THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE:

Over 100 years of Alberta's nursing history

1916
The Alberta Association of Graduate Nurses, later known as the AARN, is created to oversee nursing practice standards.

1925
AARN adopts a standard 12- hour period of duty, down from 24 hours.

1930
Nurses are beginning to be hired as Employees. Employer-Employee relationships become more common. Prior to 1930, most hospital nurses were volunteer members of religious orders

1944
The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) endorses the right of nurses to bargain collectively, with professional associations as bargaining agents.

1950
Nurse associations begin to appear in Alberta hospitals. Typical pay is $8/day.

1961
A full-time nurse earns about $285/ month. Factoring in inflation that would be $2,984.33 in 2025.

The AARN, with its no strike policy, agrees to a 3-year wage freeze in exchange for a promise of a pension plan.

1972
AARN abandons its no strike policy.

1973
The Supreme Court of Canada rules nurses can establish unions independent of their professional bodies.

1977
UNA founded May 6 when the AARN votes to have its collective bargaining arm become a separate organization-UNA. UNA begins a strike involving 2,500 nurses. Judge awards a 9% wage increase. New nurses earn $6.28/hour.

1978
UNA holds first Annual General Meeting.

1980
6,400 nurses strike at 79 hospitals, achieving a 39.8% increase over 2 years, Professional Responsibility language and fifty other contract improvements. New nurses earn $12.11/hour.

1982
6,000 nurses strike at 69 hospitals The government orders them back to work, eventually leading to an arbitrated settlement of 14% increase over 1 year.

1984
Provincial government bans strikes by hospital workers.

1988
14,000 nurses strike illegally at 98 hospitals. UNA fined $426,750.00, which is the the largest fine ever given to a Union at the time).

1990
UNA negotiates a 27% pay increase and other improvements.

1995
Government creates regional health authorities.

1997
UNA and Staff Nurses' Association merge into one union. A new nurse earns $18.34/hours.

2002
Government reduces the number of health regions from 17 to 9.

2005
UNA and other healthcare unions lead a successful fight against Ralph Klein's attempts to privatize healthcare.

2008
Health regions are consolidated into AHS.

2013
Newly organized UNA members at Devonshire Care Centre strike for two weeks.

2015
In response to UNA's challenge, court declares ban on strikes unconstitutional. Legislation redrafted to allow strikes.

2018
New collective agreement reached. New nurses earn $36.86/hour.

2023
Government announces plan to restructure health care and divide AHS into multiple new employers.

2025
After voting down a tentative agreement, a new collective agreement is reached. By April 2027, new nurses earn $45.90/hour.

UNA
United Nurses of Alberta
August 2026