

## New UNA members ratify agreements bringing them into the provincial contract

New UNA members – who came into UNA from other unions last year as a result of Bill 27 – voted last week to ratify new agreements that bring them into the provincial Collective Agreement.

The agreements were ratified by each affected Local, including nurses in Fort McMurray and region, at Alberta Hospital Ponoka, at mental health services in Claresholm and mental health nurses all across the province. Overall, 96% of the members and 100% of the voting Locals approved the agreements, in the vote on October 6.

Unfortunately nurses who were formerly with other unions in the Chinook Health Region will have to wait a while yet for a contract. That Region has refused to reach a deal for the Fort Macleod Special Development Unit. As a result it has refused to ratify agreements that have

been reached for nurses in Raymond and the mental health sector. Retroactivity is the issue for the Fort Macleod nurses. UNA points out that these nurses are eligible for the same retroactivity back to April 1, 2003, including on salary, as all the other nurses who were covered by the negotiations.

UNA is taking Chinook to the Labour Relations Board (LRB) to resolve the issue. Under Bill 27 the LRB is empowered to mediate or even finally arbitrate any disputes. The LRB has appointed a mediator but has not set a date for a hearing.

UNA is also asking that Chinook be required to pay UNA's additional costs for protracted negotiations after the agreements were essentially settled except for the Fort Macleod facility.

"All the other agreements have retroactivity," David Harrigan, Director of Labour Relations, notes. "Chinook is being patently unreasonable here and forcing us to go through a lengthy process for something that should be a foregone conclusion. There is no reason the Fort Macleod nurses should not have the retroactivity all other nurses have been given. Chinook is objecting because it was drastically underpaying these nurses and now faces a bit of a bill to correct that. That's no reason for these nurses to be treated differently from all the others in the province."

### National conference in Edmonton focuses on nurses' role in safety

The opening day of the Halifax 4: The Canadian Healthcare Safety Symposium held in Edmonton focused on nurses' role in patient safety. Co-sponsored by the AARN, Capital and Calgary Health Regions and others the conference was titled "Patient Safety: In Nurses' Hands." Along with nursing educators, the sessions had speakers from both the Health Regions.

A graphic with a grey background. At the top, the number "127" is written in a very large, bold, black font. Below it, the word "DAYS" is written in a slightly smaller, bold, black font. Underneath that, the text "Without a contract for LTC Nurses" is written in a bold, black font, with "Without a contract" on one line and "for LTC Nurses" on the line below.

**Without a contract  
for LTC Nurses**

**Long-term care nurses continue to wait for their contract. Talks are finally resuming.**

## October dates being set for CCEBA talks

New dates for negotiations for the long-term care nurses have been set. UNA is meeting with Bethany Care Society Cochrane on October 13th and with the Continuing Care Employers Bargaining Association (CCEBA) on November 20th. These Employers were part of the provincial round of negotiations but have continuously refused to come to an agreement.

Nurse-in-charge, benefits and night shift premiums are some of the issues still outstanding in the negotiations.

UNA has applied for an arbitration panel to resolve the remaining issues so nurses get their new agreement and new rates of pay. UNA and CCEBA have agreed to an arbitration panel and chair who have yet to be appointed by the Minister. In any case UNA and the Employers are undertaking another negotiation round.

## Federal employees take strike action

Rotating strike action by Public Service Alliance of Canada members was called off last week as they head back to the table for more negotiations with the federal government. But PSAC resumed strike action on October 12th as talks failed to reach new tentative agreements.

## Salaries and wage equity for female employees are two of the main issues in the talks.

The employees of the Canada Revenue Agency, Parks Canada Agency and the Treasury Board have undertaken many different types of strike action across the country to put pressure on the government in the negotiations.

In Alberta, PSAC strikers put up a picket at Minister Anne McLellan's office in Edmonton. Other PSAC members went to different community groups and spent the day doing volunteer work. Last Tuesday, Red Deer strikers contributed pounds of food for the local food bank. In Jasper, striking members from the highways crew played havoc with the bi-annual town cleanup. Strikers in Calgary were invited to come back after volunteering at the Drop-in Centre and local food banks, as well as at the Salvation Army in Red Deer. CFB Suffield management was caught off guard when PSAC members set up picket lines there. More innovative strike tactics are expected this week.

## Lethbridge citizens give Premier a rousing "welcome"

When Premier Ralph Klein arrived to speak at a luncheon in Lethbridge on October 6, he was greeted by a group of over 50 citizens demanding a fair share of the pie for all Albertans. Ruth Jeannotte, President of the UNA Local at St. Michael's Health Centre was one of the key organizers of the protest. Ruth Jeannotte said St. Michael's nurses were protesting because they still do not have their new collective agreement.

Seniors, faculty members, nurses, transit employees and others mounted a special protest picket outside the Lethbridge Lodge where Klein was speaking.

## BCNU nurses ratify 0% increase contract

BC Nurses have voted strongly in favour of accepting the terms of settlement for a new two-year agreement, which covers the majority of registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses working in BC's health care system. In the September 30th poll, 87.5% of nurses voted yes.

"We're encouraged that the members who voted recognized the valuable outcomes of our new bargaining process," said BCNU president, Debra McPherson, spokesperson for the Nurses' Bargaining Association. "Obviously, in the face of a provincial zero, zero mandate and a roll over on wages and benefits, there were many who felt they had no choice."

McPherson was referring to a Framework Agreement reached between the Nurses' Bargaining Association and the Health Employers Association of BC, which was aimed at bringing stability to BC's health sector. The agreement stated there would be no rollback in nurses' hourly rates, benefits or time off provisions and that there would be no increase in total compensation.

The nurses did negotiate increases in the vehicle mileage rates, as high as 46¢ a kilometer effective April 1, 2005.

Also in the new agreement is a voluntary phased-in retirement program that will allow nurses 60 years old or older and are working full-time to convert to part-time for up to three years. Their pensions contributions would continue as if they were full time for the three years.

In an unusual move, BCNU will pay to extend a Long-term Disability benefit that was scheduled to expire next year. The change helps out about 400 nurses who went off on LTD before 1998.