

UNA STAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

Don't cut out seniors

- Friends of Medicare and other organization have joined with Public Interest Alberta's seniors task force to call on the Alberta government not to cut seniors out of access to a universal pharmacare plan and public continuing care.

"Both of these government strategies will force the average senior who requires extensive medical care or expensive drugs to pay significantly more for their care," said Noel Somerville, Chairperson of PIA's Seniors task force. "When did it become acceptable public policy to put the heaviest load on those who are the sickest and frailest?"

The government continues to follow its policy of no more full-service nursing home beds in the province, only for-profit assisted living expansion. It also is sticking to the new "means-tested" plan for seniors drug coverage that will force seniors to pay more and more for prescriptions.

More at: www.pialberta.org/program_areas/Seniors

Nurses ready to help re-open maternity services in Banff

- Nurses at the Mineral Springs Hospital want to talk about what can be done to re-open the recently closed obstetrical services in Banff.

"Banff Nurses are extremely concerned about the closure, and want to see the full services restored as soon as possible," says United Nurses of Alberta provincial President Heather Smith.

United Nurses of Alberta has had preliminary discussions with Covenant Health about



Don't Cut Seniors Out!

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working out solutions to the staffing problems at the Banff hospital.

"We are quite ready to talk about changes to help attract the nurses Banff needs to re-open the maternity service," she says.

"We've been in close contact with the nurses at the Mineral Springs, who have been advised by the hospital not to make public statements about the closure," Heather Smith notes.

As provincial President, she is speaking out on the issue on behalf of the Banff nurses.

Alberta nurses concerned about safety of blood supply with lowered professional standards in screening

- Alberta's Blood Services nurses are joining the cross country criticism about proposed staffing changes at Canada's blood donor service.

Canadian Blood Services has announced a plan to replace Registered Nurses with unregulated staff in performing health screening and assessments of blood donors.

"If we take the RNs out of the screening booth, the risks will be increased," says Heather Smith, President of the United Nurses of Alberta.

Heather Smith says the screening process is critical and requires professional judgement.

"It's a high level of skill," she says, "and the standards are very high. It's something we can all be proud of."

The nurses are concerned that reducing the qualifications of the staff who are screening donors will raise the risks of infected blood coming into Canada's all voluntary blood donation system.

"The nurses' concern is the safety of the blood supply," says Heather Smith.

Nurses signing Telus petition

■ Hundreds of UNA nurses have sent in their signatures on the petition to stop Telus Sourcing Solutions from taking over payroll for Alberta Health Services.

For four years, Telus Sourcing Solutions Inc. (TSSI) has been doing payroll, benefits and Occupational Health and Safety administration for the Calgary Health Region. In that time, there have been constant errors - overpayments, underpayments, no pay for several pay periods, members dropped from benefit plans, etc. Nurses have been signing the petition urging Alberta Health Services NOT to give Telus the job province-wide. More on the UNA website: www.una.ab.ca.

CNA questions safety of “overcapacity protocols”

■ A recent statement from the Canadian Nurses’ Association notes that use of overcapacity protocols creates “new challenges that may affect the safety of patients and nurses and the integrity of nursing practice.”

The CNA position goes on to call for “sustainable solutions that will eliminate the need for and use of overcapacity protocols.” Investment in nursing recruitment and retention is one of the steps they mention. See the full statement online at: http://www.cna-aicc.ca/CNA/documents/pdf/publications/PS101_Overcapacity_e.pdf.

Videos on nursing on-line

■ The UNA website, www.una.ab.ca is now hosting links to a number of short on-line videos on different nursing topics. Follow the UNA videos link to see the short films from UNA as well as others from Ontario and even as far afield as Australia.

Public Interest Alberta conference Beyond Band Aids and Bailouts

■ The economy has hit the skids, but now is not the time for a return to the days of cutbacks, privatization and royalty rollbacks. There is another way to tackle

the economic downturn. Public Interest Alberta’s 3rd Annual Advocacy Conference is looking at how we can broaden the scope of public solutions to keep Alberta working, and make us greener at the same time. “Beyond Band-Aids and Bailouts: Public Solutions in Critical Times” runs April 3 - 5 in Edmonton. Speakers include Judy Rebick, Elaine Bernard and Dr. Robert Woollard. UNA is one of the events sponsors. Find out more at: www.pialberta.org/events

New Joint Statements on Degree allowance and paying out “Stat” banks

■ UNA and Alberta Health Services have settled two Provincial Collective Agreement questions and released two “Joint Statements” with clarifications.

Nurses with a degree either in nursing or applicable to nursing practice receive the education allowance. For international degrees, UNA and the Employers previously relied on the Nursing Education Program Approval Board (NEPAB) or the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) to determine equivalents. But NEPAB and CARNA have advised that they no longer evaluate foreign degrees for the purposes of registration.

UNA and the employers concluded that the most effective and credible means of obtaining satisfactory proof of the equivalency of an international nursing degree is to obtain an assessment from IQAS, the entity already providing the evaluation for non-nursing degrees.

Nurses already receiving the allowance will continue to do so.

The second statement clarifies that Employers cannot unilaterally pay out “stat” banks of holidays earned in lieu of Named Holidays when an employee transfers to part-time. Employees may request a pay out of the bank. For employees transferring to casual status, the banks will be paid out automatically UNLESS the employee requests otherwise.

Full copies of both Statements are available on the UNA website and on UNA*Net, UNA’s email and conferencing system.

Friends of Medicare hosting string of events

Athabasca Public Meeting

Help save our Hospitals & Public Medicare in the Athabasca Region!

March 16, 7:00 pm

Athabasca & District Seniors Society, 4810 48 St.

Rally! Don’t Cut Seniors Out!

Edmonton March 21 12 Noon

MLA Raj Sherman’s office - 220-8944 182 Street

Calgary April 18

Ron Liepert’s Constituency Office, #2 5555 Strathcona Hill SW @ 9:30 AM

Speakers Series Presenting: Steven Shrybman

Your Rights Under Medicare & How to Fight for them!

Lawyer Steven Shrybman’s practice focuses on international trade and public interest litigation, including issues concerning health care, the environment, human and labour rights, the protection of public services, natural resources policy, and intellectual property rights.

March 25 Calgary 7pm

Unitarian Church of Calgary, 1703 1 St NW, Panabaker Hall

March 26 Edmonton 7pm

Stanley Milner Library, Downtown Edmonton, Library Theatre, downstairs

A discussion with Friends of Medicare Executive Director David Eggen

April 7, Edmonton

Southeast Edmonton Seniors Association, 9350 82 St @ 1PM

Speaker’s Series: Featuring Dr. Tim Doty

April 9, Lethbridge

Public Library, 810 5th Ave South @ 7 PM

April 16, Medicine Hat

Details TBA

A Discussion with Diana Gibson (Parkland Institute) and Judy Wasylcia-Leis (MP for Winnipeg North)

April 15, Camrose

Norsemen Inn, 6505 48 Ave @ 6:30 PM

Friends of Medicare AGM

Featuring Guest Speaker Dr. Tom Noseworthy

April 18, Calgary

CUPE Local 37 Hall, 5112 3rd Street SE @ 11 AM