

Nurses...

It is up to you to tell politicians about the realities in our health care system.

Tell your MLA!

**More
health
cuts?**



**WRONG
WAY**

Government Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) need to hear loud and clear that Albertans are very concerned by the prospect of another round of health care cuts.

Most importantly they need to hear from nurses who are the experts in what is really happening in our health system.

Government MLAs are being told we cannot afford our health care system, it is wasteful, inefficient. Nurses' overtime, enabled by a "horrible" contract is allowing nurses to claim huge amounts of overtime and pushing costs through the roof. (See the separate Red Herring flyer for more facts about these issues.)

GOOD

Write or email
your MLA!

Every letter counts and they do not have to be long to let your MLA know your concerns.

End with a question they must respond to, like:
Are you going to stop the cuts to our health system?
Please let me know what steps you are taking on this important issue.

Other things to keep in mind:

- Get to your point immediately in the letter, so no misinterpretation is possible
- Identify yourself as a nurse
- Ask for a specific response

BETTER

Call your MLA or call their
Constituency Office

Ask to speak directly to your elected representative. Have in mind just a few points you want to make, and be sure to ASK for action and indicate you want to hear more from the MLA about what he or she has done on this issue. (See meeting tips below for more information). You may be asked to speak with a Constituency Assistant and that is acceptable too, although you should still ask for a call back from the MLA.

Ask EVERY UNA member to telephone. Ask EVERY member to ask a friend to telephone as well.

NUMBERS COUNT!

It's usually a good idea to go in a small group, of two, three or four friends. Get your group together and call the local Constituency Office of your MLA and ask to set up a meeting.

It makes it more fun to go as a small group, but also allows you to keep better track of what your MLA said and of making sure you get in all the points you want to make.

Get together in advance of meeting your MLA. Decide on who will make what points, and perhaps get one person to take mental or paper notes. Make it clear you expect a polite but firm meeting.

Make sure to have at least a short de-brief afterward to compare notes and to decide how you can follow up with the MLA.

Not all MLAs are easily convinced

As the saying goes, they are not so likely to SEE THE LIGHT, as they are likely to FEEL THE HEAT. So of course, you want to bring good clear facts for a meeting with an MLA. But be prepared for them to argue back.

In fact the MLAs are given SCRIPTS of answers to top constituent questions, prepared by the Public Affairs Bureau and the Minister of Health's office.

It's important however, to stand your ground and not back down from what you say. Be polite, but do not accept ridiculous statements from an MLA. And you should not leave the MLA feeling as though he or she charmed you and everything is all right now.

Be clear you are going to follow up.

BEST

Set up a meeting with your MLA

Points you want to make and the MLAs' script

1. Health care cuts are affecting your patients, clients and residents.

You can have examples of closed beds, delays or even safety concerns.

The MLA script: MLAs will say there are NO health budget cuts. They may even say the budget has been increased.

THE REALITY is that jobs and services ARE being cut, and it is useful to give them local examples.

2. Put a priority on getting the doctors, nurses and health professionals we need.

Keep our new graduates and reduce the shortage. Albertans have to wait for surgery because we have closed ORs and closed beds because there are NOT enough nurses.

The MLA script: This is not a switch to private health care, it is PUBLICLY funded and we are sourcing services in the most cost effective way.

The REALITY: Government funding to private service delivery is financing the growth of a parallel private health system.

3. Don't move to more for-profit health services. For-profit services will cost us all more. The government has NO mandate to switch to private health care.

MLA script: If we have a better balance, and nurses not doing paperwork or other non-nursing duties, we will not have a shortage. Already, with the economy, things are turned around as fewer nurses are retiring and more nurses are working more hours.

The REALITY: Over-complement beds, overtime, double shifts are still there, we need to hire more nurses.

4. Our public system can get the Best Bang for our Buck in health care. We can make improvements to increase efficiency and improve our health services. Stop the disruptive and destructive cycle of massive reform and change, which is sabotaging our system.

The MLA script: Our public system is wasteful and has separate silos and groups of self-interest. Free enterprise medical services will increase competition and efficiency and lower costs.

REALITY: Many Conservative MLAs believe this completely. The reality is that introducing the business motive into health care takes us directly down the road to the American health system, by far the most expensive and unfair in the world.

Have a short list of things you want your MLA to do or to get back to you on.

Can you Contact Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert and tell him you do NOT support the cuts in health services?

Can you report to Ed Stelmach that your constituents do not support cuts to health services?

Can you give us information about a closure or change in local health facilities?

Can you commit to supporting more full-care nursing home beds?

Be sure to let the MLA know you are not walking away satisfied and you will be back to get the answers to your questions or to hear what he or she is doing to protect good health services for Albertans.

It is somewhat useful to leave printed information for an MLA. If you do leave printed material, leave only one concise and direct piece. Most UNA material is for nurses, other health workers and citizens, not for MLAs.

More important is to leave personal letters and personal local information about people who are concerned or want more information. If there are four of you and each of you has letters from other people to deliver, that increases your impact and the heat. Letters can be brief and to the point, they don't need to be long and drawn out.

Do talk about the other people or groups you will be discussing this meeting with. My friends and colleagues will be most interested to hear...



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(780) 425-1025 or 1-800-252-9394

Be polite and listen carefully

Firm but friendly is a good motto. Try to determine areas of agreement. Avoid arguing and don't lecture. If the politician is on side in stopping cuts, ask what steps he or she will take and how you can help.

More likely, your Conservative MLA will disagree with you. Don't get angry or frustrated. Be polite and courteous. You are still having a tremendous impact.

These MLAs are prepped with speaking notes and messages from Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert. Some of them believe we have an excess of nurses, or that overtime costs are the reason for health deficits. They need good, accurate information about what is truly happening in health care in their constituency and across the province.

We all do our part!

When nurses act together, we have tremendous power. Putting pressure on each MLA is an important step. We can make them nervous. We can turn them around. We have done it before!

When each of us does our small part, it works!
So let's get started!

