

UNASTAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

New benefits coming into effect October 1

- The new supplementary health benefits come into effect on October 1. Because of this change there is an “open period” for employees not currently subscribing to the supplementary benefits, to join and begin subscribing. Employees who are considering joining the benefit plan should check with their employer for the dates of the open period.

Some previous benefit costs since August 1 can be covered

- Because some maximums in the benefit plans are rising, (orthodontic dental services lifetime maximum increases to \$3,000 extensive, and dental services coverage annual maximum increases to \$3,000), costs that had been over the limit and were not covered from August 1, 2007 forward will be eligible for benefit reimbursement. Anyone who incurred costs over the previous maximum, but up to the new \$3,000 limits, since August 1, should resubmit those bills for reimbursement.

The parties initially thought retroactivity would apply to the beginning of the current benefit year. However this is incorrect. As this information was posted in an August Spotlight the parties have agreed to accept retroactive claims to August 1, 2007.

October 10 deadline to apply for 2% retroactivity

- To receive retroactive pay on the 2% Long Service Pay Adjustment to April 1st, nurses must apply with their employer before October 10th. Nurses who apply later, or reach the 20 years of nursing mark later will receive the 2% only from the date they apply.

Dates for retroactive pay and long service payment

- UNA will announce on the website www.una.ab.ca and on the First Class Negotiations News conference, the dates that each Employer will be paying Retroactive Pay and the 2% Long Service Increment retroactivity. Check those sites for up to date information.

Alberta's "Health Workforce Action Plan"

- On September 11, three cabinet ministers met at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton to announce, with great fanfare, the new Health Workforce Action Plan.

The ministers announced \$27.5 million to buy patient lifts across the province and talked about core retention and recruitment issues.

However, the government's own strategy admits: “Despite the expansions, projections show that Alberta won't be able to produce the 15,000 health providers it needs by 2016.”

The plan includes \$5.2 million for expanding health training including 258 new seats immediately. But only 37 of those are in general Registered nursing, 9 in graduate nursing and 35 in nursing specialties. There are also 128 extra spots for LPNs.

A copy of the plan is available on the government's website at www.health.gov.ab.ca.

National Drug Plan Hearings in Alberta October 29 and 30

- The Canadian Health Coalition's national Drug Plan hearings are coming to Alberta in October. The hearings will collect personal stories highlighting the need for a national program and receive briefs and policy positions and proposals for a public drug insurance plan and better pharmaceutical management.

In Edmonton

Monday, October 29, 2007 1-5 pm.
Stanley A. Milner Library Edmonton Room
7 Sir Winston Churchill Square

In Calgary

Tuesday, October 30, 2007 1-5 pm
Oslo Room, Olympic Volunteer Centre
North End of McMahon Stadium

Fall line-up of UNA educational workshops

- UNA puts on regular full-day educational workshops for members who are serving on Local Executives or Local Committees. Education Officer Tim Gough and Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Officer Janice Peterson run the workshops to provide skills and information to Local executive and local committee members. This fall there are also Nurse Abuse workshops open at no cost to all members. See the UNA*Net or the website www.una.ab.ca (Member Resources menu item on left) for a full list of up and coming workshops.

New law allows first responders to have assailants tested for blood-borne diseases but excludes nurses

- The Alberta government has just announced a new law that allows “first responders” who have been exposed by patients to bodily fluids to have those patients tested for blood-borne diseases including HIV and Hep C. But the new law does NOT apply to nurses or doctors.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Computer Flatlined

I work in a busy office, and when a computer goes down it causes quite an inconvenience. Recently one of our computers not only crashed, it made a noise that sounded like a heart monitor.

“This computer has flat-lined,” a co-worker called out with mock horror.

“Does anyone here know how to do mouse-to-mouse?”

Saskatchewan’s special talks on nurse retention collapse

- This week, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) says by refusing to commit funds to a nursing retention and recruitment program, Premier Lorne Calvert has walked away from his responsibility to ensure that Saskatchewan’s health care system will be able to continue to deliver the services the public has a right to expect.

SUN and the Saskatchewan government have been conducting special retention talks this year since SUN research showed the province is losing nurses at a rapid rate.

More news on their website at:
www.sun-nurses.sk.ca

Human service sector launches desperate campaign on extreme staff shortage

- Low wages and benefits are causing a serious staffing shortage in Alberta’s human service sector says a group of provincial agencies. On August 29, the agencies launched whocaresalberta.com, a campaign to increase the pay for social agency workers. “We have two key objectives,” said Anton Smith of the Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families, “increase salaries and benefits to people providing services and a three year social infrastructure plan for the province.”

More women than men in Canada’s unions

- For the first time there are more women than men in Canadian unions, according to a recent Statistics Canada Labour Force survey.

The survey, which was released on September 7, for Labour Day, showed that the number of women joining unions has increased steadily over the past decade.

Between January and June, 2007, the survey found 2,248,000 women were represented by unions while only 2,237,200 men were.

Construction trades protest unfair labour laws

- For several days last week, construction workers in northern Alberta walked off the job to protest the province’s labour laws that they say are stopping them from freely negotiating. The province’s 4,000 union carpenters, scaffolders and roofers were particularly angry, because they are being blocked from striking even though they had a 97% strike vote. Alberta law says when three-quarters (19 of 25) of the groups in the unionized construction industry have ratified a settlement with their employers, the remaining trades have to go to arbitration.

Unions challenging Alberta labour laws

- Last week the Boilermakers and Carpenters each filed statements of claim with the Court of Queens Bench challenging provisions of Alberta’s labour laws and more claims are expected this week. “The government of Alberta has been flaunting the Supreme Court of Canada for many years in the area of labour law,” says Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan. “A number of sections of the Labour Code have been implicated in decisions by the Supreme Court, yet the government has done nothing to correct these injustices.”