

# UNA member wins seat in the Legislature Tories lose 12 seats

## **Klein has NO mandate for health care privatization**

Liberal Bridget Pastoor, a UNA member and former Local President at Edith Cavell Care Centre, won a seat for the Lethbridge East constituency. Of the eight RNs running in the election, Pastoor was the only one elected although others garnered a great deal of support.

Four UNA members running for the New Democrats, Laurie Lang, Jerry Macdonald, Holly Heffernan and Joyce Thomas, all put in respectable showings as did Anita Ashmore running for the Social Credit.

Other nurses running for the Liberals, Donna Smith in Edmonton Whitemud and Louise Rogers, former executive director of the Staff Nurses' Association, in Sherwood Park both came within striking distance of deposing sitting cabinet ministers.

Overall the Conservatives dropped 15% in the popular vote and 12 seats from the 2001 election.

As New Democrat Leader Brian Mason proclaimed forcefully in his election night speech: "Ralph Klein has NO mandate for privatizing our health care system." Friends of Medicare made the same point, saying, "Because of Klein's refusal to discuss his health reform plans during the election, his victory is not an endorsement of his health care musings. In fact, based on his loss of seats and decline to 47 per cent of popular support, it is clear that the majority of Albertans are deeply concerned about Klein's hidden health care agenda."

## **Will the secret agenda come out now?**

After not putting his secret plan for health care before the electors, Premier Klein cannot claim to have any mandate for privatization. That may not stop him from trying to force private health care onto the province. Word is that the Premier plans to proceed with his "international symposium" on health care and with a subsequent "consultation" with Albertans on the changes. The backdrop for it all will almost certainly be his on-going myth: we can't afford it.

## **Bets on new minister of Health and Wellness**

Gary Mar will likely be replaced. With the Charlebois contract scandal still fresh, he's almost certainly done as minister of Health and Wellness. Talk in the halls is that Iris Evans (who faced a strong challenge from nurse Louise Rogers) could get the nod. Or it could be former Education Minister (and medical doctor) Lyle Oberg. Oberg had a rough record in education, promoting terribly bad relations with teachers and boosting class sizes. Premier Klein has promised to announce the new cabinet by the end of the week.

## **CCEBA nurses ratify agreement**

On November 18, nurses voted to accept mediator's recommendations for a contract with the long-term care Employers who had not settled since the province-wide agreement was concluded last June 9th.

A strong majority of the nearly 500 nurses at the Locals voted for the agreement, which is approximately equivalent with the provincial deal. The main monetary items, salaries and premiums are exactly the same as the provincial agreement, giving the nurses salary increases of 3.5% in the first year and 3% in the second and third years of the contract.

"These nurses have waited over five months since their colleagues had their new agreement settled," says UNA President Heather Smith. "In the end we have what is substantially the same agreement."

## **Bethany Care Cochrane talks expected soon**

The last remaining contract remaining to be settled from the provincial negotiations round is with Bethany Care for its Cochrane facility. At an October hearing the Alberta Labour Relations Board dismissed Bethany Care's application for a vote on its final offer and asked the Society to return to good faith negotiations. Dates have yet to be set for further negotiations.

## **Central Park Lodge nurses to vote on new agreements**

Nurses with Locals #107 and #137 at Central Park Lodges are going to vote November 25 on a proposed new contract. The agreement includes salary parity with the provincial agreement and a significant increase in shift premiums to the provincial rates. Contract talks are just beginning for the Bow Crest facility, also run by Central Park Lodge. Dates are set for December and January of next year.

## **Nurses who are NOT going flat out provide better care**

Canadian researcher Linda O'Brien-Pallas says that reducing nursing workloads produces better results AND lower costs. In a research study focusing on cardiac patients, O'Brien-Pallas and colleagues found that: "nursing productivity/utilization should be kept at 85 percent, plus or minus

five percent. When rates rise above 80%, costs increase and quality of care decreases. Patient health is more likely to be improved at discharge if productivity/utilization levels are below 80 percent and if patients are cared for by nurses who work less overtime. When productivity/utilization levels are kept below 80 percent, nurses are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and absenteeism is reduced, and nurses are less likely to want to leave their jobs when productivity/utilization is less than 83 percent."

The report is available on the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) website: [www.nursesunions.ca](http://www.nursesunions.ca)

## **BCNU fights contracting out RNs in long term care**

BCNU is launching a major fight against attempts by some nursing home companies to contract out the jobs of Registered Nurses in long term care.

The campaign is aimed at companies that have served notice to the union this fall that they intend to fire their RNs and provide nursing staff to residents through an outside contractor.

The union considers this to constitute termination without cause, an illegal attempt by the companies to avoid their obligations under collective agreements. It shows great disrespect for RNs in long-term care who have given years of dedication and skill to the care of seniors in these homes.

## **KEEP IT LIGHT**

### **Too Sick...**

At a primary care clinic in Texas, an older woman found one reason or another to visit daily. She had few friends and liked to chat with the doctors and nurses.

They in turn treated all of her medical complaints with seeming concern and compassion.

Showing up one afternoon, after being absent for over a week, a nurse asked her why she hadn't been there in so long.

The lady responded, "I've been sick all week."

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