

UNASTAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

EMPLOYERS CANNOT PAY OUT VACATION

CONTACT UNA IF THEY ATTEMPT TO PAY OUT YOUR VACATION

- The UNA Collective agreements do NOT allow for pay out of vacation time.

Some employers tell nurses that if they do not take their vacation, they will pay it out.

Vacation is earned one year to be taken in the next year (or in the months after it is earned).

The vacation year for most Employers runs from April 1 to March 31 and Employees who do not use up their full vacation entitlement can request in writing that the unused time be carried over to the next year and their request cannot be unreasonably denied.

Employers are not permitted to make arbitrary rules like: no more than five days can be carried over; all unused vacation must be paid out, etc. That would be unreasonable denial.

Employees who have attempted to schedule vacation but have had their request(s) denied, cannot be reasonably denied a request to carry over that vacation time to the next year.

Overtime can be paid out by the employer but every employee needs the well-deserved break of vacation every year.



CITIZEN ACTION TEAM

Join the CAT in your constituency
Local action to Keep Medicare Public
Contact Coordinator 1-888-633-1311
petition@keepmedicarepublic.ca

GOVERNMENT RE-ANNOUNCES “THIRD WAY”

PLAN FOR MORE FOR-PROFIT HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE IS OUT OF THE BAG

- On February 28th the government finally released its 10-point “framework” for a parallel for-profit health industry. “This is still their route to developing a for-profit health industry, one that would cost a lot more and leave out a growing number of Alberta families,” says UNA President Heather Smith.

The Alberta proposals would allow doctors to work both inside and outside the public system, would allow for-profit hospitals, and would force people to rely on private insurance. These changes all violate the spirit of medicare and the letter of the law, of the Canada Health Act.

This is clearly a plan that would allow queue jumping based on ability to pay.

More on the “third way” plan is available on the Friends of Medicare campaign website: www.keep-medicarepublic.ca.

LOA AND YOUR PENSION

- Nurses in the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) who take an unpaid leave of absence need to have an opportunity to “buy back” the pension contributions they missed. Employers must provide a statement of missed LAPP contributions by March of the following year. Employees then have until April 30 to give their employer written notice that they want to make up the missed pension contributions. The actual arrangement for payment is then made after the amounts are calculated by the pension plan. For the purchase of the first 12 months of service, the employer will have to also make their contribution to the pension. For the second to fifth years the Employee would have to pay the Employee and the Employer’s contribution rates. Making up missed LAPP contributions is valuable, because, missed pension time will either postpone retirement or reduces the pension.

GROUP LAUNCHES WEBSITE TO MONITOR LTC

- The Citizens' Network on Continuing Care has launched a website to monitor quality and safety in the province's long-term care system. "I believe the Citizen Watch website (www.continuing-carewatch.com) can play a vital role in monitoring the Government of Alberta's actions on continuing care," said Lynda Jonson. The Network is also calling on residents, families of residents and home care recipients, health care workers and other citizens to offer confidential feedback on their experiences, knowledge, observations and views of how the system is working. "It will be these contributions by the people of Alberta that will be the real success of this site," she said.

PRAIRIE GIANT: THE TOMMY DOUGLAS STORY.

- A 2 part / 2 hour Mini Series the miniseries will air on March 12 & 13, 2006, on CBC TV.

One of history's most interesting political leaders is profiled in this true tale of the struggle for social justice and subsidized medical care for all in the wake of the depression, political unrest and riots in the streets.

Help us celebrate the life and extraordinary achievement of Tommy C. Douglas.

His passion, integrity, leadership and innovation inspired a nation. The former

Saskatchewan premier, first federal NDP leader, pioneer of universal health care and relentless humanitarian bequeathed this country a legacy of political and social reforms of which every Canadian can be proud.

"You can lock up a mouse or a man, but you can't lock up an idea."

JOINT COMMITTEE LOOKING INTO GRIEVANCE PROCESS

- The Joint Committee of UNA and HBA Services has launched a special group to examine the overall effectiveness of the grievance process. "We are going to look at how we can make it work faster, more effectively and really help in fair administration of our collective agreements," said UNA Director of Labour Relations, David Harrigan. He will be one of the committee members who will be meeting with UNA and employer representatives around the province in the coming months.

LPN CHARGED IN DRUGGING CASE IN GRANDE PRAIRIE

- RCMP finally laid over 50 charges against LPN Sarah Christine Bowes in the bizarre case of the drugging of employees at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Grande Prairie. After several bouts of illnesses the nurses on one unit insisted on air quality tests last year. That turned up nothing, but blood tests showed benzodiazepine drugs. A loaded syringe was found tucked away and foods in staff fridges were found to be tampered with. The LPN's former employer says the woman claimed to be the victim of a similar crime while working in Ontario. An official at a nursing home east of Toronto says Sarah Christine Bowes was among three nurses who told police in late 2002 their sodas had been spiked with medication.

3RD WORLD CONGRESS FOR PSYCHIATRIC NURSES

- The College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta is one of the sponsors of the World Congress coming up May 11-13, in Calgary. The Congress will give nurses access to the leading experts in the field from around the world. They expect over 400 delegates and exhibitors. The International Conference organized by and for psychiatric nurses will include such reputable keynote speakers such as Margot Kidder, Big Daddy Tazz, David Miller, and Dale Nikkel.

BENEFIT PLANS "LEVELED UP"

NURSES HAVE UNTIL APRIL 30 ENROLL

- The Provincial collective agreement requires that the supplemental health benefit plan offered by Employers be equivalent to the plan offered by the Health Organizations Benefit Plan (HOBP).

Most employers use the HOBP. The following employers do not: Chinook, Calgary, Mineral Springs Banff, David Thompson, St. Mary's Camrose, and Capital.

The Joint Committee of UNA and HBA Services representatives recently reached a settlement on the issue of equivalency.

Calgary and Capital have amended their plans and will have an open period where employees who previously opted out can opt back in. The open period will run from March 1 to April 30. More information on the new benefits is available through your Local and on the UNA website, www.una.ab.ca.

APPEALING PRESCRIPTION CLAIMS DENIED BETWEEN JUNE 1, 2001 AND FEBRUARY 1, 2006

APPEALS MUST BE FILED BY APRIL 30, 2006

- Since 2001 the provincial Collective Agreement requires coverage for all prescribed medication. ("Eighty percent (80%) direct payment provision for all physician or dentist prescribed medication – Article 21.01 (ii)). There have been a number of disputes and denials of coverage.

The Joint Committee of UNA and HBA Services representatives recently set up a process to resolve prescription claims that have been denied.

Nurses who have had a prescription claim denied between June 1, 2001 and Feb. 1, 2006 should fill in and submit a claim form and documentation to UNA. The form is available through your Local or on the UNA website, www.una.ab.ca.