

## **Bethany Cochrane contract held up on Employer demand to stretch nurses**

Negotiations with Bethany Care Society for the Cochrane facility resolved nearly all the outstanding issues on Tuesday, December 7. But finally UNA and Bethany could not finalize an agreement because the Employer demanded nurses on night shift at the nursing home also provide nursing services in the attached residential facility.

The Bethany Care Society Cochrane is the last Employer remaining without an agreement from the provincial bargaining round that began in 2003.

The deal is almost exactly the same as for the other Continuing Care Employers and includes severance, the salary increases, the night shift premium and retroactivity for all Employees and former Employees.

“We have an agreement except for this last absolutely unacceptable demand to force nurses to nearly double their responsibility on the night shift,” said David Harrigan, UNA’s chief negotiator and Director of Labour Relations.

“We absolutely could not agree that, on top of covering 78 residents in the nursing home, the night RNs provide nursing care in the associated assisted living facility which has 50 more residents. Nurses cannot risk their license with such a plan.”

UNA is considering several options to convince Bethany Care to drop the unreasonable demand and settle this last agreement.

## **BC private surgeries draw nurses from public system**

St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver recently was forced to cancel elective day surgeries after 12 speciality nurses left. The Hospital contracted out 1,000 surgeries to three private clinics, which DID have nurses on staff. British Columbia Nurses Union President Debra MacPherson pointed out that the private clinics are drawing staff from the public system, partly because they don’t run with heavy overtime loads and lots of just-in-time staffing with call backs.

## **Ontario announces plan for its election promise of 8,000 more nurses**

Ontario will spend an additional \$29 million on training and hiring new nurses, health minister George Smitherman announced in December. \$17 million of that money will go to creating full-time temporary positions for new graduates, who will have three months to apply on other positions. \$10 million goes to training simulation equipment in nursing under graduate programs and \$1.4 million goes to Employers who find new ways to encouraging nurse mentoring.

The new funding is “progress for a profession that too often has lost its new RN graduates to the United States,” said Joan Lesmond, president of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. The RNAO also said it would be watching to be sure the money isn’t used to hire new graduates through one door and lay off experienced nurses out another.

## **Nurses’ Planners in the mail**

The UNA Nurses’ Planner for 2005 is finally in the mail after some delays in the process. The target had been to get the Planner out earlier, however, synchronizing mailing of the Planner with the NewsBulletin, -- to avoid doing two mailings -- has delayed it. Nurses should be receiving their Planners in the next week or so.

## **Iris Evans named Health Minister**

The Premier named Iris Evans Health Minister in a speedy new cabinet plan announced just days after the provincial election. Paddy Meade is the new Deputy Minister. She comes with a strong reputation from the Deputy position in Aboriginal Affairs. Evans is “inexhaustible” and Meade is “smart as a whip” according to Legislative Assembly watcher Rich Vivone. Veteran spin master Mark Kastner comes with Evans from Children’s Services. Kastner has handled political hot potatoes like the adopt-a-child website controversy and health care changes. Last June when the government backed away from opening private hip replacement clinics, it was Kastner who handled the spin: “the government needs to consult with Albertans further before they move ahead on any further reforms,” said Mark Kastner, a spokesman for Mr. Klein.

## Federal Health Minister promises fines for violating Health Act

Federal Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh said he has sent warning letters about violating the Canada Health Act to British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta and Nova Scotia. He also said that earlier this year his ministry fined B.C. and withheld \$126,000 in federal health funding because the province was allowing private for-profit surgeries. The other warnings that went out were about private MRI clinics that may be giving people the means to “jump the queue” for health treatments.

The fine in B.C. was on private clinics performing orthopedic and other surgeries for a special fee. The clinics were having the fee paid by a “third party” claiming it was not a user fee. It still violated the Canada Health Act, Dosanjh said.

## Ft. MacLeod nurses get substantial retro cheques

### All nurses brought in by Bill 27 are now in the UNA contract

Negotiations to apply the UNA contract to nurses brought in by the Bill 27 legislation finally wrapped up on November 25 with an agreement for nurses at the Special Development Unit in Fort MacLeod. The agreement gave the nurses full retroactivity to April 1, 2004 plus further retroactivity lump sum payments of \$6,000 each for full-time nurses and \$500 for each of the casuals who worked more than two shifts. Only about eight nurses work at the unit. The nurses had been members in CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) and had a significantly lower pay rate.

Nurses at Raymond another group in Chinook brought into UNA by Bill 27, will also now come under the UNA agreement. Because these nurses came into UNA from AUPE where they had a “me too” clause that gave them the UNA increases, they had already been entitled to the increases.

The province-wide negotiations for most of the new UNA nurses were completed in September and ratified and in effect in October, but Chinook Health Region refused to settle until this week.

The settlement with Chinook completes the Bill 27 transition for UNA. Other health unions including AUPE and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta have not completed Bill 27 changes.

## Arbitration awards UNA one quarter of Capital Health's \$300,000 plus insurance rebate

UNA has won an arbitration on insurance demutualization and Capital Health should now return to nurses one quarter of the insurance windfall it received several years ago.

In 1999 Sun Life began the process of “demutualization”. The company essentially “bought out” policyholders of their part ownership through their policy. This conversion led to a windfall of approximately \$320,000, which was paid to Capital Health Authority. The Union maintained that the money was also owed to Employees as premium payers and as the actual beneficiaries of the policy. Under the UNA Agreement, Employees pay one quarter of the premium costs.

The arbitration decision followed precedents set in the courts on other demutualizations. Neither UNA nor Capital Health has announced whether they will appeal the arbitration decision in court. As well UNA has not announced how it would handle the return of approximately \$80,000.

## KEEP IT LIGHT

### Nurses Go to Heaven

Three nurses went to heaven, and were waiting to plead their case to St. Peter to enter the pearly gates.

The first nurse said, “I worked in an emergency room. We tried our best to help patients, but occasionally we did lose one. I think I deserve to go to heaven.”

St. Peter looks at her file and admits her to heaven.

The second nurse says, “I worked in an operating room. It's a very high stress environment and we do our best. Sometimes the patients are too sick and we lose them, but overall we try very hard.”

St. Peter looks at her file and admits her to heaven.

The third nurse says, “I was a case manager for an HMO.”

St. Peter looks at her file. He pulls out a calculator and starts punching away at it furiously, constantly going back to the nurse's file. After a few minutes St. Peter looks up, smiles, and says, “Congratulations! You've been admitted to heaven ... for five days!”

Send your light-hearted stories  
for the UNA Stat to [kwiley@una.ab.ca](mailto:kwiley@una.ab.ca).