

NEWS Bulletin UNA

United Nurses of Alberta



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FOCUS ON
RESPECT!**

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UPDATE**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Happy Holidays, and Solidarity in the tough bargaining ahead

■ **THE** Holiday Season is almost upon us, and I wish everyone of you a happy winter holiday, no matter which tradition you celebrate.

But as I told UNA's Demand Setting Meeting in November, in the New Year we will have very serious matters to consider.

I told the more than 700 delegates to the meeting from every local that is part of UNA's Provincial Collective Agreement that we are all sitting on a powder keg. I don't think I have ever seen a time, as we enter collective bargaining, that so many nurses are dissatisfied, nor a time when the expectations for bargaining with our employers have been so high.

I feel the same kind of anger, resentment, and high expectations that were felt in previous rounds of bargaining which ultimately ended in strikes.

We will be communicating this reality to the other side of the bargaining table – and to the government that is enabled by legislation to give public sector employers secret instructions our employers are not permitted to tell us about. Alberta's nurses demand respect, and we are not willing to put up with long delays or inadequate monetary offers.

Unlike the past, we have a legal right to strike. If we encounter delays or inappropriate offers, we will move forward to the next step.

As David Harrigan, our Director of Labour Relations and the leader of the Bargaining

Committee, put it, If hospitals can afford to pay agency nurses \$300 an hour and the province is enjoying a large surplus, Alberta can afford to pay its Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses what they deserve.

There are other serious issues that will impact us in 2024. Public delivery of public health care is absolutely imperative. But as happened in the 1990s, Alberta again has a government that is ideologically committed to privatizing public services, including health care. We are going to have to be prepared to fight that fight, even as we struggle to protect our Canada Pension Plan and our right to a secure retirement.

In all of this we will emphasize The Rs – *Respect, Recruit, and Retain* – to fix the fundamental problem in health care, the shortages of nurses and other medical professionals. And we will emphasize the Three Cs – *Courage, Challenge, and Commitment* – that will be required to win the collective agreement we all deserve.

We are Alberta's nurses – at your side and on your side, and willing to stand up for our rights.

Yes, we are struggling to make life better for us. We are also fighting to make it safer and better for our patients.

In Solidarity,

Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta

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Respect for nurses key to fixing staffing crisis, say delegates at UNA AGM



■ **RESPECT** for nurses in Alberta's public health care system was top priority for members of United Nurses of Alberta who attended the union's Annual General Meeting from October 17 to 19 at the EXPO Centre in Edmonton.

With about 1,000 delegates, observers, guests and staff at the AGM, nurses from across Alberta debated and voted on motions impacting the internal governance and operations of the union.

The AGM took place as UNA relaunched its 3Rs: *Respect, Retain, Recruit* public engagement campaign, and those themes resonated strongly with the nurses at the meeting.

Over the course of the three-day meeting, attendees heard from UNA President Heather Smith and guest speakers, including national radio program host Dr. Brian Goldman, author Andrew Nikiforuk, Canadian Federation of Nurses Union President Linda Silas, College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta President Tonya Ratushniak, UNA member Barbara Campbell, Manitoba Nurses Union President Darlene Jackson, and

Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan.

Delegates also voted to elect candidates for two positions on the union's executive board and numerous regional representative spots.

Danielle Larivee was re-elected as First Vice-President

Larivee is a Registered Nurse and was first elected to the position in 2019. She previously served as President of UNA Local 315 Keewetink Lakes (Community) and from 2015 to 2019 was the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake and an Alberta cabinet minister.

Christina Doktor was acclaimed as Secretary-Treasurer

Doktor is a Registered Nurse and member of Local 196 (Edmonton Community). She has served as a North Central District representative on UNA's provincial board since 2006 and most recently was vice-chair of UNA's Finance Committee. She also served as Secretary of Local 301 from 2004 to 2008.

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AGM delegates from North District pose for a group photo in front of a mural outside the Edmonton Expo Centre.



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Doktor succeeds long-time Secretary-Treasurer **Karen Craik**, who was first elected to the position in 1996 after serving a decade as a representative from the South Central District. Craik is a member of UNA Local 115 (Foothills Medical Centre) and has been an effective advocate for Alberta nurses and improved workplace conditions for all workers. (See story on page 11).

UNA congratulates North District representative **Jerry Macdonald**, North Central District representatives **Terri Barr, Jennifer Castro, Cathleen Cobb, Christine Moncrieff, and Stephanie**

Pickett, Central District representative **Donica Geddes**, South Central District representatives **Barbara Campbell, Marie Corns, Ken Ewanchuk, and Edith-Rose Cairns**, and South District representative **Melinda Skanderup** on their election to those roles.

UNA thanks outgoing district representatives **Tim Bouwsema, Susan Fisk, Jennifer Knight, and John Terry** for their tireless service, dedication and contributions to the union on the provincial and local levels.

UNA's next AGM is scheduled for October 2024. 🍷

Scenes for UNA's 2023 Annual General Meeting, October 17 to 19.



UNA President Heather Smith before her address to the UNA Annual General Meeting on October 17.



Heather Smith tells 2023 AGM Alberta must treat nurses and other health care workers with respect



■ **ALBERTA'S** government and health care employers need to understand that when the world-wide supply of nurses is tight and demand for nurses' skills is high everywhere, the market "is certain to be impacted in ways that benefit members of the nursing profession," United Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith told the opening session of the union's Annual General Meeting.

Solving Alberta's nurse shortage "is going to require treating nurses and other health care workers with respect," she told the approximately 1,000 Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, staff and observers on October 17 at the Edmonton EXPO Centre.

"You can't recruit and retain nurses – which the government admits it needs to do, and says it wants to do – without treating nurses with respect, and to be blunt, that's going to cost money," she said to applause.

With formal bargaining set to commence in 2024 for a new collective agreement between UNA and Alberta Health Services and other major health care employers, the focus on negotiations among the union's more than 30,000 members is intense, she said.

"I have never seen more interest among UNA's members about what our demands should be in bargaining," she said. "There was

twice the number of proposals we received in 2019!"

The number of Professional Responsibility concerns and Occupational Health and Safety reports filed by UNA members is also high, she noted. "This is an indicator above all of just how desperate Alberta's nurses are to help protect their patients and insure the safety of the facilities in which they work."

"Members are not just concerned, they're angry too," she added. "Our employers, and our government, need to be paying attention at a time when health authorities in other provinces are recruiting aggressively."

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UNA representatives on the Rural Capacity Investment Fund (RCIF) (left to right): Darci Penman, Katie O’Byrne, Lara McQuade, David Harrigan, Leticia Bodor, Donna Smith, and Heather Smith



Images by UNA

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In her wide-ranging report to the AGM, Smith also touched on the Alberta government’s plan to decentralize Alberta Health Services, its scheme to separate from the Canada Pension Plan and replace it with an Alberta pension, its continuing interest in privatizing public health care services, the impact of its plan to send internationally educated nurses (IENs) to remote and rural parts of the province, and the successful Rural Capacity Investment Fund negotiated in UNA’s last round of bargaining.

One of the next challenges nurses will face is the government’s plan to decentralize AHS, she said. The plan had not been announced at the time of her speech. The uncertainty surrounding the restructuring announced on November 9 will cause challenges in the upcoming round of negotiations, she has said since.

“As we struggled through COVID-19, facing exhaustion, uncertainty and fear in our workplaces – not to mention the threatening behaviour of many of our fellow Albertans who had been convinced COVID was a conspiracy, not a disease – we had hoped for a reprieve, a respite, when the worst of the pandemic had passed,” she said. “But,

sadly, one crisis has been replaced with another, and it appears to be getting worse.”

To loud applause, she called for the government to back away from its “terrible notion” of pulling out of the Canada Pension Plan.

“One of the things unions like UNA worry about big time is retirement security for our members, and all Albertans,” she explained. “That’s why we fight for the existence of good pension plans for you. And that’s why we’re fighting now to keep Albertans in the CPP.”

If Alberta pulls out of the CPP, she predicted, Alberta pensioners will lose security, stability and portability and, in spite of claims to the contrary in the government’s tax-financed advertising campaign, they could well suffer a loss in benefits.

“Despite all the government’s talk, the scheme remains extremely unpopular with most Albertans,” she said, telling the government to “keep your hands off our pensions! Keep your hands off our CPP!”

Regarding use of internationally educated nurses – often referred to as IENs – Smith warned that “the burden of support for IENs, many of them new to Alberta, new

to Canada, and new to the rural circumstances in which they will be asked to work, will fall to front-line nurses already experiencing overwhelming workloads, mandatory overtime, and fatigue.”

“If our employers think they have things in hand, they are going to have to learn that an orientation session isn’t going to cut it!”

As for the Rural Capacity Investment Fund program, in which AHS agreed to spend \$7.5 million a year over two years for a joint union-employer committee to fund ways to encourage recruitment and retention of nurses in rural areas, including providing relocation assistance, it has “had the impact of making front-line nurses feel a little more respected and valued in their workplaces and careers.”

In conclusion, she urged delegates to prepare for a tough year of bargaining ahead.

With as many as 250,000 public sector workers represented by several unions going into negotiations with the Alberta government and its agencies in 2024, Smith said the big unanswered question will be “how is this the government going to approach public-sector bargaining?”



Linda Silas to Canadians: Nurses are hard-working professionals, 'treat them that way!'

■ **THE** time has come to end “agency nursing” in Canada, the president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions told UNA’s annual general meeting on October 19.

“If employers can pay \$200 an hour for a nurse from an agency, they can pay *you*,” Linda Silas told the delegates to the AGM, to their cheers.

Hospitals and health authorities throughout Canada are relying ever more heavily on nurses from private staffing agencies, and the costs of those services are soaring, Silas said. It makes no sense.

CFNU, she said, has launched a study in partnership with Queen’s University into the use of agency nurses (sometimes known as “travel nurses”) in Canada. The goal is to learn “how many public dollars are going to private staffing agencies? What is the impact on patient care?”

“The report will provide key policy recommendations for provincial, territorial and federal governments,” Silas explained, adding that she would never blame an individual nurse for leaving a bad job with

a bad employer to take up agency nursing. “I blame the employers.”

But the solution to the high cost of agency nursing is fair pay increases and full-time career jobs for nurses, she asserted.

“Everybody says, ‘I love a nurse,’ but how much do you love nurses? Do you love her enough to give her a 20-per-cent pay increase? Do you love her enough to give her a permanent job?”

Respect for nurses, including fair market pay and safe staffing and hours of work, is the key to solving both the national nursing shortage and the high cost of agency nursing, Silas told delegates. And, she asked, “Why isn’t nursing education free in this country?”

There can be no more “Ms. Nice Nurse,” Silas said. “You are going to fight like hell to keep what you have and enhance health care!”

“We were never those angels of mercy,” she concluded. “Those wings on your backs? You clip them! We are hard-working professionals, and they need to treat us that way!” 🍷

“If employers can pay \$200 an hour for a nurse from an agency, they can pay you,”

- Linda Silas



Teamwork works! It can reduce stress and burnout, says CBC's Dr. Brian Goldman

■ **"SHOW** me a health care team that has a teamwork model and I'll show you a team that has a lower rate of burnout," Dr. Brian Goldman, the high-profile physician and broadcaster who hosts the CBC's *White Coat/Black Art* radio program, told delegates to UNA's Annual General Meeting.

"There are proven benefits of teamwork," said Goldman, who has practiced as a physician since 1982, specializing over the years in family and Emergency Room medicine. "You make better diagnoses," he explained. "More appropriate treatment is more likely to be accepted. ... You see more patients. You see them more thoroughly."

According to Goldman, one of the great benefits nurses bring to health care is their empathy. Being able to imagine what it's like to be your patient, he explained, is important for getting patients onside with a treatment plan. "Empathy as a cornerstone of that purpose."

But overwork, stress and burnout are the enemies of empathy, he said. The factors contributing to that are well known to his audience: inadequate pay, mandatory overtime for days on end, unsafe nurse-to-patient ratios, public harassment, and "lack of respect inside the system (and) from politicians who act as if nurses are disposable."

"You are at the heart of the crisis," Goldman told his audience. "In the province of Alberta, you have inadequate staff, you have dangerous nurse-to-patient ratios, you have mandatory overtime, you have moral injury when you know that your absence may mean closing the Emergency Department. Who wants to carry that when it's not your fault?"



Dr. Brian Goldman

Image by UNA

The author of four Canadian bestselling books – including *The Power of Teamwork: How we can all work better together* – offered his thoughts on how to work together effectively in a health care setting to more than 1,000 nurses, union staff, guests and observers on the AGM's final day, Oct. 19.

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Image from Freepik

“Nearly all of them say that low staffing is a major dissatisfaction source.
Lack of respect is a huge issue.”

– Dr Brian Goldman

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“It’s the system’s fault, it’s politicians’ fault for not putting enough into recruitment and retention,” he continued, pointing the decline in the number of nurses as the population of Canada rose 6 per cent and there was a 14-per-cent increase in the nurse vacancy rate.

“How’s that supposed to square?” asked Goldman. Senior nurses leaving the profession has a triple effect, he warned. “Not only do you lose that wisdom and experience on the front lines, but you also lose that cornerstone of teaching and mentoring that young nurses want and need when they get out of school and don’t want to be thrown in the fire.”

This, in turn, means younger nurses are also leaving the profession sooner than was expected, he said. “Nearly all of them say that low staffing is a major dissatisfaction source. Lack of respect is a huge issue.”

Goldman said he believes sensitive teamwork can reduce the worst effects of this pervasive situation – and encouraging empathy is part of that toolkit.

Good teams don’t throw members under the bus, he explained – noting that medicine often encourages a punitive response to mistakes.

Good teams also identify the strengths of members, and let them apply those strengths, he said. “Everybody has powers that need to be acknowledged” – that, when used, can help a team through a crisis.

“I’m going to challenge each of you to go back to the place you work, to get together as a team to identify the ‘superpower’ of another member of the team,” he concluded. “It’s so much more positive and powerful when that comes from somebody else.” 🍷



Pandemics end when communities end the conditions that create them, author tells AGM

■ **AFTER** COVID-19, nurses need to be ‘the candle in the dark,’ says Andrew Nikforuk

Citing a strong connection in history between pandemics and times of political, technological, economic, and ecological instability, journalist, author and environmentalist Andrew Nikforuk warned delegates to UNA’s Annual General Meeting on October 18 that things are going to be different after COVID-19.

a serious and growing problem in the world we all now inhabit.

“Pandemics discriminate,” he said. “The greatest consequences are among the poor.” But in an era of easy air travel, and an exploited global workforce, those consequences more easily reach out to the better off.

Another lesson of history, Nikforuk told delegates, is that pandemics are as often ended through engineering as much as medicine.

Cholera, driven by industrialization, became a scourge of urban Britain in the 1830s. London, overwhelmed by human waste from its burgeoning population, experienced human-made conditions in which the disease could thrive. “Construction of proper sewers eliminated cholera in England.”

Similarly, Nikforuk argued, as COVID-19 continues to spread through the air, ending this pandemic may become a job for engineers. “We need to be focused on cleaning the air,” he asserted, calling for investment in indoor air cleaning infrastructure to become a public priority.

In a crisis when public health measures were attacked as an infringement of individual liberties, he added, pandemics end with co-operation and community. “They end when we have the courage and the will to end the conditions that caused them.”

And in this, he said, with their compassion, scientific education, and practical skill, nurses must play a critical role.

Quoting Florence Nightingale – who exclaimed, “how very little can be done under the spirit of fear” – he concluded, “You, as nurses, need to be the candle in the dark.” 🕯️

Environmentalist and author Andrew Nikforuk addresses the UNA AGM on October 18.



Image by UNA

“As a nurse, it is your professional obligation to bring your concerns of unsafe patient care to the attention of your manager.”

“There is no new normal,” warned the author of numerous books, including two about pandemics. “Tomorrow will not be like yesterday.”

We need to brace ourselves for more pandemics, more frequently, than in the past century, because political, technological, ecological and economic factors are lining up to create conditions in which new pathogens can be created and spread, he said. He pointed to the rise of *E. coli* infections tied to the industrialization of beef and pork farming.

Nikforuk argued history also shows a strong connection between infectious disease and disparity of economic wellbeing,



Karen Craik, 1978

Karen Craik, UNA Secretary Treasurer, retires after nearly 30 years

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta members attending the October 2023 Annual General Meeting thanked and paid tribute to long-time UNA Secretary-Treasurer Karen Craik, who retired after 27 years in the role.

“I will always be grateful to Karen for her hard work, help, and valued advice, and for the watchful eye she has kept on UNA’s finances over nearly three decades,” UNA President Heather Smith told delegates to the AGM.

Smith expressed her sadness that Craik was unable to attend the meeting because of health challenges. “No one is more disappointed than Karen herself that she could not be here in person,” Smith said. “This AGM was meant to be about saying thank you to Karen for her years of service and honouring her contribution to our union. While Karen will not be present this week, we will nevertheless celebrate her huge contribution to UNA.”

AGM delegates gave a standing ovation after watching a tribute video prepared for Craik by UNA’s Communications Department that included video and photos of her activities in the union over more than three decades.

In Craik’s honour, each delegate received a yellow scarf and a pack of sunflower seeds, her favourite colour and flower, and

symbols closely associated with the fight against ovarian cancer.

Craik started her career as a Registered Nurse in 1978 after graduating from Mount Royal College in Calgary. She worked in several Calgary hospitals over the years, learning the importance of mentorship in the nursing profession. She walked the picket line through the UNA strikes of 1982 and 1988, showing her belief in the importance of solidarity and strong union leadership.

Craik was first elected as secretary-treasurer in 1996 after serving a decade as a representative from the South Central District. She is a member of UNA Local 115 (Foothills Medical Centre).

Karen has been an effective advocate for Alberta nurses and improved workplace conditions for all workers. She was the founding chair of the Calgary Workers’ Resource Centre. She has also been involved in the broader community on health issues, serving on the Board of Ovarian Cancer Canada and as the founding co-chair of the Ovarian Cancer Walk of Hope in Calgary. 🌻



Images and artwork by UNA





2024 Bargaining

We are 'sitting on a powder keg,' President Heather Smith warns delegates to UNA's Demand Setting Meeting

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith warned Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses from throughout Alberta at the opening of the union's November Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton that the province is sitting on a powder keg.

"Dissatisfaction, unhappiness, whatever adjective you want to apply in terms of our workplaces and whatever has gone on since we last had a demand setting meeting, combined with expectations," Smith told the more than 800 participants at the three-day meeting that marks the start of bargaining for a new UNA Provincial Collective Agreement. "That is our powder keg!"

"We are going to work our way through our proposals to come up with what we believe nurses in this province need to address both expectations and dissatisfaction," she said. "It has to be a package that we individually will commit to support and promote and that we believe our

members, who you are here representing, will also support and commit to."

And, she continued, "I feel the same kind of anger, resentment, and expectations that were felt in previous rounds of bargaining which ultimately ended in strikes."

"Why am I saying this? Because I think, again, we are the closest that we have been in many years to having to consider strike action."

One thing is different now from the days when past nursing strikes took place in Alberta, Smith said, noting that she has been on strike four times "and every time it was scary."

What's changed is the law, thanks to Canada's courts, which have firmly established nurses like all workers have a legal right to strike, subject to the provisions of essential-services legislation. "Hopefully, we don't have to reach that point. If we do, we need to be assured that what we are asking for is solidly supported by our members."

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Members of UNA Local 120, Chinook Regional Hospital, show off their Super RN shirts at the Demand Setting Meeting.





UNA's 2024 Provincial Negotiating Committee (left to right): Kerrie Bradshaw, Local 37; Blair Bukmeier, LRO; Jan Robinson, Local 17; David Harrigan, Chief Negotiator; Kevin Champagne, Local 115; Bernadette Brocal, Local 121; Heather Smith, President; Trudy Bennett, Local 23; Orissa Shima, Local 85; Tanya Beniuk, Local 28; Gail Pederson Todd, Local 38; Margie Emes, Local 120; and Rachael Schiller, Local 73.

Images by UNA

“We mean what we say and we say what we mean,” Smith said to the cheers of the members.

Describing the legacy of UNA’s past technically illegal strikes – although provincial law since 1982 was in conflict with the Canadian Constitution – “there was renewed energy and interest and participation within our locals because they were along for the entire process, and they understood and supported the expectations that were articulated by your negotiating committee at the bargaining table. There was a renewed commitment to hold employers accountable for the hard-fought words in our collective agreements.”

Nurses demand respect from their employers and government – a key UNA message is that the prescription to

remedy the health care mess governments have created is to *Respect, Recruit and Retain* nurses.

But Smith said Three Cs will be required as well – *Courage, Challenge, and Commitment*. Members must remind Albertans that nurses are at their side and on their side – “because, ultimately, what we are trying to achieve today is not just about what is going to make life better for us, it is about what is going to make work life safer and better to our patients.”

Labour Relations Director David Harrigan, who leads the union’s 2024 Bargaining Committee, told the delegates “it is clear – and we have been saying to employers since our last agreement was ratified – our people are not prepared to do this anymore.

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“We are not prepared to spend two years in bargaining. We are not prepared to accept less than the cost of living. For 20 years, Alberta was the highest paid of any of the provinces for nurses, which it should be because the average wage in Alberta is higher than any of the other provinces,” he said. “Right now, we’re third.”

If hospitals can afford to pay agency nurses \$300 an hour, and one third of the province’s hospitals have service disruptions, he said, Alberta can afford to pay its RNs and RPNs what they deserve.

“Unlike the last time when we were looking at a provincial deficit, right now the government is looking at a large surplus,” Harrigan observed. “So there is no reason why we shouldn’t be able to get an acceptable deal and get it quickly.”

Harrigan said UNA and employers have agreed to a timeline for bargaining: Negotiations will start on February 6 when the sides exchange proposals and if there is no agreement by mid-April, UNA will

seek mediation. “If we are in mediation and don’t have a deal by the end of August, we’re at an impasse.”

The Demand Setting Meeting wrapped up after delegates voted on the proposal package, which had been developed by the Bargaining Committee after it considered ideas submitted by UNA members at local bargaining meetings and in surveys.

The “Ingoing Proposal Package” agreed to by members on November 23 will be subject to a full membership ratification vote on January 31. Until the proposal has been ratified by a majority of impacted locals and a majority of members, details will remain confidential.

The Demand-Setting Meeting is one of the key moments in any round of UNA bargaining, especially for pattern-setting the Provincial Collective Agreement between the union and Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care, and The Bethany Group (Camrose).

The current agreement expires on March 31, 2024. 🍷



Delegates from UNA Local 413, Edmonton Corrections, and Local 415, South Health Campus, at the Demand Setting Meeting in November.



Images by UNA

Stalwart UNA activist Diane Lantz honoured with Bread & Roses Award

■ **LONGTIME** UNA activist Diane Lantz was honoured at the Demand Setting Meeting with the union's prestigious Bread & Roses Award.

Active in UNA since 1982, Lantz has been a tireless volunteer, serving as a Local 1 executive, grievance committee chair, Professional Responsibility Concern and Occupational Health and Safety committee member, among many other roles.

"Diane is a natural advocate for her local," UNA President Heather Smith told delegates to the Demand Setting Meeting, where the award was presented because illness kept Lantz away from the annual general meeting in October. "Diane embraced the challenge and responsibility to become local president, a position she has held since 2009."

"If you ever have trouble," Smith said, "just look for the closest rally. She is an active participant in the labour movement, taking part in rallies and protests, small and large, from pension rallies, Nurses Week, to in-solidarity appearances, sit-ins and various picket lines."

"Diane has participated in every UNA provincial AGM since 2004," Smith added – "well, except for one, the most recent."

"Diane has never missed an opportunity to help someone grow within the union movement," Smith noted. "This is a very deserved presentation and recognition of your contributions, Diane."

Lantz, the fourth recipient of the award since it was introduced by UNA in 2020, told the crowd she was honoured and humbled by the recognition. "I grew up in the



(Top) Bread & Roses Award winner Diane Lantz, at right, with UNA President Heather Smith, who presented her with the award.

(Left) The four winners of the award: Orissa Shima, Local 85, 2022 Bread & Roses Award winner; Karen Kuprys, Local 154, 2020; Diane Lantz, Local 1, 2023; and Marie Corns, Local 80, 2021.

Images by UNA

union movement and knew how important it was to advocate for others and to know what your rights are and to make things better for people that didn't have things as good as we did."

The UNA Bread & Roses Award honours members who demonstrate leadership, the true spirit of solidarity, unionism, and the advancement of social justice at the local, district or provincial level.

The Bread & Roses Award is named in honour of the pioneers in the fight for women's suffrage and women's workplace rights and dignity. The phrase is often associated with a textile workers' strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912, in which the strikers demanded: "Give us bread but give us roses too." 🌹



Friends of Medicare Chair Karen Kuprys, at left, looks on while Canadian Health Coalition Chair Pauline Worsfold addresses the November demand Setting Meeting.



Image by UNA

It's not too late for Pharmacare!

■ **ALMOST** everyone in Canada desperately needs a national public drug plan now, but it seems as if despite years of promises, pharmacare has been moved to the back burner by the federal government.

Canada is the only country in the world with a universal public health care system that doesn't cover prescription medication. The World Health Organization calls access to medication a human right. Yet one in four Canadian households can't afford the medications they need.

When the NDP signed its "confidence and supply" agreement with the Trudeau Liberals, the Liberals promised to pass a Canada Pharmacare Act by the end of 2023. On November 27, though, the Liberals admitted that key promise will not be kept and pharmacare legislation will not be passed in 2023.

Without pressure from health care professionals and other Canadians, chances are

good it will fall right off the table as we close in on the next federal election.

But it's not too late for pharmacare in Canada. It's on us to see to it that our political leaders understand pharmacare must be a priority.

UNA members are urged to phone their Members of Parliament and tell them that everyone in Canada needs pharmacare.

Visit the web sites of the Canadian Health Coalition and Friends of Medicare for more information on pharmacare, and to sign their petitions calling for a national pharmacare program.

UNA is proud that members of our union chair both the CHC and FoM. Pauline Worsfold, RN, a member of UNA Local 301, is chair of the Ottawa-based CHC. Local 154 member Karen Kuprys is chair of Friends of Medicare, an Alberta organization. 🇺🇸



**Government Statement
on Nov. 27:**
[www.cbc.ca/news/
politics/ndp-liberal-
pharmacare-1.7041706](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ndp-liberal-pharmacare-1.7041706)



FoM:
[www.friendsofmedicare.
org/](http://www.friendsofmedicare.org/)



CHC:
www.healthcoalition.ca/



UNA urges members to remain vigilant to protect against COVID-19 and Influenza

■ **NEW** COVID cases continue to be recorded in Alberta during the current respiratory disease season, and UNA urges members to remain vigilant to protect themselves against COVID-19 and influenza.

Accordingly, UNA strongly recommends that all members be immunized against influenza and COVID-19 to protect themselves, their patients, and especially vulnerable populations such as the elderly and young children.

UNA supported the **Enhanced Masking Directive** introduced by Alberta Health Services in mid-October. This directive applied to all AHS and APL staff at acute care facilities, as well as Covenant Health and Lamont Health Care Centre.

The directive allows zone and site leaders to determine if enhanced masking for staff is necessary based on a local assessment of several factors including hospitalizations, number of outbreaks, occupancy, and test positivity.

UNA called for additional steps, including:

- Masking also be required for designated support persons and visitors in all areas of the facility, not just in the emergency department.
- Application of the directive to sites and programs beyond acute care facilities.
- Reintroduction of screeners at health care sites, so the burden does not fall to clinical staff.
- Inclusion of the Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committee (JWHSC) for a site in consideration of masking requirements.

The **Joint Statement: COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment** remains in effect with AHS and Covenant Health. This agreement guarantees your access to the necessary PPE, including fit-tested N95 respirators, based on a Point of Care Risk Assessment.

UNA supports the recommendations found in the **Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) COVID-19 Fall 2023 Statement** including “calling on both the federal and provincial governments to take proactive steps, including widespread public education to combat vaccine disinformation, to protect the safety of health care workers and the health of Canadians” 🍷



Image from Freepik

Give nurses the respect they deserve: Linda Silas



By Linda Silas
President, Canadian
Federation of Nurses Unions

■ **ANYONE** paying attention to the crisis facing our health care systems can clearly see how incredibly valuable nurses are. Indeed, I was glad to hear our federal Health Minister Mark Holland emphasize the importance of retaining our nurses when we met in October. Nurses are the anchor of Canada’s health care system, and without you it would cease to function.

Yet you continue to contend with untenable work environments: crushing and unsafe workloads, difficult and dangerous conditions, and a lack of respect from employers and governments. We can forgive even the most dedicated among us if they’re looking for the exit sign.

Respect and retention go hand-in-hand – a message we have taken directly to the country’s premiers and health ministers. Respect for you as individuals with lives outside of work. Respect for you as professionals who need and deserve the conditions and resources to do your jobs with the fullness and pride you and your patients deserve.

From the moment the federal government reinstated Canada’s Chief Nursing Officer, the CFNU has been working with Dr. Leigh Chapman to improve the lives of nurses across the country. Months of collaborative work, including input from CFNU members at our biennial convention in June, have culminated in a federal Nursing Retention Toolkit to bring nurse-led retention initiatives across the country.

Ensuring safe hours of work, implementing nurse-to-patient ratios, flexible scheduling, competitive compensation packages,

enhanced mental health support – this is what respect for nurses looks like.

Collaboration between governments, employers and the front lines remains critical to creating the concrete change I know you need to see in your day-to-day. For this toolkit to see true success, we will need the full support of health care employers and our governments – including funding tied to implementing these critical retention initiatives.

CFNU is calling on governments to use this year’s increase to the Canada Health Transfer and funding from the bilateral agreements to invest in proven nurse retention initiatives and enable the robust recovery of our country’s health care system.

The challenges facing our public health care system are nationwide, but they are far from insurmountable.

Remember, our collective power is one of our biggest strengths. You are part of the largest movement of nurses in North America – 250,000 strong – from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. Rallying together behind our common challenges and solutions, I know we will build a stronger public health care system where nurses have the respect we deserve. 🇨🇦

Join the call for governments to fully fund nurse retention initiatives and end the nursing shortage: <https://nursesunions.ca/completetherecovery>



nursesunions.ca/completetherecovery

Albertans rally behind UNA's 3Rs digital campaign

UNA's "3Rs: Respect Retain Recruit" digital campaign has reached a significant milestone, marking three months since its launch. The campaign is an initiative aimed at addressing the critical challenges faced by nurses in Alberta.

Since its launch on September 5, the campaign has gained support from Albertans across the province, many of whom have displayed 3Rs lawn signs on their properties and windows, showing their solidarity with nurses and their critical role in health care.

Campaign materials have been prominently featured on buses, at airports, on trains, and billboards, sparking conversations about the need for change in health care.

One of the core elements of the campaign is the power of storytelling. Through the

newly launched free digital newsletter, "The Pulse," UNA will keep subscribers abreast of the campaign's progress and ways nurses and members of the public can participate.

The campaign has now introduced a new feature: "Behind the Frontlines." This YouTube series will serve as a platform for nurses to share their experiences, challenges, and inspiring moments as they tirelessly care for Albertans and our loved ones.

As the 3Rs campaign enters its fourth month, we invite you to join the movement. The campaign's mission is not complete, and together we can ensure a brighter future for health care in Alberta.

For more information and to participate, visit the campaign's website at NeedNurses.ca. 🇨🇦

By **Camelia Guthrie**
UNA Communications Advisor



Camelia Guthrie



NeedNurses.ca

UNA remembers December 6 and presses for action to prevent violence against women and girls

■ **IT** has been 34 years since the vicious act of gender-based violence that took the lives of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. On December 6, United Nurses of Alberta mourned the 14 engineering students who were murdered and recommitted to reflect on the impact of violence against women in our society.

The anniversary of December 6, 1989, known as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, also represents an opportunity for all Canadians to think about how reporting of violence against women has grown in recent years.

Communities and individuals must speak out. All levels of government must continue to be reminded of their responsibility to take meaningful steps to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls in Canada, including measures to restrict the possession and misuse of firearms.

Working on the front lines of health care, Alberta's nurses see the impact of violence against women, and sometimes experience it themselves in their own workplaces and homes. 🇨🇦

We remember each of the 14 young women who lost their lives on December 6, 1989:

GENEVIÈVE BERGERON

HÉLÈNE COLGAN

NATHALIE CROTEAU

BARBARA DAIGNEAULT

ANNE-MARIE EDWARD

MAUD HAVIERNICK

MARYSE LAGANIÈRE

MARYSE LECLAIR

ANNE-MARIE LEMAY

SONIA PELLETIER

MICHÈLE RICHARD

ANNIE ST-ARNEAULT

ANNIE TURCOTTE

BARBARA KLUCZNIK-WIDAJEWICZ

2023 UNA Nurses Week Challenge highlights member engagement

By **Dave Cournoyer** UNA
Communications Advisor



Dave Cournoyer



■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta announced the winners of the 2023 Nurses Week Member Engagement Challenge at the UNA Annual General Meeting in October in Edmonton.

To recognize the work of UNA locals, UNA invited them to submit examples of member engagement efforts created and used during this year's Nurses Week, which took place from May 8 to May 14, 2023.

The theme of this year's Nurses Week challenge was *3Rs: Respect, Retain and Recruit*. Locals were encouraged to enter submissions that followed that theme.

Eight UNA locals submitted multiple entries in six of the eight challenge categories. Judging was conducted by an external judge, Dana DiTamaso, president and partner at **Kick Point**, an Edmonton-based digital marketing agency.

Entries were accepted from or on behalf of locals in four categories organized by local membership size. The winners were:

2023 Nurses Week Member Engagement Challenge Winners

Best Poster (Local with fewer than 400 members)

Local 96 (Northern Lights Regional Health Centre)

Best Poster (Local with more than 400 members)

Local 196 (Edmonton Community)

Best photo (Local with fewer than 400 members)

Local 77 (George McDougall Memorial Health Centre – Smoky Lake)



Best photo (Local with more than 400 members)

Local 121 (Rockyview General Hospital)

Best online meme (Local with more than 400 members)

Local 11 (Misericordia Community Hospital)

Best online video (Local with more than 400 members)

Local 1 (Peter Lougheed Centre)

Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all the locals that submitted entries into this year’s challenge. The award-winning submissions will be shared on UNA’s social media and on Zimbra Forums. And they are posted on www.una.ca.

Locals involved with the winning submissions were presented with a special award certificate and had their submissions shown at the UNA’s AGM. Locals were allowed to submit multiple submissions in each category. Locals are encouraged to recognize the members who participated in the creation of their submissions. 🍷



Local 121



Local 77



Local 96



Local 196



Local 11

Wrong diagnosis always creates the wrong treatment, Heather Smith says of massive AHS restructuring



Heather Smith

THE Alberta government's plan to dismantle Alberta Health Services and create a new health-care delivery system has aroused grave concerns throughout the province.

In a news conference on November 9, Premier Danielle Smith and Health Minister Adriana LaGrange said the province would dismantle the single service provider agency known as Alberta Health Services and spread its responsibilities for health care among a jumble of providers.

AHS would continue to exist, but its primary focus would be on operating acute care and continuing care facilities. Covenant Health, however, would continue to offer its services in the areas of acute care, continuing care and mental health and addiction.

Additional bureaucracies to oversee acute care (including hospital care, urgent care centres, cancer care, clinical operations, surgeries and emergency medical services), primary care, continuing care, and mental health and addiction would be created.

The government appointed and replaced it with a seven-member board led by former Conservative cabinet minister Lyle Oberg, a medical doctor with a history of involvement in private health care enterprises and advocacy.

Critics immediately attacked the aggressive restructuring plan as an expensive and wrongheaded approach to solving the problems that bedevil health care, and as a precursor to privatization. The government promised it would help solve capacity issues caused by a flawed system.

In a statement, UNA said it saw nothing in the breakup of AHS that would address the principal crisis that concerns most nurses – chronic understaffing and overwork caused by the shortage of nurses. While UNA has long acknowledged genuine deficiencies in the management of health care services by AHS, there was nothing in the announcement that would address that problem, said President Heather Smith.

“The wrong diagnosis always creates the wrong treatment,” she said. “The government has diagnosed the problem in Alberta’s health care system as being the structure of AHS. A far more serious problem is the shortage of nurses and other medical professionals, as well as beds and capacity. Let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater!”

“The treatment announced by the government... is going to make the problem worse,” she predicted. “It seems likely the chaos in the health care system will be a roadblock to the retention and recruitment of nurses”.

Smith asked: “Who is going to move to Alberta to work in health care when they don’t even know what agency or organization they will be working for?”

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

“The government has diagnosed the problem in Alberta’s health care system as being the structure of AHS. A far more serious problem is the shortage of nurses and other medical professionals, as well as beds and capacity. Let’s not throw out the baby with the bathwater!”

- Heather Smith

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

The most important points made by UNA’s leaders to LaGrange and Premier Smith, including at one formal meeting with the health minister, was “please don’t do anything to destabilize AHS,” she concluded. “That is exactly what they have done.”

UNA has many unanswered questions about how this reorganization will impact

members and their jobs. “We will aggressively seek answers to these questions and communicate them to our members,” Smith said.

The uncertainty of the restructuring will undoubtedly cause challenges in the upcoming round of provincial contract negotiations, Smith said. 🍷



Delegates at the microphones during the November Demand Setting Meeting in Edmonton.

Images by UNA



UNA and employer resolve 295 PRC and OHS concerns at Red Deer Regional Emergency Department

■ **AFTER** years of reporting serious Professional Responsibility Concerns and Occupational Health and Safety Concerns in the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre's Emergency Department, United Nurses of Alberta Local 2 successfully resolved 295 outstanding PRCs in mid-October.

In addition to the PRCs, between 2020 and 2023 Local members filed 26 UNA OHS reports documenting the impact of short staffing and excessive workload on UNA members' psychological health and safety across the entire site, but with most originating in the ED.

The OHS reports described moral distress, fatigue, anxiety, burnout, negative physical effects, and psychological injury.

Local 2 members have been raising quality and safety concerns about the situation in Red Deer since 2015, with the situation taking on increased urgency after 2020, said Jaclyn Verklan, the Local's PRC chair.

To eventually resolve the issues, the Local had to work through the stages of meeting with senior Alberta Health Services leadership, five voluntary mediation meetings, and meetings with the CEO's designate.

On the OHS front, the union elevated the OHS concerns to the CEO's representative in the fall of 2022 after UNA was not satisfied by the response of the site's Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committee to its written concerns.

Meetings in February, March, April, May and August with CEO designate Janice Stewart led to real progress, with the resolution of the PRC and OHS complaints on October 10, 2023.

Among the issues resolved, said Verklan, were:

- **Short staffing:** The Employer has agreed to hire contract nurses now with continuous recruitment of new employees to the department to follow. In addition, a regularized relief pool has been created solely for the ED. These measures have allowed improved vacation scheduling for permanent staff.
- **Triage/waiting room coverage:** Triage and monitoring nurse positions eliminated in April 2021 have been restored.
- **BECE positions:** Benefit Eligible Casual Employee positions eliminated in April 2021 have also been restored.
- **Eight-hour shift rotations:** The return of eight-hour shift rotations was mandated at the same time.
- **Fast-track area:** The ED's minor-treatment area was revamped into a fast-track area to improve patient assessment and flow, along with increased hours of operation.
- **Staffing:** After multiple problems with the automated call-out system, the department opted out of the provincial staffing system and initiated unit-based staffing.

"Meetings in February, March, April, May and August with CEO designate Janice Stewart led to real progress, with the resolution of the PRC and OHS complaints on October 10, 2023."

- **OBP:** Operational Best Practices initiatives have been paused at the site.
- **Psych Emergency Department:** A designated psychiatric ED area has rolled out, staffed by RPNs, RNs and LPNs. One additional RN/RPN and one 24/7 LPN have been added to the ED's baseline staffing.
- **Education:** A permanent staff educator and one-year "mentorship nurse" have been hired to assist staff.
- **Staff mental health supports:** AHS offered three mental health workshop days for all hospital employees through June 2023 and a peer-support group led by floor staff organized ER Trauma Exposure Workshops for staff.

Over the years, Verklan, Local 2 President Susan Beatson, Local VP Margo Buss, and OHS Chair Cindy Clark, plus UNA Provincial Office staffers Carolyn Olsen, Josh Bergman and Donna Smith, all played significant roles in the PRC process. UNA thanks them all for their commitment and determination. 🇺🇦

UNA thanks members who took part in telephone bargaining survey



UNITED Nurses of Alberta is grateful to the many members who took the time to take part in the telephone bargaining survey of general members covered by the Provincial Collective Agreement.

"We know the telephone survey can take 15 minutes out of your day, and we're thankful to the general members who help us develop our ongoing bargaining proposals by participating in the phone survey," said UNA President Heather Smith. "We very much appreciate your generosity with your time."

The survey of general UNA members defined as those who have not recently participated in internal UNA work such as serving on Local Executives, the UNA Executive Board, or the Negotiating Committee – is conducted on behalf of UNA by Viewpoints Research.

All information collected through the survey is confidential and anonymous.

To protect members' privacy, dialing was

computerized. This meant that while the telephone interviewer knew the name of the member they were calling, they do not know, and could not access, the member's phone number or any other personal information. Viewpoints Research then combines and aggregates the data before sharing results with UNA, further ensuring anonymity.

These members' priorities are added to the bargaining suggestions brought forward by members at Local Bargaining Committee meetings and by members of the locals' executives for consideration and voting at the Demand Setting Meeting in November.

The goal is to ensure that UNA's next collective agreement it is based on consultation with the widest possible selection of members.

The current four-year provincial agreement expires March 31, 2024, and UNA is now preparing for negotiations regarding the contract starting April 1, 2024. 🇺🇦

The current four-year provincial agreement expires March 31, 2024, and UNA is now preparing for negotiations regarding the contract starting April 1, 2024.

International Solidarity



Kristin Eschyshyn

Local 301 member was part of 'Misión Claridad' to Ecuador, restoring eyesight to more than 100

■ **"HAVING** patients lined up waiting for us and applauding us on our arrival to the hospital was something I have never experienced before," recalls Local 301 member Kristin Eschyshyn, RN, after a medical mission trip to Cuenca, Ecuador, to restore patients' eyesight in September 2022.

"I was extremely humbled," she said in her International Solidarity report to United Nurses of Alberta, which contributed \$1,000 to Eschyshyn's "*Misión Claridad*," as the humanitarian medical mission was named.

On the trip, she wrote, she was able to assist in cataract surgery to restore eyesight to about 100 low-income Ecuadorians whose lives had been profoundly impacted by their blindness or vision impairments due to cataracts.

In Canada, she noted, this surgery is free. In Ecuador, it is not, making it inaccessible to many.

The feeling she experienced on the first day "was a great reminder of why I am in health care and became a nurse... to be able to help people who truly need it.

“Not only did this mission and our work assist in giving people their vision back, but also gave them back their independence and quality of life,” she added.

After two years in planning delayed several times because of the pandemic, “the team consisted of two ophthalmologists, two resident doctors, four Registered Nurses, an optometrist, an optician, and three volunteers,” Eschyshyn said. “All of us were from Edmonton, except one of the nurses who was from Grande Prairie.”

The team was in Ecuador from September 15 to September 24, 2022, she said, with the surgeries themselves taking place over “five long days, some close to 14 hours.”

“With our team working in two ORs and supported by an Ecuadorian team in a third OR, close to 100 surgeries were performed

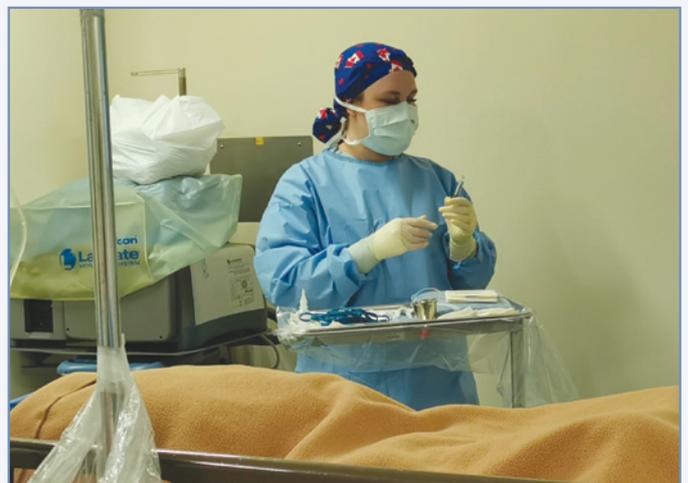
in this time,” she said. “All the supplies we brought to Ecuador with us in 24 hockey bags were donated.”

Eschyshyn, who works at the Mazankowski Heart Institute in Edmonton, said she enjoys travelling and being able to experience different cultures and ways of living, and combining this with her passion of helping others was “heart-warming and rewarding.”

“This was the first mission trip I have ever participated in, and I do not see it being my last! I highly recommend a trip like this, as it pushed me out of my comfort zone, expanded my compassion, and exposed me to a new level of gratitude. As Helen Keller once said, ‘there is no better way to thank God for your sight than by giving a helping hand to someone in the dark.’” 🍷



Scenes from Local 301 member Kristin Eschyshyn’s September 2022 surgical mission to Ecuador.



Images by Kristin Eschyshyn

PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACES ARE POSSIBLE

By Dewey Funk and
Josh Bergman
UNA Occupational Health
and Safety Advisors



Dewey Funk



Josh Bergman

■ **THE** topic of psychological health and safety has been receiving increasing attention over the past few years as COVID-19 laid bare and exacerbated the significant vulnerabilities of our health care system and its impact on the mental wellbeing of workers within that system.

A survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions in 2022 found that 94 per cent of nurses are experiencing symptoms of burnout, with 45 per cent experiencing severe burnout. This epidemic of burnout has fallout for patients too, as research has shown there is a strong association between development of burnout and worsening patient safety.

CFNU President Linda Silas aptly summarizes this as “the conditions of work are the conditions of care.” Despite this identified need and increasing attention, there is still a considerable lack of understanding among employers on how to address this important area of safety in a systematic and meaningful way.

When we talk about psychological health and safety in the workplace and related topics like moral distress and burnout in nursing, these discussions tend to focus on what actions individual workers can take to mitigate the psychological hazards and harm they are encountering in their workplaces. For example, emphasis is placed on things like accessing Employee and Family and Assistance Programs (EFAP), resilience, and personal wellness.

It’s not to say these aren’t important or don’t play a role within a psychological wellness framework, but we need to acknowledge that these are downstream approaches and do little to identify or address root causes. It is essentially waiting for harm by the system to occur and then asking individuals to take action to mitigate the effects of that harm.

The good news is that there is an evidence-based framework employers can utilize to take a more systematic and proactive approach to develop and sustain psychologically healthy and safe workplaces for their employees. It’s called *The National Standard of Canada Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace*.

There is a specific requirement in several of UNA’s Collective Agreements – including UNA’s Provincial Collective Agreement, which covers members that work for Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre, and The Bethany Group (Camrose) – to implement a Psychological Health and Safety Plan consistent with this standard. UNA will continue to try to negotiate similar language into all its collective agreements.

Since 2022, we have been meeting regularly with representatives from both AHS and Covenant Health to understand, more specifically, what actions each employer is undertaking to meet this collective agreement requirement. Some of the key actions over the past year include:

- AHS released a Position Statement on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace. UNA was consulted on and provided feedback on this statement.
- AHS added and hired into three new positions (two senior advisors and one coordinator) and Covenant Health added and hired into two new positions (one manager and one advisor) to support this work in their respective organizations.
- AHS updated its Psychological Health and Safety Action Plan after consultation with unions and Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committees (JWHSC). It includes a specific commitment to develop knowledge and skills



for representatives who sit on JWHSCs, an area for which the AUPE, HSAA, and UNA specifically advocated.

- Covenant Health has developed a Psychological Health and Safety Action Plan for their organization, which includes specific commitments to identify roles and responsibilities for JWHSW members; develop a psychological health and safety position statement; and to measure PHS workplace factors to prioritize activities.

UNA recognizes that many of these actions aren't being felt on the front lines and as such we will continue to advocate for all employers to take meaningful action to measure and address the workplace factors that are impacting the mental wellbeing of their employees and to transparently communicate how they are doing so.

One way we can hold Employers accountable to addressing the psychological hazards and harm you are encountering in your workplaces is by reporting them to your Employer through their incident (OHS) reporting system (e.g. MSN for

AHS employees) and through UNA's online OHS reporting system. <https://dms.una.ca/forms/ohs>

For more information on reporting, please refer to the following resource: <https://www.una.ca/document/reportingohsconcerns>

Once you submit an incident report and make your employer aware of an incident or concern, your employer is required to investigate and identify corrective actions. A corrective action means any action taken to eliminate or reduce exposure to the identified unsafe conditions. It is your right to receive and review the employer's completed investigation and corrective action report. You should ask for this report if it is not provided to you. 🍷

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your UNA Local Executive or Occupational Health and Safety Advisor at **1-800-252-9394**.

Remember: you have the right to a safe and healthy workplace, which includes your psychological health and safety.



dms.una.ca/forms/ohs



www.una.ca/document/reportingohsconcerns



Members must now opt in to receive Nurse Planner

■ **MORE** changes are coming to the Nurse Planner booklets distributed free to UNA members.

As the ways nurses schedule their working lives evolve, each year more UNA members have transitioned from the use of a printed calendar to electronic versions on their smart phones and computers.

For those who wish to continue to receive the Nurse Planner, however, this year UNA has introduced a way members can receive a Planner even as demand among the membership declines.

Members who wish to continue receiving

the Nurse Planner must go online to either the DMS Web or the UNA App and **opt-in**. (Go to "Membership Information" and click on the toggle button under "Receiving Nurse Planner" to opt in for another year.)

Members will have to opt in *each year* to continue receiving the Planner.

The 2024 Nurse Planner comes with a separate plastic cover. To reduce waste, UNA hopes members will reuse the plastic covers. Nurses who require a new cover in future years will have to order it separately on the opt-in page. 🍷



Nurses need presumptive coverage for traumatic psychological injuries

■ A petition organized by a group of UNA members calling for nurses to have access to presumptive coverage for traumatic psychological injuries was tabled in the Alberta Legislature on November 7.

UNA member and Registered Nurse Heather Murray spearheaded the collection of more than 1,000 signatures from nurses and supporters for the change, which would mean that the Workers' Compensation Board would presume a confirmed psychological or psychiatric injury happened because of an incident at work.

UNA supported the petition. "Through the nature of their work, nurses are routinely exposed to traumatic events in the workplace," said UNA President Heather Smith. "Nurses should not be forced to wait for – or be denied – access to workers' compensation benefits after experiencing traumatic events while on the job."



The petition was tabled in the Legislative Assembly by Edmonton-Glenora MLA Sarah Hoffman and supported by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview MLA Peggy Wright. It calls on the government to include in presumptive coverage legislation any nurse registered or licensed with a college of nursing in Alberta.

"Nurses are on the front lines of the health care system and should be included with other front-line workers like emergency medical workers, firefighters, dispatchers, police and corrections officers in not needing to provide proof of a causal link to post-traumatic stress disorder and workplace incidents to receive coverage" Smith said.

Nurses are frequently exposed to traumatic events and are twice as likely as members of the general public to suffer a diagnosis such as PTSD. If the legislation is changed, nurses will have access to Workers' Compensation programs and treatment initiatives that will assist them in their recovery and get them back in to the health care workforce faster.

The wording of the petition is as follows:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to introduce legislation to amend the Workers' Compensation Act to extend presumptive coverage for workplace injuries related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other traumatic mental health injuries to all nurses who hold a practice permit or are registered with a college of a regulated profession under the Health Professions Act. 🇨🇦

"Nurses should not be forced to wait for – or be denied – access to workers' compensation benefits after experiencing traumatic events while on the job."

Image by UNA

Heather Murray, RN, in red scrubs, with supporters from throughout the province and NDP MLAs Christina Gray (far left) and David Shepherd (at right) at the Legislature in Edmonton on November 7.

Reporting Professional Responsibility Concerns

KNOW
your
Rights

■ **NURSES** are required by the standards of their professional licensing bodies to advocate for practice environments that have the resources necessary for safe, competent and ethical nursing care.

As a nurse, it is your professional obligation to bring your concerns of unsafe patient care to the attention of your manager. As a result, employers and United Nurses of Alberta have agreed in writing that it is of mutual benefit to find resolutions to issues of concern including the safety and quality of patient/resident/client care.

Article 36 of the Provincial Collective Agreement provides a protected and constructive way for Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses to advocate for their patients, residents and clients.

When there is a patient safety concern, discuss the issue with your immediate supervisor or manager. You may be able to resolve your concerns prior to needing to fill out a PRC form. If your concern isn't resolved during that discussion, though, fill out a PRC form. If you are uncomfortable or unable to have this discussion, your Local may assist you or have the discussion on your behalf.

As a nurse, it is your professional obligation to bring your concerns of unsafe patient care to the attention of your manager.

To complete a Professional Responsibility Concern Form (PRCF), go to dms.una.ca/forms/prc on UNA's website as soon as possible. The form can also be found on your UNA App.

When you fill out the form, provide as much detail as possible about the incident or issue, including recommendations on how to resolve the issue. **Do not** use the names of patients/residents/clients on the form.

Enter your Manager's email address to ensure they receive a copy. A copy will automatically be emailed to your Local.

If the PRC remains unresolved after discussing it with your manager, the PRCF will be discussed at the joint UNA/Employer Professional Responsibility Concern Committee (PRCC) for your site/workplace.

After submitting the PRC form to your Local, be prepared to stay involved. Your Local PRCC representatives may call or email to gather more information, invite you to a PRCC meeting to speak to the issue you identified, share the Employer response to your PRC form, and discuss potential resolutions.

If you have any questions about PRCs or if you should be submitting a PRC form for your concern, contact your Local.

UNA has the right to advance unresolved PRCs to the Employer CEO, an external Independent Assessment Committee, and the Employer Governing Board, if necessary. 🇨🇦



Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your UNA Local Executive or Labour Relations Officer at 1-800-252-9394.



dms.una.ca/forms/prc

R RESPECT

R RETAIN

R RECRUIT



UNA 

#neednursesAB

Show your support with a '3Rs: Respect, Retain, Recruit' lawn sign

Insufficient staffing levels and high workloads resulting from the current staffing shortage are forcing nurses to leave the profession. Our health care system cannot survive without nurses.

Support Alberta's nurses by putting a "3Rs: Respect, Retain, Recruit" lawn sign on your lawn or in your window.

Anyone can order a lawn sign by going to: <https://neednurses.ca/action/request-a-lawn-sign/> 



RESPECT RETAIN RECRUIT

**DON'T PULL THE
PLUG ON PUBLIC
HEALTH CARE**

UNA 

neednurses.ca

