

SUMMER 2022 VOLUME 46, NUMBER 2



NEWS Bulletin

United Nurses
of Alberta

MAY 14:
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Not OK!

■ **THE** weather is starting to warm up and with summer just around the corner, many of our friends and family are thinking about holidays and relaxation. But for many Alberta nurses there are a lot of other things on our minds.

We know things aren't okay.

The Alberta government has removed nearly all of the remaining COVID-19 related protections. Despite declining hospitalizations, COVID was responsible for more than 500 deaths in the three months after March 11, 2022 - the second anniversary of the start of the pandemic.

It is not okay for nurses who face understaffed worksites every shift and every day. Nurses who are exhausted and injured, not just by the events of the past two and a half years, but by all the years of inadequate and unsafe working conditions before COVID.

REGISTRATION 2023 Big Changes for RNs

As nurses we are used to annually renewing our registration with the college, but this year there are some big changes.

The restructuring of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) into the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CRNA) has significant implications for members.

A new organization, the Alberta Association of Nurses (AAN) officially launched on May 9, during Nurses Week and is in the process of developing bylaws. AAN is the professional association and advocacy entity for Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Licensed Practical Nurses in Alberta.

AAN membership is voluntary and the annual fee is \$50.

It is not okay to privatize labs.

It is not okay to contract out our colleagues in supportive services.

It is not okay to tell parents to drive to the hospital emergency because an ambulance is simply not available.

It is not okay to use our public dollars to provide profits for private surgical interests.

And the latest - it is not okay to contract out home care services across the province!

As the UCP holds a leadership race to choose their next leader, who will automatically become the next premier, we need to be relentless in our defence of our patients, our coworkers, our workplaces and our public health care system.

Because of this big change, CRNA is reducing the annual licensing fee to \$502.83 for 2023.

But it is not simply a fee reduction.

Under the Health Professions Act, RNs and NPs are required to maintain Professional Liability Insurance on top of any employer liability coverage.

For many years liability insurance was included in CARNA registration costs and was provided by the Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS).

This liability insurance coverage is no longer automatic when RNs and NPs renew their registration with CRNA.

This means that RNs and NPs will need to buy their own liability insurance through CNPS.

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: UNA Second Vice-President Cameron Westhead (right) and Local 415 President Stephanie Wilcox in Calgary for the May 14 Rally. Photo credit: Dave Olecko



Part of the crowd at the May 14 rally at the Alberta Legislature Building in Edmonton

MAY 14 RALLIES ACROSS ALBERTA SUPPORTED PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

■ **"BETTER WAY ALBERTA"** rallies were held across Alberta on May 14 to support public health care and protest the Alberta government's attacks on the province's health care system.

Timed to coincide with National Nurses Week, the rallies in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge were a joint effort by United Nurses of Alberta, Friends of Medicare, the Alberta Federation of Labour, and others.

"We're here to support public health care, not just public funding, but public delivery to us of health care," Smith told the rally at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton. "It is essential to our common good."

The Alberta government, she charged, "has intentionally devastated and alienated our health care workforce and then offered private solutions as the answer."

"What we need is money and political will to invest in public health care," Smith told the rally. "We need to move forward with

things like pharmacare and real reforms to our long-term care system."

Smith called for federal money to support provincial health care programs to be provided with "strings attached" to ensure the Alberta government doesn't divert it to subsidize private, for-profit corporations.

Representing Canadian Doctors for Medicare, retired Edmonton anesthesiologist Sue Reid called for continued emphasis on "publicly funded, publicly delivered health care."

Reid said she fears the government's plan to use public money to finance surgeries at private for-profit clinics will lead to longer waits for surgeries, not the opposite as the government claims. "You steal people from the public hospital system and put them in the private system and there's no surplus. So if you're an anesthetist working in the private OR, then the one public OR is closed."

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“Our public health care isn’t broken, it’s being intentionally dismantled by an ideological government intent on privatizing every sliver they can,” said Friends of Medicare executive director Chris Gallaway. “Health care decisions should be made prioritizing people, not profits. It should be about providing the care Albertans need, not using our public health care dollars to facilitate privatization and profit for corporations.”

“The provincial government went to war with doctors, driving them from our province and our city,” said Bev Muendel-Atherstone, Friends of Medicare’s chapter chair in Lethbridge. “Now over 40,000 people in Lethbridge are without access to a family doctor.”

Canada celebrates National Nursing Week each year during the week that includes 12 May, the birthday of Florence Nightingale. 🇨🇦

A video of Heather Smith’s remarks to the rally, and her thanks to all members of the health care workforce who delivered vital services to Albertans through the pandemic, can be found on United Nurses of Alberta’s YouTube channel.

It’s a long tradition: Raging Grannies pitched in to help May 14 rallies



Some of the members of the Edmonton chapter of the Raging Grannies at the Legislature on May 14.

■ **PARTICIPANTS** in the May 14 rally in Edmonton were assisted by the capital city’s Raging Grannies, a thorn in the side of less-than-progressive Alberta governments for more than 30 years.

After a polite call from Louise Swift, 92, one of the founders of the Edmonton group, to make sure they were included, the Grannies, as they’re fondly known, were on hand to do their part to protect public health care in Canada.

The Grannies have been around for just over 30 years in Edmonton.

But Raging Grannies first turned out to support progressive causes 35 years ago in Victoria, B.C. – a reaction to ageism and sexism in the peace group the first Grannies were associated with. They wore colourful clothing to mock stereotypes of older women, wrote clever songs, and contributed fun and irreverence to serious issues.

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A STATEMENT BY UNA PRESIDENT HEATHER SMITH:

On National Nurses Week 2022, Alberta and Canada need more nurses

■ **UNA President Heather Smith made the following statement at the start of National Nurses Week, 2022:**

This is National Nurses Week 2022, and Alberta and Canada need nurses more than ever.

Our province and our country need *more nurses than ever* too.

Traditionally National Nurses Week, which runs from May 9 to May 15 this year, is a time to celebrate the work of nurses everywhere. The theme this year is **#WeAnswerTheCall**.

But nurses have always answered the call. Since 2020, through 2021, and now well into 2022 as the COVID-19 pandemic

has held Canada and all the nations of the world in its grip, nurses have gone above and beyond that call of duty.

Nurses are overworked and exhausted. Some are leaving the profession. Many more are considering it.

The shortage of qualified nurses that Canada already faced before the pandemic has become critical. Emergency Rooms and many wards in hospitals throughout Alberta are stretched beyond safe limits. Too many nurses are being asked to work too much overtime to keep the health care system functioning. Rural hospitals throughout Alberta are being forced to close beds and shut down services because staff can't be found to keep them open.

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May 14 scenes
throughout Alberta.



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They're still at it. Not only are there Raging Grannies in Victoria and Edmonton, but they can be found across the country and in several other countries. You can even find them on their way to and from protests in the subways of New York.

Contacts for the Grannies in most Canadian provinces, 24 U.S. states, and half a dozen other countries are found at raginggrannies.org/locations/.

As long as there are progressive causes to be fought for in Alberta, it's likely the Grannies will be part of the crowd. 🇺🇸





May 14 scenes

throughout Alberta:

Heather Smith during the rally in Edmonton, above centre; NDP Health Critic David Shepherd, at right.

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Lineups at some hospitals are so long that it can take several hours just to triage patients, and many more hours to see a physician.

This is a real crisis. It requires real action. Action that can't wait.

The government's plan to privatize surgical services won't help. The fundamental issue is a shortage of qualified nurses and other medical professionals.


United Nurses of Alberta's 30,000 members, most of whom are Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses, have made it clear that our provincial government must start by acknowledging that there is a crisis. From there, the government needs to take measures to retain

nurses still in the profession and recruit and educate new ones.

We all now must add our voices to this urgent message.

The United Nations declared 2020 to be the Year of the Nurse, marking the birth of Florence Nightingale on May 12, 1820.

It's as if the Year of the Nurse is now in its third year! Alberta's nurses are still answering the call.

It's time for the Alberta government to recognize this, and to acknowledge it in ways that have real meaning. The first and most important way is to take practical, concrete steps to end the nursing crisis in Alberta. 



May 14 scenes throughout Alberta: First Vice-President Danielle Larivee, top right.



New contracts, LOUs ratified by six UNA locals

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta members at six worksites recently ratified new collective agreements or letters of understanding with their employers.

Newly organized UNA members at Prince of Peace Manor & Harbour in East Calgary voted 100 per cent in favour of ratifying a first collective agreement with their employer, Verve Senior Living. Members at this worksite are currently represented by Local 504, a provincially administrated unit of UNA.

New collective agreements were ratified by members of UNA Local 37 and Local 172 employed by Chantelle Management in

Grande Prairie and Lethbridge, Local 194 employed by the Salem Manor Nursing Home in Leduc, Local 226 employed by Venta Care Centre Ltd. in Edmonton, and Local 416 employed by the Blood Tribe Department of Health Inc. in Stand Off.

Members of UNA Local 154 employed at Foyer Lacombe in St. Albert voted in favour of salary adjustments included in a new Letter of Understanding with their employer, Covenant Care.

UNA thanks the members of these locals for their hard-work and solidarity during these negotiations. 🍷

Prince of Peace Manor & Harbour in East Calgary voted 100 per cent in favour of ratifying a first collective agreement.

UNA and AHS reach agreement to resolve workplace harassment and abuse concerns involving physicians

■ A new agreement reached by United Nurses of Alberta and Alberta Health Services is intended to modernize and simplify the process available to nurses filing Workplace Harassment and Abuse concerns involving abuse by physicians.

In response to a presentation by UNA Occupational Health and Safety Advisor Dewey Funk to AHS and Medical Affairs, AHS has agreed interim measures are required to address nurses' concerns and that an alignment of process for these types of complaints needs to be created.

In a letter dated March 3, 2022, AHS agreed to a series of interim measures to address these types of concerns, including:

- Directing AHS staff requesting information about the complaint process to the applicable human resources and medical

staff concerns consultants for the area or matter to provide information and answer specific questions

- Partnering human resource business partners and medical staff concerns consultants for all worker-to-worker Type III harassment matters that involve a physician
- Ensuring any complaints with an employee complainant will have HRBP on the investigation panel
- Ensuring complainants are always interviewed as part of an investigative process and are offered union representation for all meetings or proceedings

AHS has committed to deliver recommendations and work with UNA to create an implementation plan by June 30, 2022. 🍷

A copy of the document signed by AHS and UNA's co-chairs of the Bilateral Complaint Resolution Working Group is available at www.una.ca

RESIGNATION OF PREMIER could impact unpopular policies

■ **ALBERTA** politics were thrown into a state of uncertainty on May 18 when Jason Kenney unexpectedly announced he would resign as premier and leader of the United Conservative Party after receiving the support of only 51.4 per cent of the party members who cast ballots in his leadership review vote.

This could have impacts for a number of unpopular and controversial policies pushed by Kenney, including the UCP's planned "surgical initiative," which would see private for-profit clinics engaged to provide some surgeries for patients covered by public health insurance.

Critics say the plan will increase privatization, cost taxpayers more and ultimately result in longer wait times for many patients if the government stops heavily subsidizing the scheme.

In addition, it is likely to impact additional efforts by the government to end the ongoing crisis in the health care system,



Jason Kenney at the Government of Alberta
Cabinet Meeting - May 20, 2022

Critics say the plan will increase privatization, cost taxpayers more and ultimately result in longer wait times for many patients.

including cancelled surgeries, long waits for access to emergency medical services and shortages of nurses and paramedics. 📉

No evidence yet that UCP surgery privatization plan will be curtailed or dropped

■ **DESPITE** Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's decision to resign, there is no evidence the United Conservative Party project to expand private, for-profit surgical services in the provincial health care system will be curtailed.

Kenney signalled his intention to move ahead with privatization in mid-February in an interview with a right-wing online publication run by a former UCP MLA. "Our surgical reform initiative will more than double the number of surgeries that Alberta performs in private surgical facilities," he said. "They will be publicly

insured, but they won't be union-run hospitals."

The February 24 provincial budget allocated \$133 million over three years to "the Alberta Surgical Initiative Capital Program," to expand "chartered surgical delivery" and more than double the number of private surgeries by 2023.

In the weeks after that, Kenney reiterated his intention to proceed with expansion of private surgeries to cope with surgical cancellations caused by staff shortages, particularly of nurses, and pandemic stresses.

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UNA to introduce improved PRC form

■ A year-long project to update and improve UNA's Professional Responsibility Concern Form (PRCF) is nearing completion with plans to launch the new form in July after consultation with locals.

The update was based on a scan of other Canadian nursing unions' professional responsibility, staff and workload reporting forms, a review of technical literature on nursing workload and quality-of-care indicators, and a quality review of UNA's existing PRC data asset, said PRC Advisor Josh Bergman.

In addition, Bergman said, focus groups were conducted with UNA locals engaged in the PRC process in all parts of Alberta.

Key changes to the form and UNA's Data Management System (DMS) include:

- Additional or updated fields to prompt reporting and better capture important information that can help managers and PRC Committees discuss and resolve concerns
- A new ability to link multiple PRCFs in the DMS, allowing local representatives to update and close those records
- A new electronic Manager Response Form (MRF) that will automatically be emailed to managers to complete after they receive a PRCF
- The ability to create, document, and manage PRC Committee agendas and minutes in the DMS

A review of the new PRCF as well as related changes to the PRC module of the DMS will be provided to locals in June, Bergman said.

The new PRC update will be rolled out in stages, said UNA Information Systems Director Andrew Johnson. "It will come first to the Web and a few months later to the UNA App," Johnson said. "This does mean people will need to go to the web only for a little while, but timelines around development dictate the staggering of the releases."

The DMS is used by UNA to receive, manage and update PRCFs submitted by members.

Reporting a Professional Responsibility Concern is a constructive action that can protect patients, clients, and residents and alleviate the moral distress nurses sometimes experience when they are unable to provide care as required by the standards of professional licensing bodies. 🍀

AHS CHANGING HOW EMPLOYEES DECLARE DEPENDENTS' STUDENT STATUS AND UPDATE OVER-AGE DEPENDENT INFORMATION

■ **ALBERTA** Health Services is changing the way employees with dependents between the ages of 21 and 25 who are post-secondary students must establish and update their Over-Age Dependent status.

Effective July 1, 2022, all UNA members employed by AHS with Over-Age Dependents (OAD) will be required to complete OAD declarations and updates in e-People Employee Self Service (ESS).

This means employees will no longer be able to fill out the paper Over-Age Dependent Declaration form. They must instead submit relevant information in e-People ESS.

Employees will also no longer receive any correspondence by postal mail from Alberta Blue Cross.

Effective July 1, 2022, all UNA members employed by AHS with Over-Age Dependents (OAD) will be required to complete OAD declarations and updates in e-People Employee Self Service (ESS).

Reminder notifications previously provided by Blue Cross will now be provided by e-People through a system-generated email and will include all necessary details and instructions.

This new process will not impact the level of benefits UNA members receive, the ability to access these benefits, or the eligibility requirements for OADs.

Members with questions or concerns should contact their UNA Local Executive or Labour Relations Officer at 1-800-252-9394 or by email at nurses@una.ca. 🇨🇦

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At the time, UNA President Heather Smith noted that private facilities move all risk onto the public system by skimming off low-risk activity and leaving the rest for public facilities.

“It’s not like we’ll have a whole bunch of new surgeons or nurses, so they’ll skim off the public side to fuel private activity, which means you just diminish the ability of the public side to be responsive,” she said.

Private clinics accept only the healthiest and wealthiest patients, dumping the

poor, the elderly and those with complex conditions on the public system. If patients face complications, they are moved to the public system. So when private health care pulls resources out of the public system, most patients will face longer wait times.

It is widely believed Alberta Health Services CEO Verna Yiu was fired by the AHS Board in April because she opposed the UCP Government’s plans to privatize public health care delivery of medical and surgical services. 🇨🇦

“It’s not like we’ll have a whole bunch of new surgeons or nurses, so they’ll skim off the public side to fuel private activity.”

– Heather Smith

On April 28, 'as we mourn for the dead, we continue to fight for the living'

■ **ON** April 28, 2022, Alberta and Canada passed the third International Day of Mourning under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID continues to be a major health hazard for Albertans, especially in indoor environments, including workplaces."

– Gil McGowan

Workers Compensation Board statistics showed that of the 178 people known to have died on the job or from a work-related illness in Alberta in 2021, 31 died of COVID-19.

Speaking at an open-air ceremony in Grant Notley Park in Edmonton organized by the Edmonton and District Labour Council, Opposition Leader Rachel Notley said almost all workplace deaths and injuries are preventable and chided the government for relaxing occupational health and safety standards and calling it cutting "red tape."

"Let us remember, safety standards are not and never should be ever characterized as red tape," Notley said.

The same day, in a virtual Day of Mourning ceremony organized by the Calgary and District Labour Council, Alberta Federation of Labour President Gil McGowan called for "a revolution in public health and workplace safety to keep workers safe from COVID."

"Despite all the government rhetoric about getting 'back to normal' and 'learning to live with it,' COVID continues to be a major health hazard for Albertans, especially in indoor environments, including workplaces," he said.

Urging paid sick leave for all workers, provision of N-95 masks to those working in all indoor environments, and aggressive testing programs, McGowan said governments were irresponsible to allow the response to the pandemic to be framed as a choice between lockdowns and "freedom."

United Nurses of Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Advisor Dewey Funk observed on April 28 that "work shouldn't hurt, but work is hurting health care workers every day."

"Many nurses and health care workers have suffered injury while facing incredible workplace complications created by COVID-19," said Funk. "Overwhelming workplace stress and distress has hurt morale and created untold psychological distress in the workplace over the past two years."

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UNA members and those from other unions marked the International Day of Mourning on April 28: Bottom left, UNA President Heather Smith and First Vice-President Danielle Larivee in Edmonton.



Why do we report workplace incidents?

By Dewey Funk
UNA OHS Advisor

■ **WHENEVER** a nurse raises an occupational health and safety concern to me, I always ask if they reported their concern in the employer's reporting system.

The silence is often deafening. The rationale is frequently “I don’t have time,” “we don’t need another form to fill out,” or “nothing is ever done so why fill out another form?”

When I worked for another union, a member asked me for assistance fixing a payroll concern. But the member didn’t want me to reveal their name. Really, how could I assist with that member’s payroll issue if they wouldn’t reveal their name?

This is the same for OHS concerns. If no one has the time to fill out the OHS concern form in the employer’s reporting system, how can either the employer or UNA assist? With no recorded record of the event or concern, the employer can rightly ask, how much of a concern is this if no one could be bothered to report it?

I realize that, as a nurse, you may not have time when the matter of concern is taking place. More than likely you are trying to mitigate the concern just then. But you don’t have to report concerns that day. You can report the concern on the next shift.

I advise you to report as soon as possible, but there are no timelines for reporting an incident or concern.

What if multiple people have the same concern? Everyone should report the concern, not just one person. OHS concerns can affect different people different ways.

For example, when a traumatic incident occurs, every person can psychologically absorb the event differently. One person may develop PTSD, another person may not have any psychological effects.

What if your manager states you don’t have to report the concern? Report it anyway. The report is a written record of the event.

When a report is made, employers have a duty to investigate the concern and address it. Should the employer not address the concern, the concern can go to the Occupational Health and Safety Committee for discussion and resolution. That written initial report is the basis for resolving the concern.

I’m asking you on a go-forward basis to report all of your OHS concerns.

It’s the only way we can resolve them.

One day, your working conditions, your health, and your safety may depend on it.

Dewey Funk 🍷



I’m asking you on a go-forward basis to report all of your OHS concerns.

It’s the only way we can resolve them.



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However, he added, had it not been for the advocacy of unions and workers for access to personal protective equipment and safe working conditions, things could have been much worse.

“As we mourn for the dead, we continue to fight for the living,” Funk said.

April 28 is the labour movement’s most solemn day, and officially became the National Day of Mourning in 1991 after the passage by Parliament of the *Workers Mourning Day Act* in December 1990. Since then, the occasion has come to be widely marked throughout the world. 🍷

UNA gravely concerned by staffing crisis at Alberta Children's Hospital, other facilities

■ **IN** a May 5 statement, United Nurses of Alberta said it is gravely concerned by the situation described in an anonymous letter outlining the serious difficulties faced by nursing staff at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary and other health care facilities throughout Alberta.

The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services must take emergency measures to address this critical nursing shortage immediately.

While the authors of the letter, which was sent to media, are not known, UNA can attest that the circumstances it describes are real and require an immediate and focused response from the Government of Alberta.

The letter described "sick kids standing outside in the rain" as they and their parents awaited triage at Alberta Children's Hospital. "It is taking 2-3 hours just to be triaged adding to astronomical waiting times."

The letter continued: "Waiting rooms are full. Health care professionals cannot keep up with required reassessments based on the acuity of patients. The department is full. There is nowhere to put a patient that urgently needs a bed ..."

"Patients are coming by private vehicle because when they call for an ambulance they are being told there aren't any. There are no available ambulances on the road. Let that sink in ..."

The letter concluded: "We need nurses now. We need doctors now. We need more first responders now. We need more support staff now. We need more security staff now. We need more bed capacity now. We need more mental health beds now. The ship is sinking and we are all going down with it ..."

In its response, UNA said the crisis continues at Alberta Children's Hospital. Pediatric nurses, who for the past two years of COVID-19 have pitched in to aid adult patients gravely ill with COVID-19, are now pleading for help. Staff face repeated calls to work mandated overtime, denials of personal leave and vacation days. Exhaustion and despair are rampant.

Meanwhile, similar stories are being told at health care facilities throughout the province.

"This situation must be resolved. Lives are at risk," the UNA statement said. "The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services must take emergency measures to address this critical nursing shortage immediately.

"The first step is to acknowledge that there is a serious problem, resolution of which must include retention of the current nursing resources while sincere efforts are put in place for the training and recruitment of new nurses. United Nurses of Alberta stands ready to advise and contribute to developing emergency strategies to cope with this ongoing crisis." 🇺🇦

A full copy of the anonymous letter is available www.una.ca.

The Emergency Room entrance of the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary.



Photo 19801465 © Maksimages | Dreamstime.com

KENNEY'S MAY 13 ANNOUNCEMENT lacked what's needed to solve Alberta health care crisis

■ **PREMIER** Jason Kenney's May 13 "update" on new hospital beds did not answer the fundamental question about how to end the continuing crisis in Alberta's health care system.

"Premier Kenney gave no indication in his remarks that his government has any plan to recruit new nurses or other front-line workers for Alberta's health care system, or even to retain the ones we have now," UNA President Heather Smith said the same day.

All Kenney and Health Minister Jason Copping did at the news conference a few days before the premier's unexpected resignation announcement on May 18, was to re-announce plans to add the 50 ICU beds province-wide first announced in February's budget. The only real news was that 19 of those beds have now opened, Smith said.

"Just buying hospital furniture won't solve the problem," she said. "Privatizing important aspects of health care and making health care workers' jobs less secure won't help either."

"It was appropriate for the premier to hold his news conference in a room full of empty beds, because AHS is going to have trouble finding nurses to staff any of them," Smith added.

She said nurses are now exhausted and disillusioned after sacrificing throughout the pandemic to keep the health care system running. Many are seriously contemplating retiring or leaving the profession for other work, or considering departing for other jurisdictions where pay and working conditions are better.



Alberta Premier Jason Kenney at his May 13 news "update" at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary.

So solving the crisis in health care has to start with acknowledgement by the government that there is a crisis, she said.

After that, Alberta's government needs to commit to making nurses' and other health care workers' jobs more secure, which would allow Alberta Health Services to reduce its heavy reliance on expensive temporary contract "agency" nurses for up to \$100 an hour.

It also needs to commit immediately to creating more educational opportunities and supports for Albertans considering a career in nursing, and to a serious recruitment and retention program to bring nurses to Alberta.

"That will require treating nurses and their unions as essential contributors to the solutions Alberta needs, and no longer acting as if they are enemies," she said. 🇺🇦

"Premier Kenney gave no indication in his remarks that his government has any plan to recruit new nurses or other front-line workers."

- Heather Smith

There are solutions to CANADA'S NURSING SHORTAGE



By Linda Silas
President, Canadian
Federation of Nurses Unions

■ **THE** nursing shortage; it's on everyone's mind.

Many of the issues nurses are grappling with trace right back to it: occupational stress injuries and exhaustion, work-life imbalance, patient safety concerns, untenable amounts of overtime, and long wait times. The nursing shortage is a monumental problem facing Canada's health care system, and it requires bold and urgent action.

At the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, addressing the health human resources crisis continues to be our top priority. Over the past year, we have met with countless federal leaders to sensitize them to the magnitude of the problem.

Canada's situation is dire, compounded by an understandable and palpable frustration among nurses. More and more, nurses are simply calling it quits. The nursing shortage we are grappling with today has been decades in the making – and for many, the pandemic is the straw that broke the camel's back.

But there is hope. Canada isn't the only country to struggle with health human resources planning, and while there isn't a perfect model or approach, some countries have fared better than others.

In a white paper by Dr. Ivy Bourgeault and colleagues, researchers contend that

Canada can draw important lessons from Australia's approach to health human resources planning. In 2010, to address a national nursing shortage and health workforce distribution issues, the Australian government created a national medical workforce agency.

At the time, Australia was facing an aging population and growing health care needs; health care workforce costs were expected to double by 2050. Like many governments around the world, Australia had been trying to manage a health workforce with insufficient and inadequate data. A primary goal of Health Workforce Australia, therefore, was to acquire the data needed to guide health workforce planning to meet projected population needs.

Another consequence of the nursing shortage was increased casualization in the health workforce: more nurses were opting to go casual as a means of obtaining greater control over their working hours and conditions – something we are also seeing in Canada.

Importantly, Australia's health workforce project was national in scope, which reflected the national nature of their nursing shortage. Taking a bird's eye view of the issue also helped Australia better understand national workforce supply and health care needs.

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AHS RECOGNIZES National Day of Truth and Reconciliation AS NAMED HOLIDAY

■ **THANKS** to a province-wide grievance filed by United Nurses of Alberta, Alberta Health Services has recognized the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) as a Named Holiday in the Provincial Collective Agreement.

AHS informed UNA of its decision in a letter dated April 29.

The decision represents a settlement to a UNA province-wide grievance regarding the employer's failure to recognize NDTR as a Named Holiday effective September 30, 2021.

The parties are currently working on the details of the settlement and more information will be shared once the document is finalized.

UNA will continue to work with other employers to ensure that they recognize the day as a Named Holiday.

National Day
for Truth and
Reconciliation



On June 3, 2021, the Government of Canada passed Bill C-5 to designate September 30 as new statutory holiday known as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The day commemorates the tragic legacy of the residential school system and honours the lost children and resiliency of survivors of residential schools and their families. 🍷

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Like Canada, Australia is a large country which faces similar challenges in staffing rural and remote areas.

In Canada, attempts to rectify provincial nursing shortages often take the form of one-off efforts that do nothing but bleed nurses from neighbouring provinces. The CFNU is calling on the federal government to take a leadership role in health human resources planning. Only with the federal government at the helm can we get a complete picture of the nursing workforce, collect more robust data, and stop planning in the dark.

Critically, experts in the field caution that Health Workforce Australia cannot be considered a one-off project. Health workforce planning is an ongoing process

that ought to be immune from the ebbs and flows of politics. Cross-partisan buy-in is therefore essential. To this end, the CFNU is working with politicians of all stripes to galvanize support around a long-term sustainable strategy.

Evidence-based, data-driven health human resources planning can significantly lessen the pressures on health care workers, and, in the process, help create a more responsive and sustainable health care system.

The nursing shortage is a formidable challenge, but not an insurmountable one. With a little political will, we can build a health care system that meets the needs of both nurses and the populations for whom they care. 🍷

UNA VIDEO WINS PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL AWARD

■ **A 30-SECOND** video created for United Nurses of Alberta by Point Blank Creative has won a prestigious award for excellence in public advocacy.

The video – which showed a Registered Nurse disappearing into thin air as the result of harmful Alberta government

policies – was part of UNA's 2021 Nurses Now + Always campaign.

The Reed Award for Best International Online Video (Sub-National) is presented by Campaigns & Elections, a U.S.-based organization for advocacy and political campaign professionals. 🇺🇸



Alberta to spend \$850,000 on nursing education in northwest

■ **THE** provincial government has committed \$850,000 to creating 340 additional nursing education seats at two northwestern Alberta post-secondary institutions.

In an announcement on May 25, the province said it would spend \$436,920 on educating additional nurses at Northern Lakes College, based in the town of Slave Lake, and \$416,771 at Northwestern Polytechnic in the city of Grande Prairie.

Northwestern Polytechnic President Justin Kohlman said students will use the collaborative training, research, and teaching space in the recently opened Grande Prairie Regional Hospital.

Studies impacted by the funding will include Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, Practical Nurse diploma, and Health Care Aide certificate programs. 🇺🇸

UNA continues efforts to resolve religious accommodation grievances stemming from AHS pandemic immunization policy

■ **EFFORTS** by United Nurses of Alberta are continuing to resolve more than 150 grievances by members who were denied accommodation on religious grounds after being impacted by Alberta Health Services' 2021 mandatory COVID-19 immunization policy.

While AHS and other major employers ended the policy in mid-March 2022, allowing employees to return to work without testing or proof of immunization, important issues remain unresolved for employees who were required to take unpaid leave during the pandemic.

In UNA's view, a report on religious accommodation matters by Mediator Cheryl Yingst-Bartel that was issued to the parties on May 17 has not resolved all the concerns raised by grievors.

No grievances have been settled, granted or withdrawn.

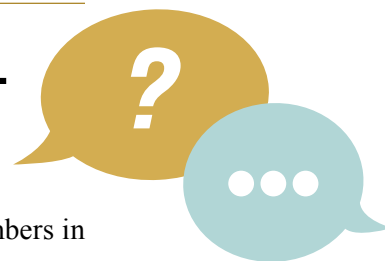
UNA representatives will meet with AHS as soon as possible to reach agreement on when to make the mediator's report public, which UNA believes should happen quickly.

No grievances have been settled, granted or withdrawn.

UNA will continue to take steps to ensure all grievances are addressed.

Updates will be published on UNA's website – www.una.ca – as soon as they take place. 🍷

UNA CONCLUDES ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SURVEY



■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta conducted its annual telephone survey of general members in May 2022.

The survey of general UNA members (that is, members who are not currently participating in internal UNA work such as Local Committees, Local Executives or on the UNA Executive Board) is conducted on behalf of UNA by Viewpoints Research.

UNA research Officer Judith Grossman said information collected through the survey is confidential and anonymous.

After responses are collected, Viewpoints Research combines and aggregates all the data before sharing results.

Thank you to everyone who participated and provided feedback in the annual survey. UNA uses the data collected to inform and strengthen our advocacy activities on behalf of our members. 🍷

HEATHER SMITH CONGRATULATES new Alberta Association of Nurses after launch

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta President Heather Smith has offered her congratulations to the new Alberta Association of Nurses after its formal launch on May 9.

The AAN – which describes itself as a “profession-inclusive” association for Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses and Nurse Practitioners – is the result of the decision in 2020 by the College and Association of Registered Nurses to split into a regulatory college and the association.

The College has now been renamed the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta, or CRNA.

The AAN is intended to represent the professional interests of all nurses, including those who are not union members. Membership will be voluntary.

The CRNA will focus solely on setting regulatory standards for RNs and Nurse Practitioners. RNs must renew their registration with CRNA in order to practice.

RPNs and LPNs have their own professional colleges

CARNA Council members voted in 2020 to separate its remaining two mandates.

CARNA grew out of the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, which served at once as a regulatory college, an association, and a collective bargaining organization for Registered Nurses until the 1970s.

A Supreme Court ruling in 1974 in Saskatchewan said that province’s RNs’ association could no longer represent members in collective bargaining because many officers of the association were in management.

That court decision led to the establishment of independent nurses’ unions across Canada – including UNA in 1977. UNA and SNAA, which represented nurses at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton, merged under the UNA banner in 1997. 🍷

The AAN is intended to represent the professional interests of all nurses, including those who are not union members. Membership will be voluntary.

□ PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

This change does not apply to RPNs and LPNs, as long as they are employed by an employer like Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health that provides \$2 million liability insurance.

The annual cost of CNPS coverage is \$88. Nurses who join AAN will receive a discount of \$20.

The annual CRNA fee and the CNPS liability insurance are tax deductible as they are required by legislation. AAN fees are not tax deductible.

In addition, CRNA is no longer a member of the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), and neither is AAN.

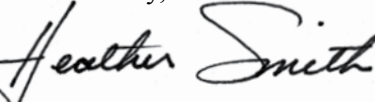
Membership in CNA includes membership in the International Council of Nurses (ICN). In order to maintain membership in the CNA and the ICN, nurses will need to directly pay an annual fee of \$96.96 to CNA.

So as warm weather finally returns we continue to advocate for a meaningful health human resource

strategy at both the provincial and federal level to repair our damaged workplaces, so that we can transform despair into hope. We also continue to advocate for comprehensive, publicly-funded and publicly-delivered health care. 🍷

Stay well. Stay safe. Stay strong!

In Solidarity,



Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta

LOCAL 207 MEMBER

JESSE GRIFFIN HONOURED

by Northwestern Polytechnic for key role in Grande Prairie COVID immunization program

■ **JESSE** Griffin, a Registered Nurse and member of UNA Local 207 in Grande Prairie, has been honoured by Northwestern Polytechnic for his work with Alberta Health Services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo by Jenise Aylward RN



Jesse Griffin

Griffin, who works as a public health nurse in the northwestern Alberta city, was presented with Northwestern Polytechnic's "Steps to the Greater Alumni Award" at a luncheon and ceremony on March 29.

Northwestern Polytechnic, formerly known as Grande Prairie Regional College, grants the award to recent graduates who have made a contribution to their communities and their professions early in their careers.

"Those chosen for this award serve as an inspiration to others and are shining examples of how skills and knowledge gained at GPRC can be used to care for and contribute to the community," the institution said in its letter to Griffin, a 2018 graduate of the GPRC Bachelor of Science in Nursing program.

The institution told Griffin he was selected for the contribution he has made working as immunization team lead in AHS's Grande Prairie area COVID-19 and influenza immunization programs.

"From the planning and implementation of community swabbing centres and immunization clinics to the delivery of immunization services in Fort McMurray and GPRC ... you have had an indelible impact on how our community has weathered the trying times presented by the pandemic," the letter said.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, the letter also said, Griffin was honoured for his generosity and positive intelligence, compassion, dedication and empathy in dealing with the people he serves in his work.

"You are known for being a bright light for those around you and for doing what you can to make the world more inclusive and accessible," the award said. "It is these qualities and more that make you an inspiration to NWP students present past and future."

Griffin said he was "very gratified and very humbled" by the award – "especially when you consider the calibre of the other people at the college."

He said the award should be seen as recognition of everyone in the Grande Prairie COVID-19 and influenza immunization program. "It's a win for all of us in nursing, it should be seen as credit for the work we've all been doing in challenging circumstances." 🍷

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR FORMER EMPLOYEES: HOW TO APPLY FOR YOUR 1% COVID-19 RECOGNITION LUMP-SUM PAYMENT AND RETROACTIVE PAY INCREASE

■ **FORMER** employees of Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, Lamont Health Care Centre, and The Bethany Group (Camrose) must apply for their 1% COVID-19 recognition lump-sum payments and retroactive pay to receive them.

Article 1.03 of the Provincial Collective Agreement between United Nurses of Alberta and the four employers states:

An Employee whose employment has terminated prior to the signing of this Collective Agreement is eligible to receive retroactively any increase(s) they would have received but for the termination of employment, upon the submission of a written application to the Employer within 90 calendar days of the signing of the Agreement.

As a result, former employees of Alberta Health Services, Lamont Health Care Centre, and The Bethany Group (Camrose) covered by the UNA provincial Collective Agreement still have time to apply for the 1-per-cent COVID-19 recognition lump-sum payment included in Letter of Understanding No. 11.

In addition, former employees who worked any hours between October 1, 2021, and February 4, 2022, are eligible to submit a request for retroactive payment.

Employees who left their employment after January 1, 2021, and before February 18, 2022, must request retroactive payment of the 1-per-cent COVID-19 recognition lump-

sum payment within 90 calendar days of the signing of the agreement, which UNA expects to happen soon.

Requests can be submitted to Alberta Health Services by email or postal mail.

Email requests to AHS should be sent to:
HRSSGeneral@albertahealthservices.ca

Postal requests to AHS should be mailed to:

**Attention: UNA Retro Request
Alberta Health Services
IBM Building
10044-108 Street Edmonton AB T5J 3S7**

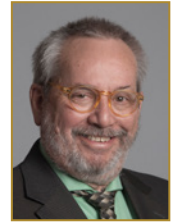
Requests can be submitted to Covenant Health by email:

**HRBusinessSupport@
CovenantHealth.ca**

Employees of Lamont Health Care Centre and The Bethany Group (Camrose) wishing to make requests should contact their employer's Human Resources department directly.

When submitting requests, all former employees should include their Employee Name, Employee ePeople ID number, termination date, and mailing address if it has changed since their date of termination.

Former employees who encounter difficulties with this process should contact United Nurses of Alberta at 1-800-252-9394 to seek the assistance of a Labour Relations Officer. 🍷



Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

PART-TIME AND CASUAL EMPLOYEES can now receive credit for hours worked at another employer

■ **EMPLOYEES** have until September 1, 2022, to receive credit for previous hours worked with another employer covered by the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement

Part-time and casual employees who work for more than one employer covered by the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement can now provide proof of hours worked at basic rate of pay at their other employer for the purposes of movement up the salary grid.

This change follows the addition to the Provincial Collective Agreement in 2022 of Articles 30.01(c)(iv) and (v) with reference to part-time employees and 30.03(c)(ii) and (iii) with reference to casual employees.

Employees have until September 1, 2022, to receive credit for previous hours worked with another employer covered by the agreement.

Employees must provide proof of hours worked at their second covered employer to their first employer for these hours to be considered toward their increment. If an employee is at a higher increment level at one employer, they will receive that same increment level at their second employer.

After September 1, 2022, part-time and casual employees must submit proof of hours worked (at Basic Rate of Pay) at another covered Employer once a year, and they will then be advanced up the salary scale based on those hours, to a maximum of one step per year.

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

UNA WELCOMES Shepherd's Care Eden House nurses

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta extends a warm welcome to the direct nursing employees of Shepherd's Care Eden House, who voted 100 per cent on May 19 to be represented by our union.

The eight nurses at the Edmonton facility for seniors living with chronic conditions received their certification

from the Alberta Labour Relations Board on May 20.

UNA staff will submit a recommendation to the Executive Board soon with respect to the local structure for the worksite.

UNA labour relations staff representatives have served formal notice with Shepherd's Care to begin bargaining for a first collective agreement. 🍷

UNA WORKSHOPS on dealing with abuse, OH&S and PRC are now available for registration

The Dealing With Abuse, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Basic and Advanced, and PRC workshops are now available for registration!

FUNDING & REGISTRATION

Full-day workshops are provincially funded (salary replacement/LOA) for eligible members who have not attended the workshop previously. For workshop descriptions and funding information, visit www.una.ca/memberresources/education.

Using their UNAnet login, members can register online in UNA's Data Management System (DMS) under "Events." For an up-to-date workshop schedule, go to "Events" in DMS or view the events calendar at www.una.ca/events.

PLEASE CONTACT EVENTS@UNA.CA

with any questions related to workshops or registration. 🍷

FOR ALL UNA MEMBERS:

- ▶ Boundaries & Self Care (half day)
- ▶ Dealing With Abuse (full day)
- ▶ Know Your Rights (full day)

FOR UNIT/OFFICE REPRESENTATIVES:

- ▶ Engagement & Support (full day)
- ▶ Taking Action (full day)

FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- ▶ PRC Workshop (full day)
- ▶ OHS Basic (full day)
- ▶ OHS Advanced (full day)

FOR LOCAL EXECUTIVES:

- ▶ Supporting Members in Distress (half day)
- ▶ How to Run a Local: Administration (full day)
- ▶ How to Run a Local: Finance (full day)
- ▶ How to Run a Local: Labour Relations (full day)

