

UNASTAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

Negotiations waiting for mediator recommendations

- Provincial contract talks finally wound up on Wednesday, June 13, 2007 after long meetings the previous three days. For the next step mediator David Jones will write recommendations for the next collective agreement.

The UNA Negotiating Committee plans to take the recommendations to a full membership vote but was making NO public announcements this week. See your Local Executive members and attend Local meetings for details.

Bev Dick receives CFNU Bread and Roses Award

- Last week, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions gave UNA Vice-President Bev Dick its highest honour with the Bread and Roses Award. Over 700 nurses at the national Biennium rose in a standing ovation for Bev at the meeting in St. John's on June 7. An overwhelmed Bev, who had no idea she was even nominated, went to the podium to valiantly pull off a brief thank you speech.

Bread and Roses Awards are presented at each CFNU Biennium to acknowledge nurses who have made great contributions to unionized nursing in Canada.

"Change those politicians" – CFNU nurses told

- Nurses around the world are fighting to maintain rights and living conditions they once took for granted, because governments and health care employers have unleashed legislative and political attacks designed to weaken nurses' living conditions and collective power.

That's what 700 delegates and observers heard Tuesday (June 5) as they gathered at in St. John's for the opening plenary of CFNU's 2007 Biennium.

"When politicians get control of Parliament and change the laws in ways that hurt you, you have to fight back and change those politicians," said Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the New South Wales Nurses' Association in Australia.

"Nurses feel undervalued" – Newfoundland Premier at CFNU

- "Nurses feel underpaid and undervalued and in this province – it'll be different next time around," Danny Williams, Newfoundland and Labrador Premier told the CFNU convention in his address June 7th. "I have the deepest respect for your profession, you are the front-line," he said. Williams also said his government is acting to restore public confidence in the public health system and he underlined his government's commitment to Medicare.

He also accused Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union President Debbie Forward of shadowing him everywhere to put the case for nurses. Debbie, for her part, promised to carry on bringing him the message.

Williams acknowledged that too many nurses work "12, even 16-hour shifts" and then have to go back immediately to do another shift. "Nurses are unable to take their vacations, and this must be addressed," he said.

Canadian Nurses want pandemic protection

- CFNU delegates passed a strong resolution about pandemic planning and the protection of health staff. Delegates unanimously supported entrenching the "precautionary principle" in public health planning in order to ensure the safety of health care workers and the public. CFNU and its member organizations will be lobbying for amendments to build in the "precautionary principle" as a core element of the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan and of provincial plans.

The principle was not in play during the SARS outbreak in Toronto where two nurses and 42 others died. Justice Archie Campbell's final report on that outbreak found that nurses had been supplied with inadequate protection, particularly masks.

CFNU poll shows Canadians want more nurses to help reduce wait times

- The results of a new poll show that Canadians overwhelming (90%) agree with hiring more nurses to reduce waiting times to receive medical or surgical attention.

These are some the findings of an Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) that also found a nearly overwhelming majority of Canadians (84%) trust information that comes from organizations representing nurses, more than the 77% who trust information from organizations representing doctors.

The poll, carried out from May 29 to May 31, 2007 found that trust in nurses and doctors was significantly more than the two thirds (64%) who trust healthcare information coming from chief executives of hospitals and other health authorities, and the (60%) who are inclined to trust information from the provincial minister of health, 57% from the federal minister of health (57%) and editorial writers and commentators (51%).

Bev Dick representing Alberta nurses in U.S. fight for universal health care

- UNA Vice-President Bev Dick has gone to the California capital, Sacramento, to help nurses there launch Michael Moore's new documentary film SiCKO!

The California Nurses' Association hosted a national effort to bring single-payer health care to

the forefront. On Tuesday, June 12th, they held a landmark event in Sacramento, which included a legislative briefing, a rally, and a special premiere of Michael Moore's new documentary on America's health care crisis, titled SiCKO!

Bev Dick will be telling Americans how strongly Canadian nurses support a public system that provides care on the basis of need, not wealth.

Moore's film is a harsh indictment of America's medical insurance industry and makes the inevitable comparisons with Canada's universal system.

Women's wages lagging in Canada

- In the last twenty-five years progressively more women have been getting university degrees than men, but the gap between what women and men earn has decreased only slightly, according to a new study released by Statistics Canada.

In 1981, slightly more women than men pursued their education through to the degree level, but by 2001 nearly 50% more women were getting degrees than men.

During the 1980s the gap between men's and women's wages narrowed considerably, but during the 90's the trend stopped. In 1997, full-time employed women earned only 73 percent of men and university graduate women only earned 70% as much as university graduate men.

The study suggests that public spending cuts in the 1990s hurt women's wage equality. Wages rose less in the female-dominated health and education fields, where government budget cuts

hit hardest. But the technology boom at the same time, boosted wages in the more traditionally male fields in technology and engineering.

During the 1990's there was also little change in the careers chosen by men and women and far more women ended up as nurses and teachers.

Supreme Court says parts of BC's anti-union law violate workers' rights

- Governments cannot use laws to unilaterally rip up union contracts, the Supreme Court of Canada said in the headline-grabbing ruling it released June 8. Three BC unions challenged the provincial government's 2002 law that effectively cancelled collective agreements and resulted in mass layoffs of health workers. Thousands of workers, mainly housekeeping and service staff, lost their jobs, which the government turned over to for-profit businesses.

The Supreme Court ruling, which has been in process since the Court first agreed to hear the case in 2005, came as a welcome surprise to the Health Employees Union, BC Government Employees Union and BC Nurses' Union, which took the case to the highest court.

In a 6-1 decision, the court over-ruled parts of Bill 29 infringed on the union members' right. The court said the law interfered with contract process "either by disregarding past processes of collective bargaining, by pre-emptively undermining future processes of collective bargaining, or both."

The ruling is also good news for working people in Alberta where the government's notorious anti-labour laws have long been controversial.