — in the labour relations forum, in the court of public opinion, and in the courts of law — to defend our rights, and to defend public health care in Alberta and Canada,” Smith said as she wrapped up her report to delegates.

UNA members need to have a serious conversation about the appropriate tactics to confront this threat. “We will have an opportunity to start those conversations

at our Demand Setting Meeting, which will take place here in Edmonton, November 19 to 21,” she said.

“We will need to be determined, courageous and to think clearly — challenges, to be sure, but challenges we are educated as nurses to rise to and overcome.”

“Now is always the right time to remind governments and employers that nurses are the greatest experts on the health care system — they know what ails it and what it needs.”

Smith concluded, to a standing ovation: “We may face a challenge, but nurses are challengers too! Stay strong! Solidarity!” 🍷

UNA PRC Advisor Josh Bergman; UNA AGM delegates; Edmonton-Mill Woods MLA Christina Gray, CFNU President Linda Silas and CFNU Secretary-Treasurer Pauline Worsfold; visiting nurse union presidents Tracy Zambory, SUN, and Janet Hazelton, NSNU; Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan.



Local 96 members in the Northern Lights Regional Hospital Pediatrics Unit in Fort Mac

RESOLVE LONG LIST OF PRCs

■ **THANKS** to the Professional Responsibility Concern process, United Nurses of Alberta members working in the Northern Lights Regional Hospital Pediatrics Unit in Fort McMurray have been able to resolve a long list of PRCs, Local 96 President Michelle Warren reports.

Since March 2016, there have been more than 70 PRCs filed by nurses on the unit, most of them related to the fact there was only one RN to cover the single unit of eight beds.

PRCs described such specific issues as a single RN working alone on unit with five or more pediatric patients, no break relief, delayed assessments and the need to answer call bells. In addition,

circumstances were described in which the only RN on the unit had to leave the area to co-sign for medication, receive post-operative patients, bring samples to the lab, or provide break relief for a health care aide with a patient requiring constant observation.

This situation resulted in such problems as RNs having to choose between responding to call bells or abandoning their constant-observation patient, and inadequate care for pediatric mental health patients.

After discussing these issues at the Local 96 PRC Committee and with the Senior Operating Officer a number of commitments were made by the employer. These included:

- Cross training between the Pediatrics and Maternity/Child Unit
- Increasing numbers in the casual pool to ensure adequate coverage for the department
- Requiring Pediatric Advanced Life Support certification for all code team members
- Requiring Pediatric Emergency Assessment, Recognition and Stabilization certification for all
- Hiring of new RN/LPNs for the Emergency Department/ Pediatrics Unit
- Advancing a briefing note to address the baseline staffing issue in the unit, recommending one RN and one LPN on all shifts

TELL YOUR PRC SUCCESS STORIES

■ **IN** his report to UNA's AGM, Josh Bergman urged members throughout the province to contribute their PRC success stories to this regular UNA NewsBulletin feature.

"These success stories represent only a fraction of the successes we see at every step of the process," Bergman told AGM delegates. "With almost 3,000 PRCs in 2018, it can be easier to focus on the overwhelming number of issues and the time and effort it can take to get a resolution."

"However, it is critical that we recognize, reflect and highlight our successes," he said. "Please contact us with any success stories you experience at your side so that we can share." 🍷

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Community nurses urged to file PRCs when unsafe practices by private agencies are observed

■ **COMMUNITY** Registered Nurses regularly express concerns about the practice by Alberta Health Services of using private agencies to provide community services such as diabetes care, dementia care and wound care, one of United Nurses of Alberta's Professional Responsibility advisors says.

"As a result, we want to emphasize that it's important for community care RNs to use the Professional Responsibility Concern process to highlight concerns and help us address the issues they raise," PRC Advisor Josh Bergman stated.

Concerns that UNA has heard about include missed care, procedures done

incorrectly, unsafe administration of insulin, inadequate monitoring, reporting delays and task-based instructions by some providers that discourage health care aides and licensed practical nurses they employ from paying attention to patients' health and emphasize billable procedures instead.

Community nurses have also reported being discouraged by managers from using the PRC process to deal with private agencies' work deficiencies, and instead to tell the agency manager about it, after which little is done, Bergman noted.

Nurses complain that while there are common procedures used to monitor and correct errors in hospital settings, such situations can pass unnoticed in patients' homes where private agencies' employees are relied on to provide the care.

"Front-line RNs in community care have been worried about this for a long time," Bergman said. "RN's working as care managers can spend up to 20 per cent of their time dealing with home care agencies."

"The results in some cases are potentially serious, and this is troubling," he said. "That's why we urge all community nurses, if you have concerns about patient safety where agencies are involved or become aware of unsafe practices, including care providers not being given proper instructions and focusing instead on a list of tasks, to use the collective agreement's PRC provisions to seek resolutions." 🍷

"Front-line RNs in community care have been worried about this for a long time."

– Josh Bergman

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

Because the recommendation to staff all shifts with two nurses did not receive executive approval, Warren and PRC Advisor Joshua Bergman requested a meeting with the CEO to discuss the unresolved PRCs under *Article 36: Professional Responsibility* in the joint in the Provincial Collective Agreement.

Local officials met with the CEO Designate Deb Gordon on September 26 to discuss the concerns. Gordon committed to staff an additional second RN per shift for a trial period of one year, after which staffing will be evaluated in real time throughout the year.

As a result of this commitment, the Local and members working on the unit are comfortable declaring the PRCs to have been resolved. 🍷

UNA and AHS recommit to their Violence Alerts initiative



By Dewey Funk
UNA, OH&S Advisor



UNA OH&S Advisor
Dewey Funk

■ **REPRESENTATIVES** from United Nurses of Alberta and UNA members at Rockyview General Hospital and the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary met with representatives from Alberta Health Services on November 18 to discuss the Violence Alerts initiative.

The meeting — which included Labour Relations Director David Harrigan and Occupational Health and Safety Advisor Dewey Funk from UNA and senior managers Todd Gilchrist, Brenda Huband,

Deb Gordon, Norma Wood and Jerry Scott from AHS — was intended to reaffirm and work collaboratively to fulfill the commitment of moving forward with Violence Alerts for the physical and psychological safety of all front line health care workers.

The Violence Alerts Program — known to many in health care as the Purple Dot Program for the mark used to indicate a potentially violent patient — is meant to inform front-line health care workers of potential for exposure to aggressive behaviors from patients.

Violence Alerts allow health care workers to balance the right of nurses to be aware of high risk/high need patients with the delivery of safe patient care as part of a risk management program supported by legislation.

The rate at which Workers Compensation claims for workplace violence are accepted from the predominantly female health care sub-sector is more than 50 times the rate of workplace violence claims filed by predominantly male sectors.

There is recognition that violence alerts are not solely the concern of Occupational Health & Safety practitioners. It's important that clinicians as well are included in this imperative for Violence Alerts to be part of safe patient care.

AHS has agreed to meet with the Clinical Operation Executive Committee for discussions on how to move violence alerts forward province wide. This discussion is scheduled to take place before the end of 2019. AHS will then meet with UNA before the end of January 2020 to continue our joint effort to move forward with a sustained implementation of the violence alert program. 🐾

WETASKIWIN TO HAVE PEACE OFFICERS ON SITE.

■ **WETASKIWIN** Hospital and Care Centre will now have Peace Officers as part of the regular complement of security on site.

The change was possible because of the hard work and perseverance by the executive and Occupational Health and Safety representatives of United Nurses of Alberta Local 68, who collected the data needed to prove to the employer Peace Officers were required on site.

Improvements in security at the site only happened when Local 68 members were persuaded to start reporting incidents to the employer through MySafetyNet (MSN). When specific incidents of violence or any Occupational Health and Safety concerns are not reported, the employer will ask members to justify their concerns. As with all concerns documentation is essential in achieving desired results.

This membership put forth a concerted effort to report incidents in MSN and use it to request corrective action.

After members began reporting incidents, we met with management and escalated our concerns to the CEO, as allowed by Article 34 of the Collective Agreement. The Executive and UNA JWHSC representatives attended and participated in presenting concerns to CEO Designate Brenda Huband. This meeting was a positive experience for everyone involved in seeking resolutions.

AHS is now in the recruiting phase of hiring Peace Officers for Wetaskiwin which will enable a safer workplace for frontline health care workers. 🐾



CANADIAN
FEDERATION
OF NURSES
UNIONS

Why nurses should be concerned about THE CLIMATE CRISIS

■ **IT'S** time for nurses to take action on climate change.

This is the take-home message of a discussion paper exploring the impacts of climate change and Canadian health authored by nursing researchers Dr. Wanda Martin and Lindsey Vold. The paper was released by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions this summer.

Climate change is on track to deliver dire and distinct challenges for everyone's health and wellbeing, particularly with Canada's ageing population and a health care system already stretched thin.

So, how exactly will our health care be affected?

In general terms, according to the World Health Organization, climate change will negatively impact the social and environmental determinants of health, including access to clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.

Some of the specific health impacts are expected to include higher rates of heatstroke and stress, increased allergens, exacerbated conditions for asthma sufferers, physical displacement, mental distress, cardiorespiratory distress, more respiratory ailments and widespread food insecurity.

With such grave impacts on the way, the need for swift action is imperative.

Globally, it is estimated that we only have 12 years to prevent a catastrophic

rise in temperatures, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Meanwhile, a report on Canada's changing climate released this year found that temperatures our own country are rising more than twice as fast as global averages, due to Canada's many large bodies of water and ice mass.

As children and young people lead a global movement for serious climate action to defend our future, how can nurses and health care workers respond?

The report provides several recommendations that serve as a starting point:

- Work with stakeholders for more sustainable workplaces
- Learn the science of climate change and help educate others
- Join the call for meaningful government action
- Help plan for the emerging needs of patients resulting from climate change
- Be prepared for extreme weather events
- Promote local healthy agriculture and food systems

In 2020, look for information on how to get involved in new CFNU Green Teams, which aim to spark efforts to bring this issue to workplaces.

As the report notes, we all share the duty as health care workers, parents, community members and citizens to learn more about the coming challenges and do everything possible to mitigate the negative impacts of the coming crisis. 🇺🇦



By Lauren Snowball
Canadian Federation
of Nurses Unions

The full paper, titled *Climate Change and Health: It's time for nurses to act*, is available on the CFNU website (nursesunions.ca/research/). Additional resources on this topic are available from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (cape.ca/).



Young Edmonton RN helped bring health care and medical education to remote Amazon communities



FOR Bobbi Spady, a Registered Nurse from Edmonton, the Amazonian jungles of Peru offered a new place to share her knowledge of pediatric medicine and develop leadership skills while participating in the eye-opening experience of delivering health care in a developing country.



Spady, a member of UNA Local 301 at the University of Alberta Stollery Children's Hospital, took part earlier this year with nine other members of Young Nurses Take Action on a 12-day medical mission with Project Amazonas, bringing modern health care and education to the people of the remote and challenging region.



“Our first eight days were spent on the live-aboard boat that serves remote communities on the Peruvian Amazon,” Spady recalled in her report to UNA, which supported her volunteer mission with an \$880 Humanitarian Grant. “These communities either completely lack access to medical care or only receive sporadic or under-supplied medical attention.”



During the mission, the boat would dock in a remote community each evening and mission members — including a local physician, dentist and four translators as well as the 10 volunteer Canadian nurses — would prepare for a medical and educational clinic in the

community the next day, usually held in the village school.

“We would collect patient and family histories and community level health information, assist the local physician in assessing patients, dispense prescribed medications and educate patients on their proper, as well as preventative health care techniques,” she recalled.

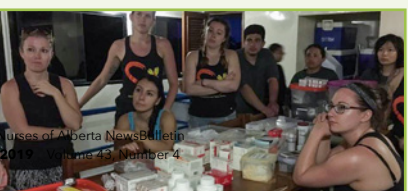
Spady noted there was high demand for dental care, and in addition to necessary dental work, the group provided tooth brushes and instructions on dental hygiene.

They also took part in home visits for patients too sick to make the trek to the clinics.

The remaining days were spent either at the rural Orosa health clinic or in nearby communities providing primary medical care and health education, focused on women's health issues.

Each community varied in size and members of the mission would see between 35-120 people every day.

“This medical volunteer trip was an amazing and challenging learning opportunity,” Spady wrote in her report to UNA. “I developed a different outlook and perspective on health and gained a deeper understanding of global citizenship.”





Of her Peruvian patients, Spady concluded, “I feel that they were able to give me much more than I could ever give back to them: a perspective on the simplicity of life, happiness, joy and family.”

Project Amazonas is a non-political, non-sectarian non-governmental organization established in 1994 to serve the people of the Amazon and help them conserve the rainforest.

Young Nurses Take Action is an Edmonton-based volunteer organization that empowers Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses 35 and younger to be effective leaders and advocates on local and global levels. 🇺🇸



Edmonton RN Bobbi Spady, in purple T-shirt, and scenes from her medical mission to the Amazon jungles of Peru
(Photos: Bobbi Spady).



Nurses at three worksites in Calgary vote to join UNA

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta has recently welcomed Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses from three new worksites into the union.

The more than 30 Registered Nurses employed by Chinook Care Centre in southwest Calgary are now members of the newly created Local 425.

UNA members employed at Carewest Glenmore Park, who voted to join the union in August 2019, are now members of the newly created Local 424.

Nurses employed by AgeCare Skypointe in northeast Calgary voted to join UNA in November 2019. UNA members employed at this worksite have not yet been assigned to a UNA Local.

As soon as possible, UNA will negotiate first collective agreements for the new members, who before voting to join UNA worked without representation in a union.

The UNA Executive Board also recently voted to make administrative changes by merging a number of existing locals north of Edmonton.

- Members and duespayers of Local 16 at the Boyle Health Centre are now represented by Local 135, which already represents members at the Athabasca Health Centre.
- Members and duespayers of Local 187 at the Radway Health Centre are now members of Local 128, which already represents members at the Redwater Health Centre/Sturgeon Country Community.

These changes are administrative and will not impact the wide range of services and representation that UNA provides to its members at these worksites. 🍷

UNA encourages Alberta nurses to get their flu shot

■ **ALBERTA** Health Services is urging all health care staff to get a seasonal influenza immunization.

AHS launched its annual immunization campaign in late October. While influenza immunization is not mandatory for health care workers, United Nurses of Alberta also encourages its members to receive their annual flu shot.

Immunization is available through AHS Public Influenza Immunization Clinics, as well as at some pharmacies and physician's offices.

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 for severe influenza illness. Immunization is the best defence against the flu.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization considers the provision of influenza immunization for health care workers who have direct patient contact or provide indirect health care services to be “an essential component of the standard care for the protection of patients.” 🍷



UNA responds to requests for a way to opt out of receiving Nurses' Planner

■ **UNA** members can expect to find their 2020 Nurses' Planner in their mailboxes by mid-January.

Please enjoy your Nurses' Planner throughout 2020, a year that includes UNA's 43rd year serving members throughout Alberta.

As the way nurses schedule their working lives evolves, more and more UNA members are transitioning from the use of a printed calendar like the Nurses' Planner to electronic versions on their smart phones and computers.

As a result, demand for the Nurses' Planner is declining, and many UNA members have requested the option of not receiving it.

In response to these requests, UNA has introduced an option for declining the planner in 2021 and future years.

Using either DMS Web or the UNA App, members can go to membership information and click the toggle button under "Receiving Nurses Planner" to opt out of receiving the Planner. 🗑️



□ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

More than at any time except in the years when UNA was first formed, and in the dark years of the Klein government when senseless cuts pushed Alberta's health care system into a crisis that continued for years, we need to be strong, and to stand by one another for what we know to be right.

The pay we receive for the work we do is fair, and justly reflects the marketplace for nurses around the world as well as the high cost of living in Alberta.

Attacking front-line health care workers is not the right way to get our province's finances in order.

And politicians who say taking roll-backs mean there will be no layoffs can't be trusted.

So don't be fooled!

And if you were around in the 1990s, don't be fooled *again!*

Remember, the history of UNA shows that when 30,000 nurses stick together, there's no limit to what we can achieve!

In Solidarity,

Heather Smith

President, United Nurses of Alberta

UNA and AHS follow through on commitment to consolidate and improve application of DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta and Alberta Health Services released a series of new resources in October and November to assist union members and AHS managers to apply the Dispute Resolution Process set out in Article 32 of the Provincial Collective Agreement.

The letter anticipated the release of joint statements on recommended practices for such topics as include initial problem solving, resolution meetings, DRACs, disclosure of information, and terminology.


Three documents were made available on October 16:

- Preamble for Resolution Meetings
- Guide for conducting a Resolution Meeting, including information about how to schedule and prepare for a meeting, as well as the roles of participants
- Clarifications about the disclosure of information, witnesses and witness statements, policies and procedures, and the interview process

An additional three documents were published on November 4:

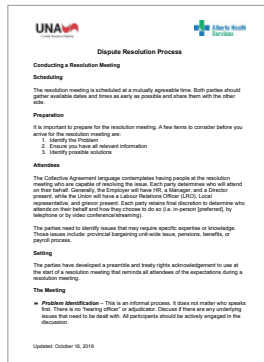
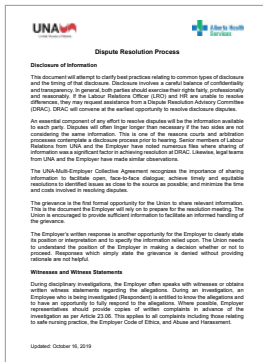
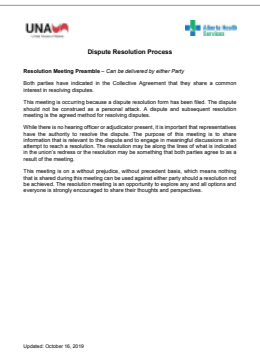
- Dispute Resolution Advisory Committee document outlining the roles of committee members and benefits of using DRAC to resolve disputes
- Description of how DRAC can assist with the Duty to Accommodate process
- Flow chart explaining the Dispute Resolution process

These documents can be found on UNA's website — una.ca — by searching “dispute resolution.”

Additional documents are expected to be made available online before the end of 2019. 

The resources stem from the joint commitment letter signed by UNA and AHS in September to implement successful practices identified over the past several years by both the union and the employer. Both parties recommitted themselves in that letter to the dispute resolution principles embodied in Article 32.01 of the collective agreement, which include:

- Encouraging open, face-to-face dialogue among people involved in a dispute
- Achieving timely and effective resolutions
- Supporting a positive, harmonious work environment
- Minimizing the time and cost of resolving disputes
- Finding solutions that are consistent with the terms of the collective agreement



EMPLOYEES HAVE at least 3 PD days EACH YEAR

■ **UNDER** Article 35.03 of the United Nurses of Alberta Provincial Collective Agreement, each employee shall be granted at least three professional development days each year.

PD days are an opportunity for an employee to participate in professional development opportunities of interest that are not required by the employer, including taking part in voluntary in-services on days they are not scheduled to work.

A Joint-Statement agreed to by UNA, Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health in September 2015 clarified the appropriate rate of pay for employees who are participating in PD days.

Employees who work a standard workday are paid their basic rate of pay for

7.75 hours for a PD day. This is the case if the PD day takes place on a regular workday, a “blank” day, or a Designated Day of Rest.

Employees who work an extended workday are paid their basic rate of pay for 7.75 hours on a “blank” day or Designated Day of Rest and basic rate of pay for 11.08 hours for a PD day if the day is a regular workday.

Even if the activity ends after 7.75 hours, there is no requirement for the employee to return to work after the PD day is complete.

PD days are not considered work scheduled or required by the employer and do not attract overtime, shift differentials or weekend premiums. 🍷

KNOW *your* Rights



Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

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

CLARIFICATION: Education Allowances

■ **A** story in the Fall 2019 edition of UNA NewsBulletin on allowances for education indicated they shall be paid from the date the employee provides proof of qualifications to the employer retroactive to the date the employee completed the requirements for qualification or from the date of hire, whichever is later, to a maximum of 12 months.

As the result of a grievance filed by UNA, however, in certain circumstances the allowances may be paid for more than 12 months. Assessments are made on a case-by-case basis.

If you discover you aren't being paid an allowance for which you qualify or have questions about this point, contact your UNA Local Executive or Labour Relations Officer as soon as possible at 1-800-252-9394. 🍷

HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS!

Alberta's Nurses are deeply concerned by the Alberta government's plans to make arbitrary changes to their pension plan and roll back their wages.

Professional Nurses are the backbone of health care in Alberta and around the world. They put up the money for their own pensions and work hard for their pay.

Pension changes proposed by the government won't save money for taxpayers. And rolling back nurses' pay won't do anything to solve the shortage of nurses that's already being felt in Alberta.

Nurses shouldn't have to pay for big tax cuts for wealthy corporations and Alberta's richest citizens.

