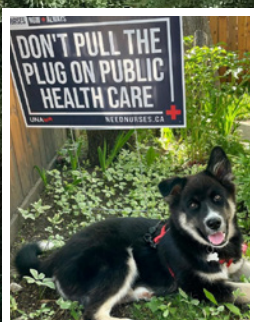
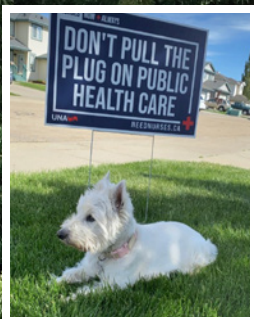
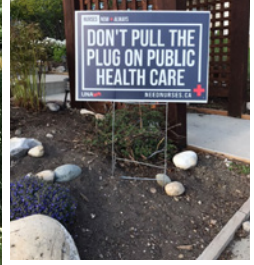
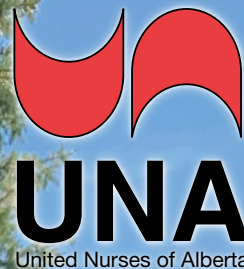


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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WE GO FORWARD! WE DON'T GO BACK!

■ **AN** entire generation of Alberta nurses have worked their careers with labour peace.

That didn't just happen. It was because in 1988 Alberta's Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses had the courage to stand up for the principle that nurses will not be bullied into taking rollbacks and will not be treated with contempt.

On January 25, 1988, 14,000 nurses at 133 hospitals and nursing homes walked off the job for the largest province-wide nurses strike in Alberta's history.

No one wanted to be on a picket line in the midst of an Alberta winter – when temperatures would sometimes reach down to minus 40 Celsius. But all understood the importance of saying no to concessions sought by their employers.

In 1988, staffing shortages were also a huge issue for members.

Alberta's nurses understood that there was no choice but to stand up to unreasonable employers backed by a government determined to impose big rollbacks. It was the right thing to do, even if it was illegal and resulted in what was then the largest fine paid by a union in Canadian history.

After 19 days in the blistering cold, subjected to constant bullying by the government and employers, the nurses won a fair collective agreement. The intimidation didn't work. The agreement ratified by members on February 12, 1988, contained no concessions or rollbacks.

That agreement set the stage for big gains for UNA members in the 1990s, and the lesson it taught resulted in three decades of labour peace.

Now, after 33 years, we have employers receiving instructions from a radical government, once again determined to force big concessions on nurses. The more than 250 rollbacks to our collective agreement sought by Alberta Health Services and other Provincial Collective Agreement employers would not just push our working conditions back to the 1980s, but in some cases to the 1950s!

Right now, the employers are playing games to avoid bargaining. They have cancelled bargaining dates at the last minute. They say they have a revised proposal, but they won't tell us what it is.


The strategy is obviously to keep the public unaware of their unreasonable demands for huge concessions until the pandemic can be declared over and the UCP government can get back to what it thinks of as business as usual – bullying a predominantly female workforce.

Although the government has denied it, AHS senior management has confirmed in correspondence with UNA that they continue to plan major layoffs of RNs and RPNs as soon as the pandemic is over – as “directed by the government.”

In other negotiations co-ordinated by the UCP Government, public sector workers have been told they would have to take *retroactive* rollbacks – and *pay money they had already earned back to their employers!*

Nobody wants to contemplate the possibility of taking job action – but as nurses said in 1988 and may have to say again soon: *We go forward, we don't go back!*

In Solidarity,


Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta

AHS unilaterally delays bargaining

NEGS 2020

REFUSES TO PROVIDE AMENDED PROPOSAL

■ **WITH** more than 250 rollbacks already on the table and confirmed plans for major layoffs as soon as the pandemic is declared over, Alberta Health Services unilaterally cancelled all scheduled June bargaining dates with United Nurses of Alberta.

AHS negotiators did the same thing in May. Using the continuing COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse, the employer has been seeking delays in bargaining since the agreement expired on March 31.

UNA and AHS still have negotiating dates scheduled for July, and on June 11 the employer indicated its bargaining team could be available on July 6, 8, and 13-14.



UNA 2020 bargaining committee

UNA has filed a bargaining-in-bad-faith complaint with the Alberta Labour Relations Board since AHS is refusing to bargain as required by law.

The AHS bargaining team has admitted to the UNA bargaining committee that they have a revised proposal for the union – but they refuse to provide it to UNA.

As a result, UNA has filed a bargaining-in-bad-faith complaint with the Alberta Labour Relations Board since AHS is refusing to bargain as required by law. The complaint asks the Board to order AHS to resume bargaining, and impose other remedies.

Meanwhile, while UNA has not seen the details of the revised offer, we have little expectation that any revised employer position will be worthwhile or be intended to actually reach a new Collective Agreement. It is even possible they may come back with further rollbacks directed by the government.

In 2019, the UCP majority in the Legislature passed a law that allowed the government to give secret mandatory orders to public-sector employers during negotiations related to any term of the collective agreement. The *Ensuring Financial Stability Act, 2019*, states: “A directive issued by the Minister under this Act is confidential and may not be disclosed by the employer to any third party without prior consent of the Minister.”

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

UNA seeks clarification of contradictory statements on **PLANNED NURSE LAYOFFS**

by Kenney Government and Alberta Health Services

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta is seeking clarification from the Kenney Government of contradictory statements made by the government and Alberta Health Services about planned layoffs of Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

"UNA members and members of the public deserve to know what the government's real plans are."

-Heather Smith

"In response to UNA's public engagement campaign, cabinet ministers and MLAs are telling constituents that no layoffs of RNs and RPNs are planned," UNA President Heather Smith said in early June. "At the same time, AHS says planned job losses it disclosed to UNA in 2019 and last year are going ahead on the instructions of the government."

"UNA members and members of the public deserve to know what the government's real plans are," she stated. "The government needs to make its intentions clear immediately."

In November 2019, AHS Lead Negotiator Raelene Fitz informed UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan in a letter that the employer intended to eliminate 500 full-time-equivalent RN and RPN positions over the next three years, which would result in the loss of about 750 individual nurses' jobs.

In October 2020, AHS Executive Director of Negotiations and Labour Relations Lee McEwen wrote Harrigan and said that despite the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, AHS and Covenant Health would be proceeding with the planned elimination of 500 FTE as previously disclosed.

When UNA described this plan in its ongoing public-engagement campaign – which has resulted in more than 45,000

online actions by Albertans such as letters to politicians, petition signings and lawn signs requested – UCP MLAs and cabinet ministers have responded with letters to constituents denying the layoffs are planned.

A typical letter from the government states there will be "no net reductions in nurses or other front-line clinical staff."

On May 10, Harrigan contacted Fitz by email requesting clarity on these contradictory statements. "I ask that you clarify and advise whether or not AHS has plans for net reductions in nurses as your letters have indicated," his letter said.

Fitz replied by email on May 28 that "the change in approach during the pandemic does not change the previous disclosure of future potential job impacts."

"As directed by government, AHS will resume work on the implementation of AHS Review initiatives once it is appropriate to do so given the demands of the COVID-19 response," her email said.

This clear contradiction between what the government is telling voters and what AHS is telling UNA needs to be resolved immediately, Harrigan said.

"AHS has made its position clear to us in correspondence from the appropriate senior officials," he said. "If the government is taking a different position, it needs to make its instructions clear to AHS, and communicate its decision unequivocally to nurses and to Albertans."

Links to the emails can be found on UNA's website, una.ca. 🍷

However, the employer is claiming to the public that Alberta nurses have contract provisions that are superior to those in other provinces, and are trying to bring wages and working conditions that would position Alberta as a low-pay outlier for the nursing profession.

At present, all professions in Alberta have better provisions for their members than in any other province.

AHS has asked for the services of a jointly agreed upon facilitator. While UNA has no objection to participation by a facilitator, it does not believe that should be necessary in good-faith negotiations. Accordingly, UNA has informed AHS it is not prepared to pay for the facilitators' services. If AHS wishes to engage a facilitator, it may do so at its own expense.

In April, when UNA declined to accept an AHS attempt to suspend all negotiations until June, the immediate response from the employer was to suspend provisions designed to protect employees from COVID-19 infection and other impacts of the pandemic that had been part of the Memorandum of Agreement for the original March 31 postponement.

UNA strongly urged all employers that are part of the Provincial Collective Agreement – Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre, and The Bethany Group (Camrose) – not to drop supports and protections that benefit everyone during the pandemic, including pay for employees who are required to self-isolate.

These included paid leave for employees with and without confirmed workplace exposures, asymptomatic employees under quarantine, and asymptomatic employees impacted by work restrictions and orders by the Medical Officer of Health affecting their site, unit or office.

However, despite the fact such additional supports and protections for UNA members recognized both the unprecedented pressures on the system caused by increased demand for service and a decrease in available staffing due to quarantine and self-isolation requirements, AHS ignored that reasonable request.

AHS has continued to refuse to budge on that issue as well. 🍷

AHS bargaining team has admitted to the UNA bargaining committee that they have a revised proposal for the union – but they refuse to provide it to UNA.

RNs at Bethany Airdrie site VOTE TO JOIN UNA

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta welcomes Registered Nurses employed by Bethany Airdrie in the community north of Calgary to our union.

The bargaining unit of 12 Registered Nurses voted to join UNA and their application to join the union was approved by the Alberta Labour Relations Board on April 30, 2021.

As soon as possible, UNA will negotiate a first collective agreement for the new

members, who before the vote worked without representation by a union. UNA members employed at Bethany Airdrie have not yet been assigned to a UNA Local.

UNA also represents Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses employed at Bethany Calgary and Bethany Riverview in Calgary, Bethany Cochrane, Bethany Sylvan Lake, and Bethany Collegedale in Red Deer. 🍷



photo sourced from www.albertahealthservices.ca

STAFF SHORTAGES, **NOT** NURSE VACATIONS, CAUSED RURAL HOSPITAL BED CLOSINGS

■ **HEALTH** Minister Tyler Shandro caused an uproar on June 8 when he responded to a question in the Legislature about the closings and diminished access to Emergency Departments at some rural Alberta hospitals by blaming vacations taken by nurses and other front-line health care workers for the problem.

"I am not aware of AHS ever saying vacations are the cause of these problems."

— Heather Smith

United Nurses of Alberta responded the next day by pointing out that Alberta Health Services has indicated on multiple occasions that unfilled vacancies for Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses are the cause of bed closings and reduced Emergency Room coverage in rural hospitals.

"AHS has never suggested to us that vacations are the problem," UNA President Heather Smith said in a news release published on June 9. "It's offensive to suggest nurses are responsible for these problems by taking desperately needed vacations."

"Obviously, if the system can't operate when nurses and other health care workers take vacations, Alberta Health Services needs to hire more nurses and health care workers instead of planning to lay them off," Smith said.

In addition, she noted that since November 2019 "the message to nurses from this government has been clear that they are not needed or wanted here. So the government has been creating this problem. They are driving nurses out of this province."

Smith said health care employers have the power to cancel vacations in emergency situations like those in Boyle, Edson, St. Paul, Elk Point, Westlock, Rocky Mountain House, Fairview and Galahad that were cited in debate in the Legislature.

A June 4 memorandum sent by AHS management to physicians and staff regarding the temporary 30-per-cent closing of 10 acute care beds in St. Paul states that the problem is "due to a high number of Registered Nurse (RN) and LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) vacancies at the facility."

"I am not aware of AHS ever saying vacations are the cause of these problems," Smith said.

Responding to a question by David Shepherd in which the NDP health critic made reference to the government's failure to keep rural hospitals and health centres staffed, Shandro accused the Opposition of hypocrisy, then said "they know that it's more difficult in the summer months, when people take vacations."

Shepherd responded: "This minister is still at war with doctors, planning to fire 11,000 front-line health care workers and more than 700 nurses the moment the pandemic is over, can the minister promise these communities that there will be no more bed closures on his watch? Yes or no?"

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

NDP Health Critic
David Shepherd.



Letter supported by UNA calls on Ottawa to address ongoing discrimination against First Nations children

■ **FOLLOWING** the tragic discovery on May 27 of the remains of 215 children in unmarked graves in Kamloops, B.C., United Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith has added her name to a letter calling on Ottawa to do all in its power to provide justice to Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Canada's Indigenous citizens "continue to be traumatized by the residential school system and the failure of successive governments to address ongoing discrimination against First Nations children," says the letter sent on June 1 to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau by Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions President Linda Silas.

The letter urges the prime minister to do whatever is necessary to identify the remains and provide some degree of closure to their families, and to ensure that each residential school site is examined and the identities of every child be brought to light.

"I have been appalled by the persistent failure of the federal government to accept

responsibility for the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling from 2016 and to finally compensate the victims of the purposely underfunded child welfare system, as well as to extend eligibility for Jordan's Principle," Silas wrote. "The government's ongoing efforts to overturn this ruling is shameful and must come to an end."

Silas also noted that discriminatory underfunding of First Nations child and welfare services has resulted in substantially more Indigenous children being removed from their homes today than at the peak of the residential school system.

"If we as a country are serious and fully committed to reconciliation, we must change our colonial attitude towards Indigenous peoples, and ensure that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations are fully implemented as the highest priority of our governments."

The letter was signed by the presidents of eight Canadian provincial nursing unions and the executive director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society. 🍷

"If we as a country are serious and fully committed to reconciliation, we must change our colonial attitude towards Indigenous peoples."

— Linda Silas

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Shandro's response did not answer Shepherd's direct question.

Despite the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, AHS has made it clear to UNA in writing on several occasions that it intends to proceed, on the instructions of the government, with the elimination of 500 full-time-equivalent positions it disclosed to the union in 2019 and 2020. UNA estimates that will be the equivalent of about 750 actual Registered Nurses' and Registered Psychiatric Nurses' jobs.

Staff shortages caused by intentional underfunding and attempts to find cost efficiencies at the expense of quality care are causing similar problems in every Canadian jurisdiction.

An emergency resolution passed June 9 by the online biennial convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions called on nurses' organizations "to pressure governments to address the health human resources crisis facing nurses and other health care workers through national initiatives that support health human resources planning at the provincial and territorial levels, such as the creation of a federal health workforce agency."

The resolution also calls for continued efforts to demand Ottawa "provide urgent funding to the provinces and territories to hire additional nurses and health care workers, and to fund retention and recruitment initiatives to stem the disturbingly high flow of workers out of the sector." 🍷

Regulation change gives RPNs authorization to prescribe medications and order tests

Medications and tests covered by the change include antibiotics and vaccines, and diagnostic tests such as urinalysis, swabs, or x-rays.

■ A comprehensive amendment by the Alberta government to the *Registered Psychiatric Nurses Profession Regulation* means some RPNs are now authorized to prescribe certain medications and order some diagnostic tests.

Medications and tests covered by the change include antibiotics and vaccines, and diagnostic tests such as urinalysis, swabs, or x-rays.

The College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta (CRPNA) described

the change as a milestone for registered psychiatric nursing practice in Alberta.

Not all RPNs will be authorized to prescribe medications and order tests. An RPN with clinical experience in a particular area will be required to complete additional education before being authorized to prescribe. In addition, there are requirements for appropriate clinical supports to be in place in the employment setting before RPNs may prescribe drugs or order tests. 🍷

You have a legal right to time to vote in municipal elections

■ **ALL** employees in Alberta, including those not covered by a union contract like United Nurses of Alberta's Provincial Collective Agreement, have the legal right to three consecutive hours of time off to vote in Alberta's province-wide municipal election day.

Alberta's next municipal elections take place on October 18, 2021.

Section 58 of the *Local Authorities Election Act, Voting time for employees*, makes this requirement explicit.

- (1) *An employee who is an elector shall, while the voting stations are open on election day, have 3 consecutive hours for the purpose of casting the employee's vote.*
- (2) *If the hours of the employee's employment do not allow for 3 consecutive hours, the employee's employer shall allow the employee any additional time for voting that is necessary to provide the employee the 3 consecutive hours, but the additional time for voting is to be granted at the convenience of the employer.*
- (3) *No employer shall make any deduction from the pay of an employee nor impose on the employee or exact from the employee any penalty by reason of the employee's absence from the employee's work during the 3 consecutive hours or part of it.*
- (4) *Subsections (1), (2) and (3) do not apply if the employer provides for the attendance of an employee who is an elector at a voting station while it is open during the hours of the employee's employment with no deduction from the employee's pay and without exacting any penalty.* 🍷

A copy of the Local Authorities Election Act can be found at:
www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/L21.pdf

Pandemic dangers linger, new challenges arise, as new COVID-19 infection numbers decline

■ **ON** March 11, the world marked the first anniversary of the day when the disease that came to be known as COVID-19 was declared by the World Health Organization to be a global pandemic.

With first and now second doses of various COVID-19 vaccines in the arms of increasing numbers of Albertans, new infection numbers are finally starting to decline noticeably.

But it is important to remember many Albertans remain in hospital, fighting for their lives, and many more have a long recovery ahead of them.

Moreover, while the province has moved effectively to vaccinate Albertans, the provincial government resisted calls for stronger infection mitigation measures throughout the pandemic, and rushed to reopen too quickly whenever it saw a chance. It refused consistently to adopt a COVID-Zero policy, which has proved effective in places from the Canadian Maritimes to Australia and New Zealand. This contributed to the second and third waves of the disease in Alberta, which for a while this spring had the highest infection rate in North America.

So while it may now feel as if the pandemic is coming to an end, with citizens starting to relax and the government hurrying to completely reopen the province in time for the Calgary Stampede in July, there is a risk Alberta could face another wave of COVID-19, even if the number of fully vaccinated Albertans continues to rise.

Alberta's nurses – who have shown strength, dedication and resilience

throughout the pandemic – will need to remain on guard against another wave of COVID.

Moreover, during the third wave of COVID-19 this spring, Alberta cancelled or delayed more than 10,000 surgeries as the pandemic pushed the province's intensive care units to the edge.


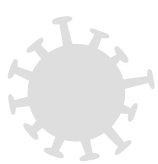
So now that infection numbers are falling and there is widespread optimism in public the pandemic may be coming to an end thanks to Canada's effective national vaccine procurement program, UNA members and other nurses are likely to continue to be tested.

Even if all goes well, as COVID numbers decline, nurses will be called upon to deal with the backlog of surgeries, not to mention delayed diagnoses, warned UNA President Heather Smith.

"If the province reopens again too quickly," she added, "we could face the challenge of another wave of COVID. We will have to remain vigilant.

"We can also expect to face new challenges as the government turns back to its agenda of austerity, health-care privatization, and legislation intended to make it difficult for unions to represent their members and nurses to speak up for public health care," Smith said.

"The past year and a half have been a difficult, challenging time for Alberta's nurses," she concluded. "Albertans are lucky to have nurses at their side and on their side." 🍷



"As COVID numbers decline, nurses will be called upon to deal with the backlog of surgeries, not to mention delayed diagnoses."

– Heather Smith.



UNA applauds bill ensuring up to 3 hours of paid leave for COVID-19 jobs

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta applauded amendments to the Employment Standards Code passed by the Legislature in late April that allows workers, including nurses, up to three hours of paid leave to receive their COVID-19 vaccination.

The passage of Bill 71, the *Employment Standards (COVID Vaccination Leave) Amendment Act, 2021*, followed weeks of Alberta Health Services putting needless barriers in the way of nurses getting vaccinated. Despite clear language in the collective agreement stated medical appointments were to be without loss of pay, AHS refused to extend this to COVID-19 vaccinations.

“After weeks of AHS putting the health, safety and lives of Albertans at risk by placing barriers to having health care workers vaccinated, nurses no longer have to take a financial hit or use their vacation time to get vaccinated,” said

David Harrigan, UNA director of labour relations, on April 22.

AHS began placing obstacles in the way of nurses getting their COVID-19 vaccinations shortly after UNA declined to agree to the employer’s request to once again delay bargaining for a new collective agreement.

Access to vaccinations during a pandemic shouldn’t have been used as a labour relations tactic, said Harrigan. “Alberta’s nurses are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic and the employer should be supporting them in every way they can, not playing games.”

After UNA filed a grievance, the Opposition NDP raised the issue in the Legislature and the government introduced Bill 71, which received unanimous support.

All full-time, part-time and casual employees are eligible for the paid leave. 🇺🇦

No word from employers at press time on date for payment of Critical Worker Benefit

■ **IN** late March, Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health provided United Nurses of Alberta with updated information about payments and employee eligibility for Alberta’s Critical Worker Benefit.

The employers said payments are proceeding for all unionized employees who meet criteria set by government – that is, a minimum 300 paid hours excluding overtime with a single employer between Oct. 12, 2020, to Jan. 31, 2021.

The employers said they were working as quickly as possible to issue the payment and will share timelines as soon as they are finalized. At press time, there had been no updates from employers.

Employers are required to validate the list of eligible employees with government to ensure there are no duplicate payments to individuals who meet the criteria with multiple employers.

This requires the employer to share personal information with the government. There will be an opt-out process for employees who do not want their information shared, but this would mean the employee would not receive the payment.

Employees who are eligible for payment will receive an email directly from HR Shared Services.

Ineligible unionized staff will also receive an email to indicate they did not meet the requirement. 🇺🇦

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

WELLNESS DAY 2: UNA members mark Nurses Week with wellness day focused on mental health, self-care and laughter

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta's second wellness day on May 12 focused on mental health, self-care and laughter.

More than 250 UNA members participated in the day-long Zoom event, which took place during National Nurses Week on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the 19th Century social reformer and statistician who is considered to be the founder of the modern nursing profession.

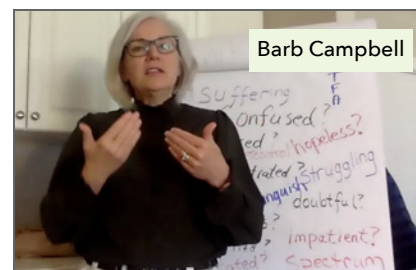
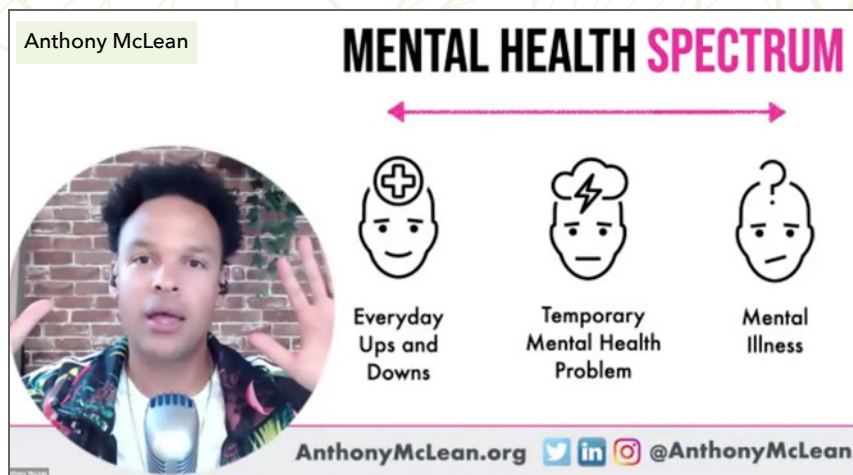
The wellness day featured speakers Anthony McLean, Big Daddy Tazz and Barb Campbell.

After welcoming remarks by UNA President Heather Smith and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions President Linda Silas, the speakers shared their skills to help members of the union boost their resiliency, learn relaxation techniques and find new ways to reduce stress. The event followed the success of UNA's first wellness day, on Jan. 21 this year.

UNA Second Vice-President Cam Westhead, who played a key role in organizing the two wellness days along with UNA's Executive Board Membership Committee, noted that in 2020 and this year, "UNA Members have been stretched and strained by the pandemic as never before,

"They have risen to the challenge, but that has come at a cost to their mental health," Westhead said. "UNA's Wellness Day was aimed at ensuring they know their sacrifices and contributions are valued, providing care to the caregivers and giving them an opportunity to recharge and focus on themselves.

"Given the lively participation and positive feedback, it's clear this event was needed and that our focus on supporting the

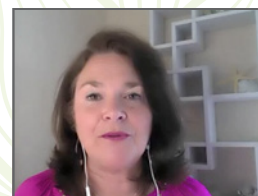


wellbeing of Members remains a priority for UNA," he said.

Speaker Barb Campbell is a UNA member and addictions/recovery coach. Anthony McLean, Registered Nurse and motivational speaker, shared practical coping skills for stress as well as the importance of reaching out for help when we're struggling. Big Daddy Tazz, who styles himself "the bipolar Buddha," is a professional comedian who also strives to enlighten, educate and inspire.

Second Wellness Day video now available for UNA members

UNA members can watch the video recording of the second wellness day event and discuss wellness issues with other nurses in UNA forums. Members will need to create a UNAnet account to access the video and chat. 🇺🇸



Linda Silas



Heather Smith

Albertans remind government that **WE NEED NURSES NOW & ALWAYS**

By Dave Cournoyer
Communications Advisor

UNA members can
learn more about
the campaign and
request a lawn sign
at neednurses.ca



UNA President
Heather Smith

NURSES NOW + ALWAYS

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

UNA 

NEEDNURSES.CA 

One of the most visual parts of the campaign was the launch of UNA's "Don't Pull the Plug on Public Health Care" lawn signs.



Members of Local 406 during Nurses Week

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta's province-wide advertising campaign has seen remarkable success since it was launched at the start of Nurses' Week in May 2021.

The *Nurses Now & Always* campaign calls on Albertans to take action against the planned layoffs of 750 Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses and privatization of large parts of the health care system by the United Conservative Party Government.

The campaign included radio ads broadcast on stations across the province and billboards and bus shelter ads located near hospitals and busy roads.

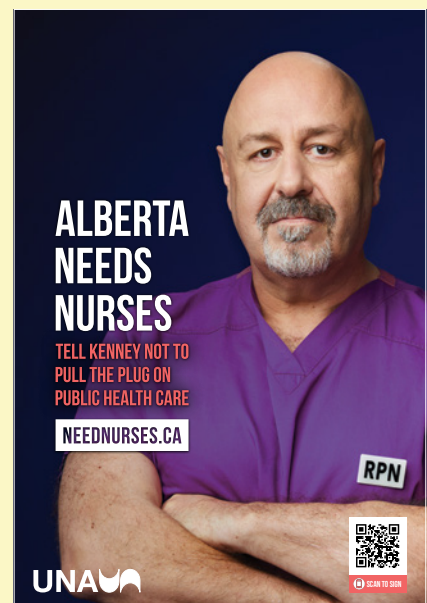
Professionally produced videos, including a series featuring UNA members sharing their stories about nursing during the COVID-19 pandemic were published on social media. The video and digital ads reached more than 1 million users and

were shared significantly across social networks like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

The campaign also included a significant digital organizing component, which through an email list of UNA members and supporters in the general public led to more than 45,000 individual actions being taken in the month following Nurses Week. These actions included supporters emailing and calling their MLA and Minister of Health Tyler Shandro to voice their opposition to the job cuts and privatization plans.

One of the most visual parts of the campaign was the launch of UNA's "Don't Pull the Plug on Public Health Care" lawn signs. Within a few weeks, UNA had received more than 1,000 requisitions for the signs, which are being distributed across the province by our hard-working volunteers. 🇺🇦

PULL OUT SIGN
on pages 14 & 15



NURSES

NOW + ALWAYS

**DON'T PLUG
ON
HEALTH**

UNA 

**ULL THE
PUBLIC
H CARE**

NEEDNURSES.CA



The time has come to REIMAGINE AGING IN CANADA



By Linda Silas
CFNU President

DURING National Nursing Week, which took place amidst an ongoing global pandemic, many across Canada recognized the successes and commemorated the sacrifices made by nurses in their tireless work caring for our loved ones, including our most vulnerable seniors.

We've known for many years that Canada's population is aging rapidly and that we face significant challenges in ensuring that everyone has access to high quality care as they get older.

Many of these challenges are the direct result of decades of under-investment and a fragmented regulatory regime. The current patchwork of services and the reliance on for-profit care in many parts of the country has resulted in soaring costs, inadequate facilities, insufficient staffing, and few protections for the health and safety of residents and workers.

Last summer, we saw the release of the Canadian Forces' disturbing reports of the conditions in many private, for-profit long-term care facilities in Quebec and Ontario during the first wave of COVID-19.

The reports shocked the Canadian public and decision-makers and highlighted the deplorable conditions faced by too many seniors. The sad reality, however, is that these problems had persisted for decades out of the public eye.

The tragedy that unfolded in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic was the culmination of an approach that has long put profit before people, with too many employers failing to meet basic labour and care standards in favour of padding their bottom line. The result is

that workers – often racialized women – face the impossible challenge of providing quality care while contending with high resident-to-staff ratios, limited resources and few workplace protections.

It should have served as a wake-up call for our federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Robust national standards for long-term care services are long overdue and they must be implemented through an enforceable process like federal legislation.

Population aging and the increasing need for care services are global issues. Other countries are rising to the challenge of providing quality care for older adults, and Canada can and must do the same.

Part of ensuring our nation's future health and economic prosperity will depend on addressing this challenge in a forward-thinking, co-ordinated and sustainable way that promotes the physical and emotional health of older adults.

We know that most Canadians want to age in their own homes and communities and – where additional care is needed – have access to safe, home-like environments where they are treated with respect and dignity. This makes a great deal of sense from both a social and economic perspective. However, many older adults in Canada have few options that support healthy aging in community.

To make this a reality, we must adopt an integrated approach that views care as a continuum of services responding to seniors' diverse needs and capabilities.

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CFNU BIENNIUM

COVID-19 revealed the cracks in our health care system, and society: CFNU president

By Ben Rene
Canadian Federation of
Nurses Unions



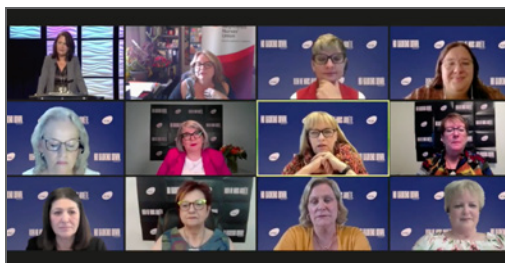
Linda Silas address
the CFNU Biennium.

■ **THE** message to Canada's nurses at the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions biennial conference was simple: We can't back down and we won't back down.

The June 8 and 9 convention – attended over the Internet by about 1,100 nurses from across Canada – took place in the shadow of a deadly global pandemic that continues to dominate Canadian nurses' working lives.

"It's been tough," CFNU President Linda Silas acknowledged in her address to members. "There's no overstating it. Our health care system was already stretched to the max. Our workloads were already unsustainable. Our mental health was already being tested. The system had no give."

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With 283 delegates, UNA's virtual delegation was the largest at the Biennium. Each convention delegate was given an envelope of flower seeds with the promise that better days are ahead – there will be new growth in the aftermath of the pandemic

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Patient acuity is a critical part of caring for older adults. The term refers to the physical and psychological status of the patient or resident – specifically, the measurement of the patient’s illness severity and the intensity of nursing care required. Current data supports a minimum staffing levels between 4.1 and 7.44 minimum hours per resident day, depending on patient or resident acuity.

With aging an inescapable reality, it makes little sense for governments to avoid addressing the issue or to hand off responsibility for the care of seniors to private, for-profit companies whose ultimate focus is generating profit for their shareholders.

Going forward, ensuring the health and wellness of seniors will require a complete reimagining of how we approach the care of older people.

We must recommit ourselves to ensuring that as Canadians live longer, they also have the opportunity to live better.

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions calls on federal, provincial and territorial governments to join with nurses, health care workers, and stakeholders to re-examine how we care for our seniors and to invest in innovative strategies and best practices to ensure that Canada represents the leading edge of seniors’ care today and into the future.

Our loved ones deserve nothing less. 🍷

Going forward, ensuring the health and wellness of seniors will require a complete reimagining of how we approach the care of older people.

Nurses confirm that patient acuity and complexity have been steadily rising for decades, with few corresponding adjustments in facilities and staffing. This means that as Canadians live longer, our approach to aging has not kept pace with the changing needs of our population.

Our system lacks the flexibility to adjust available nursing hours to changes in patient acuity, as well as the political will to develop systems that match nurse staffing levels to patient and resident needs.

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Silas pointed to COVID-19’s many devastating impacts, including the disaster in the long-term care sector, where many seniors perished at the hands of a system in which profit motives often trump care.

She also spoke to the impacts on our economy, which left countless Canadians without jobs. Without a universal national pharmacare program to fall back on, many of Canada’s unemployed also had to grapple with a losing employer-provided drug coverage. The virus also disproportionately affected Black, Indigenous and people of colour. “COVID-19 laid bare the cracks in our health care system, the cracks in our society,” she said.

As nurses worked themselves ragged against waves of COVID-19, governments did not let up their attacks on the health care sector and its workers. The pandemic may have made the case for strong public health care, but some provincial

governments are still looking for cuts, forcing nurses do more with less.

The hard work and danger of the pandemic appears to have earned nurses no good will from government, Silas added. Canada’s premiers may have applauded nurses in public, she said, but “they were busy undermining us behind the scenes.”

But while government failures and attacks are infuriating, nurses need to channel their anger into action. “We can’t let our anger – our frustration — paralyze us.”

Silas urged nurses to speak up. And not just to elected leaders, but to friends and family – anyone who can vote – about the need to strengthen and safeguard Canada’s public health care system.

“We have to channel our anger into action,” she said. “We have to make ourselves heard.” 🍷

CLC ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT, BEA BRUSKE OF UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS, ALONG WITH MOSTLY NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM

Siobhan Vipond, for eight years treasurer of Alberta Federation of Labour, is new national executive vice-president

■ **MORE** than 4,000 members of the Canadian Labour Congress, including a large delegation from United Nurses of Alberta, elected a new president and other leaders at the CLC's virtual national convention on June 18.

Bea Bruske of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 832 in Manitoba was elected president of the national labour organization in the Friday afternoon vote.

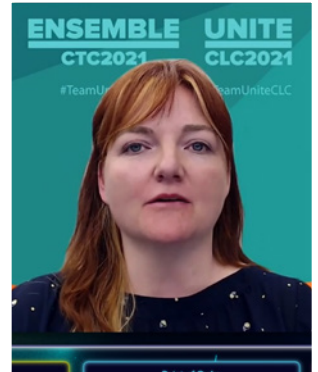
Lily Chang of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 79 in Toronto was elected secretary treasurer, and Siobhan Vipond, well known to UNA members in her role as secretary treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour for the past eight years, is now one of the CLC's two executive vice-presidents.

Larry Rousseau was re-elected to a second term as executive VP. He was first elected to the position in 2017. The new leadership team will lead the organization until 2023.

"We are committed to building a Canada that works for everyone," Bruske said. "Among our key priorities will be to ensure workers are centered in the post-pandemic recovery."

It was the CLC's first virtual convention, rescheduled and reformatted after COVID-19 arrived in Canada just before the meeting was about to begin in Vancouver in May 2020.

Hassan Yussuff, the first person of colour to lead the Canadian Labour Congress, stepped into retirement at the end of the convention. But the next week on June 22, he was appointed to the Senate of Canada by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He was elected as a vice-president of the CLC in 1999 and served as secretary-treasurer of the organization, which represents about 3.3 million unionized Canadian workers, from 2002.



Siobhan Vipond, elected executive VP

Hassan Yussuff, the first person of colour to lead the Canadian Labour Congress, was appointed to Canadian Senate on June 22.

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Outgoing CLC President Hassan Yussuff at the virtual convention.



PLAN TO REPLACE CPP WITH ALBERTA PENSION CARRIES BIG RISKS AND HIGH COSTS

■ **THE** Kenney Government's politically motivated plan to withdraw from the Canada Pension Plan and invent its own Alberta pension carries significant risks and potentially very high costs.

So despite the government's claim there is a compelling case for Alberta leaving the CPP, for working Albertans the compelling argument is the opposite.

Alberta would also have to spend enormous funds to create its own pension plan, a statement on the Alberta plan published by the Canadian Labour Congress in June argued.

For starters, even without Alberta politicians being tempted to gamble with plan members' money, it seems unlikely Alberta could match the sophistication and stature of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, the global asset manager that invests CPP contributions.

Albertans will remember how Premier Jason Kenney bet last year that Donald Trump would win the U.S. presidential election in November and allow the Keystone XL Pipeline project to be completed. When Trump lost, Albertans lost too – \$1.3 *billion* the premier gambled!

In 2020, the CCPIB achieved a 12.1-per-cent return. By comparison, the Alberta

Pension Management Corp., better known as AIMCo, had only a 2.5-per-cent return on its investments in the same year.

Alberta would also have to spend enormous funds to create its own pension plan, a statement on the Alberta plan published by the Canadian Labour Congress in June argued.

"If Alberta withdraws from the CPP, it will have to replicate the CCP's institutions and administrative capacity virtually from scratch," the CLC statement said. "It will have to pool risk across a much smaller group of contributors."

In addition, the report noted, the new Alberta pension plan would have to negotiate new agreements with Ottawa and Quebec to ensure Alberta pensions were portable.

The CLC statement notes the argument Alberta has a younger population than other provinces and therefore lower costs makes is questionable in the longer term. In 1966, when Quebec established its own pension plan, that was true there too. Now Quebecers are forced to pay higher contribution rates than other Canadians for the same benefit because of the low birthrates and lower immigration than in other parts of Canada.

"Pensions and workers livelihoods are too important to play politics with," the CLC statement concluded. "We cannot allow workers' financial security to be used as a bargaining chip or political plaything of elected officials." 🍷



ACTIVIST KAREN KUPRYS ELECTED AS SECRETARY-TREASURER OF ALBERTA FEDERATION OF LABOUR

■ **LONG-TIME** UNA activist Karen Kuprys has been elected as secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

The AFL's 52nd annual convention – conducted this year remotely over the Internet – also saw the re-election of President Gil McGowan during the final morning of the three-day event, on May 15.

"I'm personally incredibly proud that such an experienced UNA member has been elected to the position of secretary treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour," said UNA President Heather Smith. "It speaks volumes about Karen's ability to speak to all workers, not just with and on behalf of nurses."

"I am incredibly humbled to be elected to serve as your next AFL Secretary Treasurer," Kuprys said after the votes were tallied. "I have deep respect for all of

our members and our labour movement, I will continue to work hard to deserve the trust you have placed in me."

Smith congratulated both winners on their election, noting that Kuprys has been a key activist in UNA for 30 years and that in October 2020 she became the first recipient of UNA's new annual Bread & Roses Award for her contributions to the union.

Kuprys is a member of UNA Local 154 at the Youville Home continuing-care facility in St. Albert.

She and McGowan will each serve a two-year term.

Kuprys replaced Siobhan Vipond, the previous secretary treasurer, who announced before the AFL's 52nd annual convention that she planned to step down to seek the vice-presidency of the CLC. 🍷

Above: Some of the UNA members who attended the AFL Convention at which Karen Kuprys (below) was elected secretary treasurer.



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Yussuff had been expected to retire last year. Under his leadership, the CLC launched a digital and community-based campaign that put labour's issues front and centre in the 2015 federal election. Many observers believe that helped defeat the Conservative government of former prime minister Stephen Harper.

The Guyana-born labour leader fought for a stronger Canada Pension Plan throughout his leadership, frequently lobbying federal officials. That effort led in November 2016 to the tabling of Bill C-26, which expanded the CPP for the first time in its history.

Delegates to the convention passed resolutions on combating Islamophobia and Anti-Asian racism, as well as one urging Ottawa to fulfill the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

They elected labour council and regional representatives, as well as equity representatives for LGBTQ2S+ workers, workers of colour, young workers, Indigenous workers, and those with disabilities. New officers and council members were sworn in on Friday. 🍷

We have come through a time of mourning and hardship –

THERE WILL BE POSITIVE OUTCOMES

By Dewey Funk
UNA OHS Advisor

■ **LAST** year, 150 Alberta workers lost their lives on the job.

Families and co-workers were devastated. There was an empty spot at many tables, conversations will be missed forever, there are deep regrets because there was no chance to say “I love you” one more time.

Then came COVID-19. When we first heard of the new disease overseas, most of us assumed it would never land in Canada. We thought Western medicine would save us.

We were wrong. When the carnage arrived, borders were closed, civil restrictions put in place, visitors restricted in health care settings, continuous masking was required, a Joint Statement negotiated, single-site orders, AFD payments, isolation measures, mental health concerns, N95 respirators locked up, overtime, burnout, short staffing, and the list goes on.

All you need to do is look around at your workplace to see the stress on your co-workers’ faces.

Conversations are different. Who’s talking about a winter vacation or summer holidays now? Who’s thinking about an upcoming wedding invitation? Instead we have restrictions on attending a funeral to say goodbye. Who thought we’d ever need an invitation to attend a funeral for a dear friend or family member?

COVID units are over capacity, nurses must hold up iPads so family members can say goodbye. Imagine the mental toll that takes on those nurses? Resilience is a word employers rely on and workers have come to hate.

Despite all this, the Alberta Government has launched attacks on the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. It is reviewing the OHS Code and considering language that would gut Joint Workplace Health and Safety Committees, eviscerate the applicable rate of pay UNA won at arbitration, and change the rules to make it harder to refuse unsafe work.

Eliminating work refusals that save lives and protect workers’ health and safety are justified in the name of “job creators” who forget that people who work and spend their wages are the economic drivers of the economy. Labour for this government has become a dirty word.

So 2020 has become a year that many of us would like to forget, but mustn’t!

As bad a year as 2020 has been, there are positive outcomes that will take us into the future.

Employers can no longer tell workers and their unions that policies can’t be changed quickly. We have seen OHS policy changed in a week, not three years.

Meetings are now held virtually. Zoom and Skype are normal. Business gets done but the value of sitting across the table and looking someone in the eye seems to have been lost. A handshake on a deal is gone for the moment. But we will get back.

Supply chain lines for PPE are now secured. PPE is now manufactured in Canada and Alberta, including quality face shields, medical masks, and N95 respirators. No manager should hesitate to supply any PPE, no worker should hesitate to ask.

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This column was written to commemorate April 28, the International Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job.



This includes N95 respirators, when they are needed to perform work safely.

Health care workers are now eligible to receive vaccinations. But earlier this year, some workers caring for COVID patients had to meet additional criteria to be vaccinated. What's wrong with that picture?

We must never forget that governments come and go, even in Alberta. We, the workers of Alberta, will still be here to challenge inadequate legislation.

We must remember that not all health care workers who become infected with COVID recover. Some will become "long-haulers," and that will be their life's journey. They are the walking wounded. We don't know

what medical attention they will require or what their life needs will be.

This is not just about COVID-19. Countless other injuries occurred that caused the deaths of those 150 workers in 2020. They went to work and ended up not going home. They likely went to the hospitals where you work, where you tried to give them another shot at life.

We, working people, built this country. Working people have earned the right to safe workplaces, and unions to keep them safe. All working people deserve a safe workplace.

Stay Healthy! Work Safe!



*Dewey Funk is UNA's
Occupational Health
& Safety Advisor
and a regular
contributor to UNA
NewsBulletin.*

THIS YEAR, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU, NOT ABOUT YOU!

Nominations open until September 1 for UNA BREAD & ROSES AWARD

■ **NOMINATIONS** will remain open for United Nurses of Alberta's Bread & Roses Award until September 1.

The award, instituted in 2020, recognizes members who demonstrate leadership, the true spirit of solidarity, unionism, and the advancement of social justice at the local, district or provincial level.

Karen Kuprys, recently elected secretary-treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour, was the first winner of the UNA Bread & Roses Award in October 2020. She was a member of UNA Local 154 at the time and a long-time union activist.

Each nomination must be supported by at least two nominators, and all active members in good standing of UNA are eligible to be nominated. Contact nurses@una.ca for a nomination form.

The award recipient will be determined by members of the UNA Executive Board,

who will review all submitted nominations after the September 1 deadline. The award winner is chosen by secret ballot at the September meeting of the Executive Board and the announcement is normally made during the Annual General Meeting.

This year's award recipient will be announced at the 2021 UNA AGM, which will be held virtually.

The nomination form requires the nominee's name, local, current address, as well as the names of two nominators. Relevant accomplishments listed may include involvement by the nominee at the local, district and provincial level, leadership in influencing the growth of UNA through policy development, decision making, public awareness, and work empowering members through mentorship and policy development.

We encourage you to submit the names of UNA members who have inspired you. 🍷



UNA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING set for October 20 and 21 in cyberspace

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta's Annual General Meeting is set for October 20 and 21 in cyberspace.

The theme of the 2021 virtual convention will be *Forward ... Not back!*

Because the 2020 AGM was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, elections are planned for all four executive positions – President, Secretary Treasurer, First Vice-President and Second Vice-President. There will also be election for every District Representative position and every trial committee position.

More than 1,000 UNA delegates, observers and staff members from throughout Alberta are expected to log into UNA's most important business meeting of the year.

Members interested in attending the AGM as delegates or observers who have not already made arrangements need to speak with their Local executive.

There will be more information in the next edition of UNA NewsBulletin. 🍷

UNA marks Pride Month in June 2021



■ **ON** June 1, UNA recognized the outstanding contribution of Alberta's LGBTQ2S+ community and stated the union is proud to stand with its members during this year's Pride Month.

Pride Month, marked in June each year to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising in New York City at the end of June 1969, is an opportunity to celebrate and also to raise awareness of violence, discrimination, and repression of LGBTQ2S+ communities worldwide.

After several police raids targeted LGBTQ2S+ people near the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village, members of the community began to resist police violence. The incident is considered a key moment in the fight for LGBTQ2S+ rights in the United States.

UNA is committed to fighting prejudice in all its forms, so that LGBTQ2S+ people can always feel safe, valued, loved and welcomed, especially when seeking care.

UNA Pride Equity Caucus

As health care workers, UNA commits to creating welcoming environments where LGBTQ2S+ communities can feel safe, heard and understood.

The UNA Pride (LGBTQ2S+) Equity Caucus is a safe space for UNA members, where open dialogue can occur on issues and challenges that affect members that identify as LGBTQ2S+.

The Caucus strives to empower and aid LGBTQ2S+ members and their allies. The equity caucus meets annually at the provincial Annual General Meeting. 🍷



Swift resolution of Local 211 PRC was helped by decision to call urgent meeting



■ A resolution of Professional Responsibility Concerns by Local 211 Community nurses involved in contact tracing in Calgary illustrates the value of calling an urgent PRC meeting as part of the resolution process.

This spring, Local 211 nurses had concerns that included keeping up with constant pandemic-response changes while managing variants of concern, lack of clarity on their roles and responsibilities, and ineffective communication by managers.

In using the PRC process to resolve those concerns, the Local's PRC Committee was mindful of Article 36.01 of the Provincial Collective Agreement, which states in part the committee should meet monthly at a regular time, and "within 10 days of receiving a written description of the issue regarding patient/resident/client care."

So on March 21 this year, UNA nurses in the contact tracing department submitted a group PRC form to the committee. As a result, AHS and UNA Local 211 called an urgent PRC Committee meeting on March 30, at which members and employer representatives were able to initiate conversations about the members' concerns.

Both parties used the Professional Responsibility Process Best Practice guidelines jointly drafted by AHS and UNA in 2019 to help define the issues and identify the causes. The employer quickly provided a written response for discussion at the April 20 PRC meeting.

Members and managers impacted by the PRC reviewed the employer's response and, following the meeting, the local followed up with members. In this way, the PRC was swiftly resolved.

Local members were impressed by the support they received from the employer and, while there is more work to be done around wellness in the workplace, real improvement was noted after the PRC process.

The Local 211 PRC Committee recommends filing group PRC forms when it is a large-scope program-wide issue as opposed to each member filling out their own form.

As a result of this experience, the Local 211 PRC Committee – which includes Jacki Capper, Yvonne Johnson, Michelle Senkow, and Faisal Kassam – recommends filing group PRC forms when it is a large-scope program-wide issue as opposed to each member filling out their own form.

"It's more efficient for the Professional Responsibility Concern Committee to discuss one versus multiple PRC forms about the exact same concern," said UNA PRC Advisor Danusia Moreau, who assisted with the resolution.

The decision to call an urgent meeting under the Collective Agreement also helped achieve a timely resolution, she said, especially since the concerns included emerging matters.

The willingness of both employer and UNA representatives to meet on more than one occasion, and to work through a challenging workload in the midst of a pandemic, helped speed the resolution. 🍷

BILL 58 could let non-profit employers remove RNs from LTC workplace

■ A NEW government bill could open the door to non-profit employers removing Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses from long-term care workplaces.

"The minimum hours of care required in the Nursing Home regulations are not red tape, it is life-saving care."

- Heather Smith


Bill 58, *the Freedom to Care Act*, would allow non-profit groups to be temporarily exempted from government regulations.

United Nurses of Alberta is deeply concerned that this could allow the provincial government to remove provisions in the *Nursing Home General Regulation*, which require long-term care centres to have a Registered Nurse or Registered Psychiatric Nurse on duty 24 hours a day.

UNA supported an NDP Opposition amendment by Edmonton-Castle Downs MLA Nicole Goehring that would block Bill 58 from being used to temporarily suspend the *Nursing Homes General Regulation*. The amendment was defeated by UCP MLAs.

"The removal of this provision, even on a temporary basis, could have severe consequences for the safety of residents living in long-term care centres," said UNA President Heather Smith, who noted that the COVID-19 pandemic showed that long-term care centres in Alberta require enforced, minimum standards, as well as proper staffing levels.

"With their advanced education, skill sets and judgement, RNs or RPNs should be present in all health care settings," said Smith.

In May, the final report of the Facility-based Continuing Care Review called for an increase of professional services, and noted that all sites provided fewer RN or RPN hours than funded for. "The minimum hours of care required in the Nursing Home regulations are not red tape," Smith said. "It is life-saving care." 

Unions still await regulations for UCP's anti-union BILL 32

■ ALBERTA unions are still awaiting the regulations to the Kenney Government's so-called *Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act*, which would more accurately be called the "Heaping Red Tape on Unions Act."


The government claims the legislation will reduce red tape. The opposite is true.

The act, often referred to as Bill 32, needlessly duplicates UNA's established democratic decision-making for UNA members to determine the amount of dues they pay as well as how dues revenue is spent. It also attempts to impose bureaucratic financial disclosure processes and to create a false dichotomy between core and non-core union functions.

The act, often referred to as Bill 32, needlessly duplicates UNA's established democratic decision-making for UNA members to determine the amount of dues they pay as well as how dues revenue is spent.

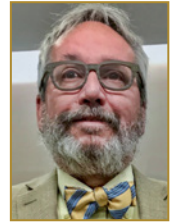
The law, passed by the Alberta Legislature on July 28, 2020, received Royal Assent the next day. It does the opposite of working toward restoring balance in workplaces and is unconstitutional, a submission to the government from UNA said in December last year, when Labour Minister Jason Copping sought comment from affected organizations on draft regulations.

"We urge the Government of Alberta to repeal the Act and avoid the costly and protracted legal battles that will surely follow should it be enacted," UNA said.

The legislation would also make it nearly impossible for UNA members to exercise professional responsibility to speak out on major health concern issues, such as poverty, inadequate shelter, food insecurity, and violence. 

It is now the law that employees must be given paid time off to get vaccinated for COVID-19

KNOW
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Rights



Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

■ **IT'S** now the law that employees must be given time off to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

A UNA grievance, filed on April 12, noted that UNA's Provincial Collective Agreement has clear language indicating that medical appointments are, depending on the length of time needed, to be without loss of pay or charged against accumulated sick leave.

Article 19.11 of the Collective Agreement says, *"If an Employee requires time off for the purpose of attending a dental, physiotherapy, optical or medical appointment, provided they have been given prior authorization by the Employer, such absence shall be neither charged against their accumulated sick leave, nor shall the Employee suffer any loss of income provided such absence does not exceed two (2) hours during one (1) work day."*

"If the absence is longer than two (2) hours," Article 19.11 continues, *"the whole period of absence shall be charged against their accumulated sick leave. Employees may be required to submit satisfactory proof of appointments."*

At some UNA worksites, however, the Employer took the position that an appointment to be vaccinated was not a medical appointment, so if a nurse had a vaccination appointment during work time, she would need to use vacation TOIL or unpaid LOA.

UNA's grievance said: "It appears that this is being done in retaliation for the Union declining to agree to the Employer's request to renew a Memorandum of Agreement regarding a pause on bargaining. In addition to being unfair, unreasonable, discriminatory and a violation of the Collective Agreement, by placing barriers to having health care workers vaccinated, the Employer is putting the health, safety and lives of Albertans at risk."

In April, the Legislature amended the provincial *Employment Standards Code* to allow all employees to access paid, job-protected leave to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

As a result, the parties agreed at a dispute resolution meeting on May 3 to resolve the matter without prejudice and without precedent.

For the period between April 1 and April 21, when the changes to the *Employment Standards Code* took effect, AHS agreed that all Employees who were required to take time off without pay to attend a vaccine appointment are eligible to have their coding corrected to regular time.

However, the onus is on impacted employees to follow up with the Employer to seek a correction.

Employees are encouraged to follow up with their manager to seek a correction.

Going forward, it is the law that all employees get paid time off to be vaccinated. 🍷

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



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UNA 