

UNA STAT

UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA NEWS UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

BIAS AT LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD CALLS ITS DECISIONS IN TO QUESTION, SAYS UNA

- UNA has asked the Labour Relations Board to reconsider all its Bill 27 rulings as a result of the revelations last week that one of the Board vice-chairs drafted parts of the law in consultation with health employer lawyers.

"The memos that came out last week showed that the Board was clearly in a conflict of interest," says David Harrigan, UNA's Director of Labour Relations. "We've called for a public inquiry, and the opposition parties have called for resignations. They must reconsider the decisions on Bill 27."

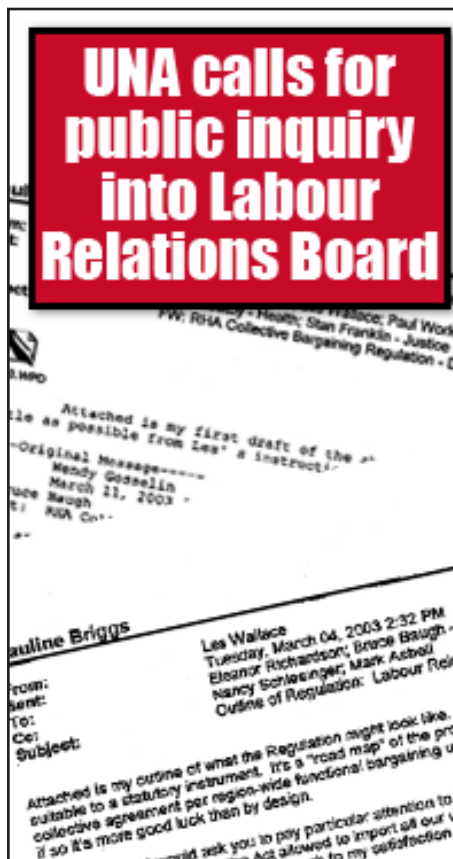
"The Labour Relations Board is supposed to be an impartial referee that fairly resolves disputes, but when they are obviously collaborating with employers, it makes the whole process a farce," David Harrigan said.

Bill 27 massively restructured unions in the Health Regions, a process that hurt the interests of many of the province's unionized health workers including Registered nurses.

"We have had concerns for years that the Board is biased toward employers, now we have what you can call smoking gun evidence of it," he said.

AFL PURSUES PUBLIC INQUIRY OF THE LRB

- Labour leaders from around the province agreed to call on the government to hold a full public inquiry at a special meeting at the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) on Friday, December 2.



They also signed an open letter to Premier Ralph Klein, calling on him to work toward a climate of fairness and justice in the province by calling the public inquiry.

"We need a public inquiry to get to the bottom of how deeply compromised the LRB is," says AFL President Gil McGowan. "The truth needs to come out."

The AFL has doggedly pursued the Freedom of Information process for the Alberta Labour Relations Board

documents around Bill 27. Initially, the AFL's request was completely turned down by the LRB but government departments released some documents. Many of those documents however, had thick lines blacking out the entire contents of the letters and memos. The Federation said the documents should be made public in its appeal to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The original documentation is all available on the Alberta Federation of Labour's website at: <http://www.afl.org/pressroom/lrb.cfm>

AFL'S "FIRST CONTRACT" CAMPAIGN

- Following on the heels of the messy and sometimes dangerous strike at Lakeside Packers in Brooks, the Alberta Federation of Labour is launching a province-wide campaign aimed at reducing the likelihood of similar strikes occurring in the future.

"Alberta is one of the few provinces in Canada that doesn't have first-contract arbitration," says AFL president Gil McGowan. "It's a relatively small legal change that, if implemented, could go a long way to promoting labour peace in the province."

In other provinces, first contract arbitration has proven to be effective at preventing bitter strikes over union recognition. They are successful at establishing the first agreement, which then allows the two parties to focus on making the relationship work.

The AFL's new campaign will feature radio ads, leaflets and a strategy to lobby government MLAs. Find out more on the AFL's website: www.afl.org/campaigns-issues/firstcontract/default.cfm

HARDISTY NURSES GET FIRST AGREEMENT

- UNA nurses at the Hardisty Nursing Home in Edmonton have reached a memorandum of understanding for a first collective agreement. After lengthy negotiations a deal was concluded December 1 and will be going to a ratification vote of the members shortly. Under the proposed agreement, the nurses will now get a significant wage hike, sick leave, benefits, shift differential, posting language, layoff and recall language and protection under a contract.

BETHANY COLLEGESIDE'S CONTROVERSIAL "FAIR"

- Nurses at Bethany Collegeside in Red Deer have gone to mediation in pursuit of their first collective agreement. So far the Bethany Care Society is refusing to agree to a good benefits package and charge pay for the nurses. That's surprising as Collegeside recently published an ad about a career fair in which it said it offered "excellent benefits" and charge pay. UNA took out its own newspaper ad to correct the errors in Bethany's ad. "Collegeside admitted that their career fair ad was false, but said they would not publish a correction – so we said we would," UNA's advertisement read, in part. In a subsequent news story, Bethany CEO Greer Black said their ad was a "misprint". "We did not want to mislead anyone," he said. But they refused to print a retraction.

NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE IN OTHER LOCATIONS

- Talks continue for first agreements at the Central Park Lodge long-term care facilities, Mckenzie Towne Care Centre, Local #401 in Calgary, and South Terrace Care Centre in Edmonton, Local #235. Talks also continue at the Holy Cross Long-term Care centre in Calgary where mediation began in November. The Victorian Order of Nurses in Edmonton is also continuing negotiations toward their new agreement. Vulcan Extencicare, another new Local, is also about to go into negotiations for the first contract for the nurses at the facility.

UNA'S FIRST ALL-NURSES LOCAL READY TO BEGIN BARGAINING

- One of UNA's newest Locals, #213 at Beverly Long Term Centre in Midnapore is preparing to begin talks for their first contract. This is UNA's first Local for all the employees "in direct nursing care" including RNs and LPNs.

FINNING STRIKE ENDS WITH WIN ON CONTRACTING OUT LANGUAGE

- The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers strike at the Finning Equipment plant in Edmonton came to a sudden end after nearly three weeks on the picket line. The workers won the language on contracting out that they needed. The strikers had used an innovative strategy of picketing appearances by one of the members of Finning's Board, Conservative leadership hopeful Jim Dinning. When the Local said they were about to launch a media campaign about Dinning at Finning the company came to their senses – and to an agreement – quite quickly.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS ACT REGULATIONS FOR REGISTERED NURSES AND PSYCHIATRIC NURSES PROCLAIMED

- It's official, November 30, the provincial Cabinet finally proclaimed the Health Professions Act Regulations pertaining to Registered Nurses. This changes the name of the AARN to CARNA, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta.

The Regulations for Registered Psychiatric and Mental Deficiency Nurses under the Health Professions Act (1999) were proclaimed on November 25, changing the name of the RPNA to the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta (CRPNA).

Among other changes the new Health Professions Act Regulations for both Colleges makes the disciplinary process much more public and makes reporting mandatory for all disciplinary actions involving suspensions or terminations.

NURSES RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT SAFETY IN HOME VISITS

- Nurses have many concerns in many Public Health and Home Care settings. Often the Employer's working alone "policy" is incomplete and inadequate to address the concerns of community workers.

"Not all community nurses have a cell phone when they are on the road, and buddied visits are frowned upon and discouraged," says Sandi Johnston, President of Local #211 in Calgary.

"We currently are prohibited from refusing to provide client care when unsafe to do so except if it is a proven risk-whatever that means," she says.

Other Regions have varying degrees of home visit safety policy. In Edmonton, "Some offices have strict policy and procedure which are adhered to around safety on home visits and working alone while others do not," reports UNA Board Member Judith Moar.

She says they often have "unsafe and threatening incidents with home visits and working alone in Community Health."

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

One day in the hospital, two little boys were lying on stretchers next to each other outside of the operating room.

The first boy leans over and asks, "What are you in for?"

"I'm here to get my tonsils out and I'm nervous," the second boy says.

The first kid says, "You've got nothing to worry about! I had that done when I was four.

They put you to sleep and when you wake up they give you lots of ice cream and Jell-O. It's a breeze!"

"Well what are you here for?" the second kid asks.

"A circumcision." The first kid replies woefully.

The second kid says "Wow! I had that done when I was born and I couldn't walk for a year!"