

NEWS Bulletin UNA

United Nurses of Alberta

**IMPACTED BY WILDFIRE?
UNA can help**

PAGE 9

**OHS: Lead found in HVAC
System in Grande Prairie
Building**

PAGE 22

**Nurses find their voices at
Know Your Rights workshop**

PAGE 26

**CFNU BIENNIAL
CONVENTION 2025**
All in for Health Care!

PAGES 3-8

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Summer 2025 marks historic turning point for reconciliation and hope

■ **AT** the start of June, with summer almost upon us, more than 300 UNA members journeyed to Niagara Falls, Ontario, for the 2025 biennial convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. This was an historic event, at which nurses from all parts of Canada embarked on a shared journey of reconciliation and hope with Indigenous Peoples.

I was proud to be there when delegates from all nine Canadian nurses' unions affiliated with CFNU unanimously adopted a resolution acknowledging our profession's responsibility for truth and reconciliation, and for ending racism against Indigenous Peoples in health care.

It was a solemn and poignant moment when leaders of all nine unions acknowledged and apologized for the harms committed by our profession, from neglect and abuse in Canada's Indian Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals to systemic racism that persists today.

We apologized to Indigenous Peoples for not listening, for devaluing the wisdom that sustained their communities and for dismissing knowledge that kept them well for countless generations. "True health care must be co-created, rooted in respect, reciprocity and the recognition that Indigenous knowledge is not only valid, but vital," I said in my part of the apology, which was for me a powerful and moving moment.

I know the goal of everyone there was to confront the truth of the past to make possible reconciliation in the future.

Here in Alberta, we are starting to implement the terms of our new Provincial Collective Agreement.

After returning home from the CFNU Biennium we immediately plunged into the business of the UNA Executive Board. We will now work with Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health and other public sector employers to begin implementing the new safe-staffing elements of our collective agreement.

Consistent with the CFNU theme of "All in for Health Care," UNA will continue to fight for public health care over private profits with our medicare advocates, the Friends of Medicare and the Canadian Health Coalition.

And in the year ahead, we hope to continue to work with the Common Front of Alberta unions committed to turn the anger and frustration that working Albertans feel into action and power to make life better for working people and their families.

I hope you all have a happy and refreshing summer. With the challenges ahead, we know that we will all be busy in the fall.

Heather Smith

President, United Nurses of Alberta 🍷

Front Cover Photo: Nurses from across Canada including more than 300 from UNA took part in the "Elbows Up for Public Health Care" rally in Niagara Falls on June 6. See story on Page 7.
CFNU Photo

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CFNU MEMBERS COMMIT TO RECONCILIATION EFFORTS ON FINAL DAY OF NATIONAL CONVENTION

■ **NURSES** from across Canada took an historic step forward in a shared journey toward reconciliation at the biennial convention of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions June 2-6 in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

With solemn reflection and renewed purpose, delegates unanimously adopted a resolution acknowledging our profession's responsibility for truth, reconciliation, and dismantling racism against Indigenous Peoples in health care.

The resolution was intended as a solemn pledge to act – acknowledging the harms committed by our profession, from neglect and abuse in Indian Residential Schools and Indian Hospitals to systemic racism that persists today.

CFNU's goal was to recognize nurses' collective responsibility

and chart a path forward. Through this commitment, nurses pledged to embed reconciliation in their daily practice by demanding equitable health policies, increasing Indigenous representation in nursing, implementing robust cultural safety education and supporting the integration of Indigenous healing practices across care settings.

When the resolution was introduced, retired nurse Kim Fraser, who cared for Jordan River Anderson, reminded delegates of the human cost of bureaucratic indifference. Indigenous nurse Kirston Blom urged her peers to be the “embodiment of our ancestors’ hope,” calling on nurses to become champions of change.”

The resolution passed overwhelmingly with a standing vote.

On June 6, an apology was read by leaders of the nine Canadian nurses’ unions affiliated to CFNU. CFNU represents members of nurses’ unions in all provinces except Quebec, and members of the organization’s board from each province read parts of a statement of apology.

“We apologize to Indigenous Peoples for not listening to you, for devaluing the wisdom that has sustained your communities for generations and for dismissing the knowledge which has kept you well for countless generations,” said UNA President Heather Smith during the apology. “True health care must be co-created, rooted in respect, reciprocity and the recognition that Indigenous knowledge is not only valid, but vital.”

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Indigenous drummers and singers took part in the 2025 CFNU Biennium. CFNU Photo



Scenes from the 2025 CFNU Biennium. Bottom right: The Inuit throat-singing duo, PIQSIQ. UNA and CFNU Photos

□ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“We are ashamed that First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples face racism in health care today,” said UNA First Vice-President Danielle Larivee. “We are supposed to be your advocates, and we have let you down. We apologize that racism continues to impact on your wellbeing, and we humbly ask that you give us another chance to show you the respect and honour which is your right.”

“This week marks two steps on CFNU’s journey to reconciliation,” observed CFNU President Linda Silas, who was acclaimed to a 12th two-year term during the Biennium. “We will walk this path together, working to be strong allies and to ensure that Indigenous communities have access to the care they need, and that Indigenous patients know they are safe with us.”

The day’s events on June 3 opened with a traditional sunrise ceremony and fire at 5 a.m., led by Indigenous Elder and Knowledge Keeper Valarie King.

The 2025 CFNU Biennium adds a powerful chapter on reconciliation. It represents a hopeful beginning for the work ahead for years to come.

The Biennium also included a lively discussion of the uses – and dangers – of Artificial Intelligence in health care, a moving performance by the Inuit throat-singing duo PIQSIQ, a public “Elbows Up” demonstration in support of public health care, and a tribute to nursing advocate and former CFNU president Kathleen Connors, whose passing on April 3 was marked in the previous edition of the UNA NewsBulletin. 🍷

AI or not, 'we can't face this future without nurses,' futurist tells Biennium

■ **ACCORDING** to Dr. Zayna Khayat, futurist and keynote speaker at the CFNU Biennium, “nobody loses a job in medicine... especially nurses” because of Artificial Intelligence.

“We can’t face this future without nurses,” said Khayat, an applied health futurist at Deloitte, a worldwide consulting, accounting and legal services corporation. “We are the most labour-intensive sector in the world,” she explained. “They’ll never train enough nurses.”

However, she predicted, AI will make big changes in the practice of medicine, including the work of nurses. AI “is not replacing the work that humans do, it’s augmenting the work that we do, because machines are very fast, they’re extremely accurate, but they’re really stupid, right? And us, humans, we’re the opposite. We’re slow, we’re inaccurate, but we’re brilliant.”

AI can augment our human brilliance with the tireless accuracy and efficiency of the digital age, she argued, claiming that this is what drives the move to AI in medicine.

However, Khayat warned, this optimistic paradigm is not without risks. For example, she asked, who gets to decide how to resolve moral dilemmas in health care? “The last thing we want is the manufacturers of all this AI to set those algorithms. We let it get away from us with social media. We cannot let it happen with AI.”

Meanwhile, during the “AI Health: Today & Tomorrow” panel that followed Khayat’s remarks, University of Calgary Associate Dean of Nursing Tracie Risling reminded delegates that when it comes to keeping care compassionate and ethical, “there’s a nurse for that!”

Dr. Risling, also an RN who is president elect of the Canadian Nurses Association, described AI as “at the ‘advanced beginner’ stage. It needs mentoring!”

Panelist Chris Nielsen of National Nurses United in the U.S. warned that “AI being driven by corporate interests aiming to cut costs.”

“AI can’t take your place,” he said, “but it might try, unless we set the rules. 🍷



Dr. Zayna Khayat



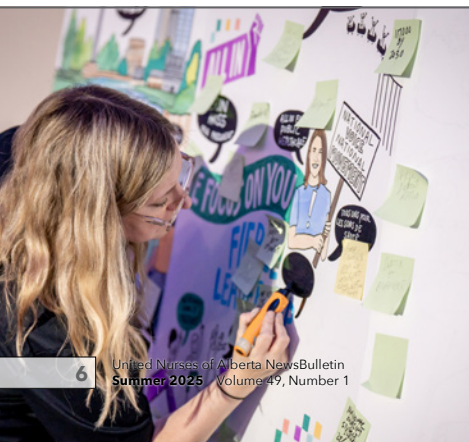
Retired CFNU national secretary treasurer and UNA activist Pauline Worsfold



Some of the members of the UNA delegation



UNA President Heather Smith



UNA First Vice-President Danielle Larivee



NURSES SHOUT 'ELBOWS UP' FOR PUBLIC HEALTH CARE!

■ **MORE** than a thousand nurses from across Canada and their supporters showed they know how to speak up to defend publicly financed and delivered health care at a noisy public rally in Niagara Falls on June 6.

CFNU President Linda Silas kicked off the noon-hour event with a strong challenge for Prime Minister Mark Carney: “Do not touch our health care system unless you improve it!”

Nurses from throughout Canada waved flags and chanted in support of public health care. They condemned government leaders like those in Alberta who have let corporations infiltrate Canada’s health care system.

Siobhan Vipond, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labor Congress and a former treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour told the nurses: “You are not alone. Three million workers across Canada stand with you!” 🍷



CFNU President Linda Silas

Linda Silas acclaimed to 12th term as president of CFNU

Linda Silas, president of CFNU for the past 22 years, was acclaimed to her 12th two-year term at the national organization’s biennial convention in Niagara Falls on June 6.

“With a new federal government in place in the midst of growing privatization pressure in many provinces, it’s critical to ensure that everyone living in Canada is all in for public health care and understands that health care is a human right, not an opportunity for profit,” Silas said in a statement after her acclamation.

Silas is a passionate and engaging spokesperson in both Canada’s official languages for nurses’ issues and the rights of all working people. During more than four decades as an RN, she has advocated tirelessly for federal and provincial policies that enhance social equity and the social determinants of health, such as retirement security for all workers, universal childcare, national pharmacare, and access to public services for Indigenous communities.

Silas was born in Dalhousie, N.B., where her father was a leader of the mill workers’ union at the Abitibi newsprint plant. Today, she is well-known throughout Canada and in many other countries as a fierce champion of public health care, workplace rights and social justice. She was president of the New Brunswick Nurses Union from 1993 to 2003, at the time the youngest nurses’ union president in Canadian history. 🍷



UNA Labour Relations Director David Harrigan

Scenes from the "Elbows Up for Public Health Care" rally in Niagara Falls on June 6, UNA and CFNU Photos



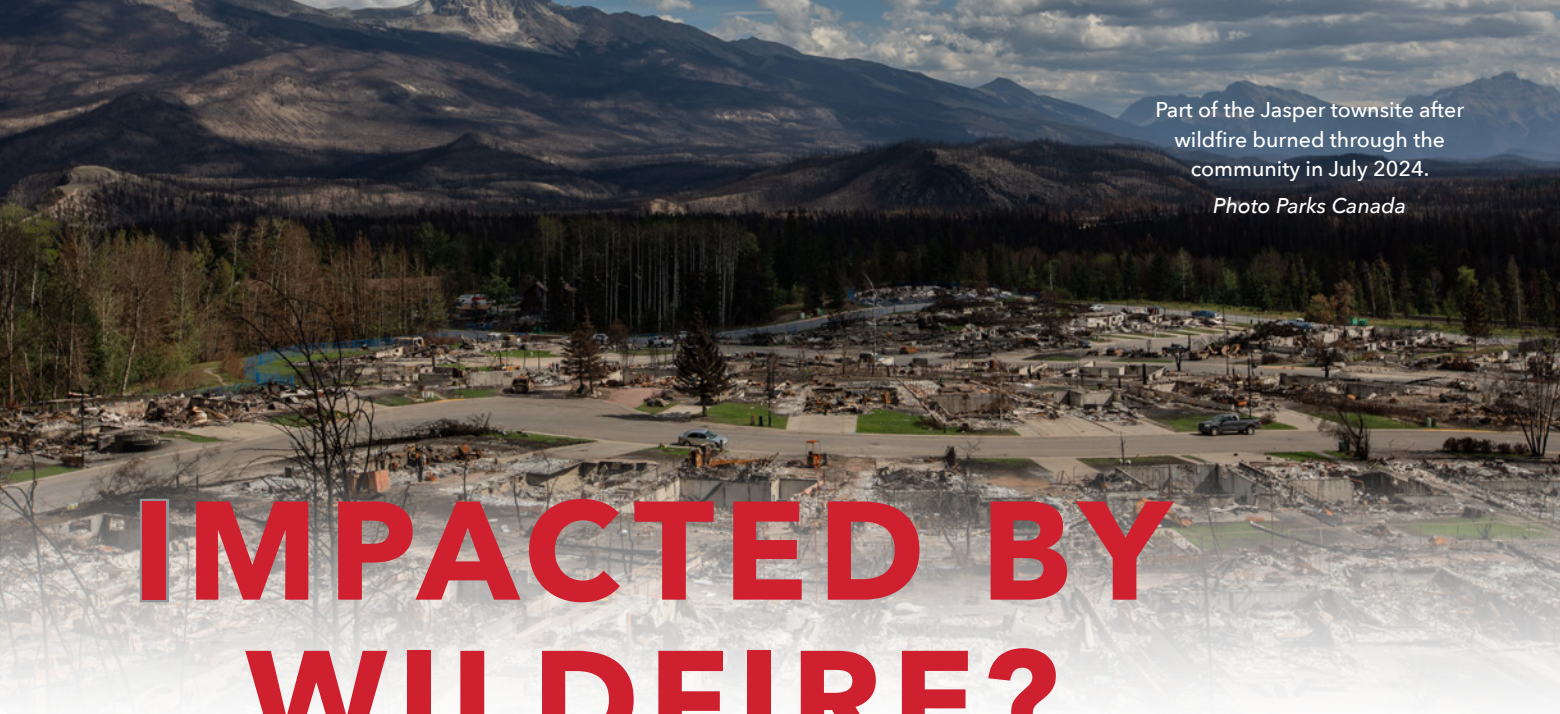
At left, UNA Second Vice-President Karen Kuprys.



UNA President Heather Smith



UNA First Vice-President Danielle Larivee



Part of the Jasper townsite after wildfire burned through the community in July 2024.

Photo Parks Canada

IMPACTED BY WILDFIRE?

YOUR UNION WILL HELP

INFORMATION FOR UNA MEMBERS AFFECTED BY WILDFIRES

■ **WITH** wildfires already having been reported this spring near Boyle, Grande Prairie, Redwater, Thorhild County, Swan Hills, Fort Chipewyan, Red Earth Creek, Peerless Trout First Nation and Loon River First Nation, UNA expects members working in many Alberta locations will require assistance as we move into the summer fire season.

Your union stands ready to do everything we can to support nurses who are affected by wildfires, and to assist with their efforts to provide the best quality patient care under challenging circumstances.

The well-being of nurses and their patients is UNA's top priority. UNA encourages nurses affected by the wildfires to seek assistance through their employer's provided support programs.

Alberta Health Services has Wildfire Resources for people impacted by the wildfire evacuations and a list

of Frequently Asked Questions for employees of AHS, Recovery Alberta, Primary Care Alberta, Acute Care Alberta and Alberta Precision Laboratories.

The AHS Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) is a free and confidential service available 24/7 to support employees and their families. Please visit homeweb.ca or call 1-877-273-3134 for support. The program offers Crisis Management Services, EFAP Counselling Services, Life Smart Services and more.

For non-emergency health advice, including information on your health-care options, call Health Link at 811.

Experiencing an evacuation can be stressful and overwhelming. If you need to talk, call the Mental Health Help Line at 1-877-303-2642 or Health Link at 811. 🍷

UNA members with any questions or concerns about how this ongoing situation is impacting their workplace should contact their UNA local executive or Labour Relations Officer at 1-800-252-9394.

ALBERTA GOVERNMENT HEALTH CARE RESTRUCTURING

Public health nurses transferred to Primary Care Alberta

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta was informed on May 21 that more than 2,000 positions held by Registered Nurses represented by our union working in public health roles will be transferred from Alberta Health Services to the new Primary Care Alberta agency.

The transfer of UNA members plus additional employees represented by other unions from AHS to PCA will become effective on July 1, 2025. Formal transfer notices were expected to be delivered to impacted employees on May 27.

In addition to UNA members, 10 positions held by Nurse Practitioners, 149 by members of the Auxiliary Nursing Care bargaining unit, 906 by members of General Support Services, 495 by members of Paramedical Professional and Technical, and 275 NUEEs were to be transferred, the government said.


Although UNA remains deeply concerned about the chaos caused by this restructuring on nurses and their ability to deliver the best patient care possible within the public health care system, a Letter of Understanding signed by the union and AHS on May 31, 2024, which is now part of the Provincial Collective Agreement, retains and expands the rights of employees impacted by the creation of new provincial health agencies and public health corporations.

As was the case when UNA members were transferred from AHS to Recovery Alberta last year, those employees currently represented by UNA will continue to be represented by this union when they are transferred to their new employer, Primary Care Alberta.

The announcement is part of the Alberta government's ongoing restructuring of the publicly owned and operated AHS agency into four separate sector-based provincial health agencies: Primary Care Alberta, Acute Care Alberta, Recovery Alberta and Assisted Living Alberta.

The government said the transfer from AHS to PCA on May 1 was part of Bill 55: Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. "Primary Care Alberta will oversee front-line public health services, such as communicable disease control, immunizations, newborn screening and health promotion," the government said in a news release at that time.

Under the LOU, employees will have the option to transfer to the new employer or to remain employed with AHS, with full rights to displace or to fill a vacant position under Article 15 of the Provincial Collective Agreement. Indirectly affected employees displaced by affected employees will have, in addition to full Article 15 rights, the right to select a vacant position at PCA. 🇺🇸



New cancer care and transplant agencies created as shakeup of health care continues

■ **THE** government announced the creation of a new Cancer Care Alberta entity on April 8, pulling cancer treatment away from Alberta Health Services and returning to the days of the Alberta Cancer Board.

In addition, in the same announcement then Health Minister Adriana LaGrange said the province was also creating a separate new organ and tissue donation and transplant organizations that will operate under the purview of the new Acute Care Alberta agency.

It remains unclear how many employers will be created by the move. What is clear, said UNA President Heather Smith

after the announcement, “that the government is moving full steam ahead with dismantling the health care system without justifications or plans.”

“Nurses know that stability is key to providing the best possible patient care, especially in cancer treatment settings,” she said.

According to the government, CCA will oversee cancer health services in Alberta. The government did not say how this will differ from the patient care already provided by nurses and health care workers at Alberta’s dedicated cancer treatment facilities.

UNA also does not yet know if the nurses working in the new CCA will be employees of CCA, become employees of ACA, or remain employees of AHS.

The government did not say what the creation of the organ and tissue donation and transplant organization would mean for nurses.

“Nurses fear that the government is proceeding with these plans without answering important questions about how this could create more and more barriers to public scrutiny and transparency,” Smith said at the time. “Albertans should be concerned that this latest restructuring is just another way to make it more difficult to track how public dollars are being spent.”

UNA members affected by these changes will remain members of the union and continue to fall under its current Provincial Collective Agreement. 🍷

Hidden aspects of Bill 55 designed to decimate our public health care system

■ **LEGISLATIVE** changes impacting hospital ownership and operation passed by the United Conservative Party Government in the Alberta Legislature are likely to do irreparable harm to Alberta’s health care system.

The most dangerous aspects of Bill 55, the *Health Statutes Amendment Act*, were excluded from government briefings with stakeholders and when finally made public were buried in 332-pages, effectively introducing highly controversial changes by stealth.

Bill 55, passed by the Legislature on May 14, will not only permit the minister to turn public hospitals over to private interests and allow private operators to charge patients fees for services, but it could also permit hospitals to evict sick patients or even turn them out into the streets as we have seen in U.S. cities.

As a result of the new legislation, the province can sell or give away 380 land titles and approximately 700 publicly owned structures.

In advance briefings by government officials, stakeholders were only told that the legislation would include “a new section that speaks to the

management and operations of hospitals.”

Dismantling Alberta’s publicly funded and delivered health care system in favour of private hospitals built and operated with public money will in no way improve health-care access or outcomes and will cost more to run than publicly owned and operated hospitals.

It is very clear now that despite claims they intend to protect public health care, the UCP plans to open the door wide to full U.S.-style privatization of Alberta’s public health care system, UNA believes. 🍷

RAMPANT MEASLES SPREAD CONTINUES IN ALBERTA, ESPECIALLY THE SOUTH

Reported cases had surpassed 800 by June 10

■ **RAMPANT** spread of measles continues throughout Alberta, particularly in the province's south.

Reported cases of the highly infectious disease in Alberta since early March had surpassed 800 by June 10. That compared to nearly 1,170 measles cases reported in the entire United States in a similar period ending on June 5.

The outbreak has been most severe in the Alberta Health Services' South Zone, where there had been 579 cases reported. On May 23, AHS issued a public statement warning that "anyone in the South Zone who was born in or after 1970 and has fewer than two documented doses of measles-containing vaccine, is at risk for developing measles."

"Due to the number of people in these areas who may not be immune to measles, it's possible that some cases are going undetected or unreported," AHS said, stating the obvious.

AHS said the risk of being exposed was highest in Two Hills, the Municipal District of Taber MD, the County of Lethbridge, and the County of Forty Mile than in the rest of the province.

However, in a May 23 news release, it announced that it had issued "a standing measles exposure advisory for South Zone, effective immediately and until further notice. This standing advisory will replace the use of separate site-specific exposure advisories, which no longer accurately capture the scope of potential risk at this time in the Zone."

In late May, there were only about half a dozen cases in Calgary and a dozen in Edmonton.

Dr. Stephanie Smith, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Alberta Hospital, told the CBC in a story published on May 22 that she is not surprised by the rate of infection in parts of the province where rates of immunization are far below the level required for community protection.

On May 26, Friends of Medicare Executive Director Chris Gallaway said in a statement that "this should be an all-hands-on deck situation."

"It's clear the previously announced public campaign and steps for increased access to immunization in the central and south zones have not been enough to stop the spread in Alberta. We need to see urgent action." 🍷



Images created for UNA's 2025 Nurses Week campaign.

NURSES MAKE IT *better* DURING NURSES WEEK 2025

■ **NURSES** make Alberta's health care system better was the key message of thanks from UNA to its members during this year's Nurses Week celebrations from May 12 to 18.

UNA Locals celebrated the annual week with giveaways, lunches, dinners, and appreciation events to thank nurses for the work they do every day.

"This Nurses Week, United Nurses of Alberta pauses to say a heartfelt

thank you to nurses everywhere for the difference you make every day," UNA President Heather Smith said in a message broadcast on radio stations throughout Alberta.

"Your compassion, strength and skills are what makes health care better," said Smith. "Whether it's offering a moment of comfort or a life-saving decision, your impact is felt in every corner of our health care system." 🌸

"Your compassion, strength and skills are what makes health care better"



UNA members from throughout the Edmonton region took part in Local 183's Mental Health Nursing Day on May 14.

UNA Photos



Local 183 hosts mental Health event for Nurses' Week

■ TO mark Nurses' Week 2025 and Mental Health Nursing Day in May 14, members of UNA Local 183 at Alberta Hospital Edmonton took a step to address psychological trauma in health care workplaces, one of the key issues facing Canadian nurses.

Led by UNA Local 183 President Michael Perry and Vice-President Sabrina Leask, the hybrid event at the nearby Quarry Golf Club and online brought together front-line nurses, mental health professionals, and researchers to focus on exposure to workplace trauma and the role of trauma-informed care as a healing and preventive tool.

"Trauma is everywhere, especially for nurses on the front lines," Leask said. "This is about recognition and real change, including formal acknowledgment in presumptive legislation."

Psychologist Ryan Gerard, one of two presenters, shared practical insights into supporting staff working in high-stress environments gleaned from his work at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre.

Dr. Lisa Burbach, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Alberta, discussed innovative treatments for trauma-exposed health care workers, particularly those experiencing suicidal ideation.

"Everybody in health care needs to have this information," said nurse Sherri-Lynn Lupul, a participant in the event, "not just RNs, LPNs, psych aides and health care aides."

Local 183 hopes the event will take place annually during Nurses Week. A recording is available on Local 183's website. 🇨🇦



unalocal183.com

it could be
better here

www.neednurses.ca



A MESSAGE FROM UNITED NURSES OF ALBERTA

**WHEN PROFIT
COMES FIRST,
people come last.**



IT COULD BE BETTER HERE ...

New UNA engagement campaign aims to defend public health care capacity

■ **UNITED** Nurses of Alberta continues to defend public health care and warn about the dangers of privatization and private-for-profit health care in our newest public engagement campaign, “It Could Be Better Here.”

Albertans rely on and support the public health care system, knowing they can get the care they need without worrying about having to pull out their credit card. But the United Conservative Party government is dismantling parts of the public health care system and turning

it over to private-for-profit corporations.

For-profit health care isn't a solution that works for Albertans. It's a problem that will only make things worse.

UNA's new campaign explains why it doesn't have to be this way. Albertans understand that health care system should use public dollars for public services and not to line private pockets. UNA stands with patients, families, and the front-line workers who care for us.

Together, we can build a stronger, fairer public health care system where patients, not profit, is the priority.

UNA's campaign launched in early March, and you'll continue to see and hear our messages across the province – on billboards, transit, in airports, on TV, social media, and radio stations.

Visit our **neednurses.ca** website for more details and to sign up for updates via our mailing list. 🍷

Members of UNA Local 77 at the George McDougall-Smoky Lake Healthcare Centre marked Nurses Week with Sgt. Anita Doktor of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachment in the town of Smoky Lake, located 116 kilometres northeast of Edmonton. Sgt. Doktor is the sister of UNA Secretary Treasurer Christina Doktor.





Gil McGowan, elected to his 11th term as president of the Alberta Federation of Labour on April 27, as he took part in the "Resistance Rally" at the Alberta Legislature Building the day before. Additional photos on pages 18 and 19 are from the rally. *UNA Photos*

Gil McGowan re-elected for two-year term as Alberta Federation of Labour president

AFL holds large 'Resistance Rally' on steps of Alberta Legislature

■ **GIL** McGowan, president of the Alberta Federation of Labour since May 2005, was re-elected to an 11th consecutive two-year term at the head of the labour-central organization on April 27.

Secretary-Treasurer Cori Longo, who was chosen by the AFL Council soon after Karen Kuprys left the position in October 2024 to become second vice-president of UNA, was acclaimed to a full term in the job.

More than 500 delegates, representing unions across the province, attended the four-day convention in Edmonton and took part in a large "Resistance rally" on the steps of the provincial Legislature Building on April 26.

The rally was organized for Albertans dissatisfied with the direction of the United Conservative Party government, including stagnation of workers' wages and the privatization of essential public services, especially health care.

The theme of the convention was "The Worker Agenda," and delegates voted on a detailed roadmap of an agenda for change in Alberta drafted with the needs of working people in mind.

The seven chapters of the document addressed wages, affordability, jobs and the economy, public services, health and safety, democracy, and the future of the labour movement itself. The agenda will drive the AFL's advocacy over the next two years. 🇨🇦



AUPE and Government of Alberta return to bargaining table

ATA members overwhelmingly authorize strike if necessary

■ **IN** early June, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and Alberta Government returned to the bargaining table with the assistance of a mediator in hopes of reaching an agreement that could avert a strike by 23,500 civil servants.

Mediation began on June 3 and was scheduled over four more days ending on June 13.

In mid-May, AUPE members who are employed directly by the provincial government overwhelmingly authorized job action if an agreement can't be reached in an official strike vote authorized by the Labour Relations Board.

With 80 per cent of eligible AUPE members voting, 90.1 per cent voted in favour of strike action, which can legally happen after 72 hours' notice. As the direct employer, the government also applied for and received authorization to lock out employees on 72 hours' notice.

While Alberta Finance Minister Nate Horner published a belligerent statement on May 23 accusing the union's leaders of not being "forthright" with its members about the potential consequences of a strike, AUPE President Guy Smith told media on May 27 he believed neither side wanted a strike.

Horner claimed in his May 23 statement that AUPE was seeking a 29-per-cent wage increase over four years. In fact, Smith said, AUPE's bargaining position is for a 24-per-cent wage increase over the same period.

About a quarter of the affected AUPE members are designated as essential workers and cannot legally strike. Essential Services Agreements exist between the union and the government in health care, wildfire control and law enforcement, for example.

The Alberta public service makes up about a quarter of AUPE's total membership.

Meanwhile, on June 10, the Alberta Teachers Association released the results of a labor board supervised vote in which 94.5 per cent of nearly 39,000 Alberta teachers ratified strike action if necessary.

"By voting to strike, teachers are sending an unmistakable message: we are united, we are determined, and we will no longer hold up a crumbling public education system," ATA President Jason Schilling said in a news release.

The vote means the teachers' union could strike after 72 hours' notice any time in the next 120 days. Students are scheduled to return to school on September 2.

At press time, the ATA and the Teachers Employer Bargaining Association had additional bargaining dates scheduled in June. 🍷

"Teachers are standing united in demanding respect and recognition for the challenges they experience in today's classrooms...Settling for anything less than tangible solutions will not be tolerated."

26 PRCs RESOLVED AT TABER HEALTH CENTRE



■ **A TOTAL** of 26 Professional Responsibility Concerns filed about the state of the Emergency Department at the Taber Health Centre in southern Alberta have been resolved thanks to the work of the UNA Local 164 PRC Committee.

The first six PRCs were filed in the fall of 2023 and the rest throughout 2024, when staff in the rural hospital's ED felt growing concern about unsafe staffing ratios, increased patient acuity and complexity, increased workload, lack of functioning equipment, and deteriorating psychological and physical safety in the department.

"The Emergency Department at the Taber Health Centre is busy and suffers from inadequate staffing levels to ensure the delivery of safe patient care," said a report on the situation last year. "Having a night baseline of only one nurse has increased adverse events and near misses, consequently compromising patient care and outcomes. The percentage of patients leaving the ED without being seen or against medical advice is increasing due to the nursing workload and wait times."

Other factors adding to the severity of the situation included a shortage of primary care providers in the community, rapidly growing population throughout the area, and the lack of a unit clerk, leaving RNs to complete registrations, answer phone calls, book appointments, and answer the door at night. Staff were often required to work entire shifts without a break.

As a result, nurses reported significant impacts on their ability to deliver high-quality and empathetic care to patients, delays in their ability to provide treatment and medication, exhaustion, fear, and significant levels of moral distress and psychological injury.

The situation was resolved through discussions with site management and escalation to regional senior leaders under UNA's collective agreement, said Local President Colleen Pack.

"Our success in getting adequate staffing in our ER was a collaborative effort," Pack explained. "Our ER staff filed PRC after PRC, our committee met regularly with management and our rock star PRC advisor, Cher Gauthier-Fownes. Together we followed the PRC process to get the staff we so desperately needed for our ER."

After a tour of the facility by senior leaders, work commenced with local managers to resolve the problems. As a result, two full-time LPN FTEs and a 0.6 RN FTE were added to the department and extra Clinical Nurse Educator hours were added. In addition, central cardiac monitoring was approved with equipment purchased through the Taber Health Foundation, allowing staff to monitor a patients' heart rhythm and electrical activity from a central location away from the patient's bedside.

Local 164 considers the matter fully resolved. 🍷

After a tour of the facility by senior leaders, work commenced with local managers to resolve the problems. As a result, two full-time LPN FTEs and a 0.6 RN FTE were added to the department and extra Clinical Nurse Educator hours were added.

UNA MEMBERS REMEMBER FALLEN AND INJURED ON APRIL 28

CALGARY



Nurses and members of other unions throughout Alberta marked the Day of Mourning for workers killed, injured or sickened on the job on April 28. UNA Photos

■ **ALBERTA** nurses laid wreaths in honour and memory of workers killed, injured, or sickened on the job during April 28 International Day of Mourning ceremonies on April 28 in Calgary and Edmonton.

At UNA's Provincial Office, President Heather Smith joined UNA's Negotiations Committee to light a candle in memory of workers who have died, been disabled or made ill by their work.

Smith reminded participants that “we mourn for the dead and fight for the living.”

UNA members serve on the front lines of the health care system and recommit themselves each year to ensuring workers are protected from the workplace hazards that lead to preventable, needless death, serious injury or illness.

April 28 officially became the National Day of Mourning in Canada 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. 🇨🇦

*"mourn
for the
dead and
FIGHT for
the living"*



EDMONTON



CALGARY



LEAD FOUND

in HVAC system in Grande Prairie Provincial Building

UNA IS CONCERNED ITS MEMBERS AND AHS WERE NOT INFORMED OF THE PROBLEM WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED LAST FALL

- UNA is using every tool at its disposal to ensure the Government of Alberta's Infrastructure Department and a private building management company are held accountable and take immediate action to remove lead from the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the Grande Prairie Provincial Building, which houses the public health clinic.

The building was closed on April 30, 2025, but concerns over potential lead contamination were first raised in September, a report obtained by the CBC indicated.

According to the report, the contamination to the building's HVAC system took place in September 2024 during scheduled maintenance. The exterior coating of the air handling unit contained lead and maintenance was not done correctly to ensure lead dust didn't get into the system.

UNA recommended that all members who worked in the building have their blood tested for lead, and nurses working in the building exercised their right to refuse unsafe work at the location. Alberta Health Services provided on-site blood testing to staff.

UNA said in a statement on May 8 that it is critical that the government and health care employers ensure this does not happen again at this worksite or any others. "The health and safety of Alberta's nurses and the patients they care for is UNA's top priority," the statement said.

UNA Occupational Health and Safety Advisors worked closely with the executive of UNA Local 207 (Grande Prairie Community) and Alberta Health Services workplace health and safety staff as soon as the unacceptable workplace health situation was discovered.

UNA is working with AHS to evaluate the impact of the lead exposure experienced by our members.

UNA is very concerned that the OHS Order informing the government and building management company about the presence of lead in the HVAC system was not immediately shared with the nurses working at the public health clinic or their employer, AHS.

UNA will continue to share information and updates with Local 207 members as the situation evolves. 🍷

Introducing an expanded UNA Occupational Health and Safety Department

■ WITH the addition of Heather Leask on May 26, UNA's Occupational Health and Safety Department has now grown to three advisors.

The addition of a new OHS advisor reflects the growing importance of ensuring the safety and health of UNA members at a time when the structure of the public health care system in Alberta is growing more complex and fragmented.

Leask worked most recently for the Health Sciences Association of Alberta as a health, safety and wellness analyst for nine years, advocating for improvements to employer policies, developing resources, and facilitating workshops.

She holds a diploma in Occupational Health and Safety, Canadian Health and Safety Consultant certification, Psychological Health and Safety Advisor certification, and training certification for The Working Mind course. She is eager to work with and support members in advocating for their health, safety, and wellness in the workplace.

Meanwhile, UNA Educator Tara Forbes has joined the OHS Department to cover a one-year leave.

Forbes has been with UNA for more than seven years as an Educator, a position in which she facilitated workshops and developed resources for UNA members and leaders.

Prior to joining UNA, Forbes was active in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and was the president of her American Federation of Teachers local. Forbes also holds a PhD in English focusing on labour literature. She is looking forward to bringing her experience to OHS and supporting members in advocating for safer workplaces.

Dewey Funk, UNA OHS advisor since 2012 and well known as a fierce advocate of the right of workers to safe and healthy workplaces, remains an anchor of the OHS team.

Members concerned about occupational health and safety issues in their workplaces should contact their UNA Local Executive or UNA OHS Advisors by calling 1-800-252-9394. 🇨🇦



UNA welcomes new members at Newport Harbour Care Centre in Calgary

■ **ON** April 18, nurses employed by Newport Harbour Care Centre in Calgary ratified Letter of Understanding Re: First Collective Agreement Implementation – Newport Harbour Care Centre Partnership, Local 429.

As a result, all terms and conditions of the Hardisty Nursing Home Inc. (Hardisty Care Centre Partnership),

Devonshire Care Centre Partnership, Benevolence Care Centre Ltd., and River Ridge Seniors Village Partnership agreement with United Nurses of Alberta Locals 234 and 402 will also apply to their worksite effective April 22, 2025.

UNA welcomes the new members and looks forward to representing them. 🇨🇦

Workers have the right to submit claims to WCB for workplace psychological injuries



By Lee Coughlan
UNA Manager of Labour
Relations (Edmonton)

■ **WORKERS** have the right to submit claims to the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board for workplace psychological injuries.

The WCB separates psychological injuries into two categories: traumatic onset and chronic onset injuries.

Total claims by RN/RPNs for both categories rose significantly starting in 2021. Starting at 110 claims in 2020, the number rose to 121, then 145, and then 144 in successive years, a 30-per-cent increase in claims during that time frame.

The rise in psychological injuries comes as no surprise to RNs and RPNs who witnessed the devastating effects of the COVID pandemic on individuals and the health care system. Nor should it surprise those who endured a rise in verbal and physical violence as people became generally less civil and respectful.

There are problems with the WCB's administration of both of these categories of psychological injuries. From 2020 to 2023, RNs and RPNs made 222 claims for chronic onset psychological harm and only 31 of those claims (14 per cent) were accepted. A total of 210 of 270 (78 per cent) claims for traumatic onset psychological harm were accepted by the WCB in the same period.

UNA has reached the point where we've identified WCB rules, standards, and systems that need to change. As related to chronic psychological injuries, we continue to take issue with the WCB's requirement for the applicant to demonstrate they experienced stressors outside of the ordinary stress of their

profession. This leads to a situation where, because all nurses are yelled at, called names, and overworked in understaffed worksite, it is practically impossible for a nurse to claim chronic psychological injuries that result from those sources of injury.

For several years, individual nurses and groups of nurses such as Nurse2Nurse Peer Support have petitioned and advocated to the Government of Alberta and UCP to reinstate presumptive coverage for nurses. These collective efforts led to a commitment in the latest round of UNA provincial bargaining from then jobs, economy and trade minister Matt Jones to bring forward a proposal to cabinet no later than June 30, 2025, to extend Workers' Compensation presumption to Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses.

Nurses may encounter any number of traumatic events in the workplace. Among other triggers, nurses regularly witness suffering and death, and experience violence, abuse and harassment from colleagues, managers, patients, and members of the public.

These events are normalized for nurses such that they are led to believe their training or experience should insulate them from harm, or that such behaviour is justified by the patient or family's own illness. This can mean nurses do not recognize the harm that is done in the moment, and they do not report these incidents as the potential harms they may be.

The commitment to presumptive coverage with WCB removes administrative and legislative barriers for nurses seeking the help they

□ CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

UNA acknowledges the work of future nurses with Nursing Education Scholarships

Each year, United Nurses of Alberta awards up to 15 scholarships of \$1,500 to nursing students from across the province as well as one Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions Scholarship also worth \$1,500.

Scholarship recipients must be in their first year of nursing studies in an approved Registered Nurse or Registered Psychiatric Nurse track program in Alberta and must also be related to a UNA member or associate member in good standing.

As President Heather Smith has said many times, UNA is proud to support new students as they start their post-secondary nursing education and will always encourage recipients of the UNA

Nursing Education Scholarship to remain in Alberta as they advance through their careers.

Each scholarship recipient must complete an application form and write a short essay answering the question, “Why is the PRC process important to Alberta Nurses?”

CORRECTION: Due to an editing mix-up, Brielle Winchester was identified as Brielle Kit in the previous edition of UNA NewsBulletin. The correct identities of the scholarship winners are shown in the captions of the photos accompanying this story. 🍷



Nursing Education Scholarship winner Brielle Kit with her sponsor, Nola Roder-Kit from Local 116 (McLennan Health Centre), and UNA Second Vice-President Karen Kuprys at left and First VP Danielle Larivee at right.



Brielle Winchester was sponsored by Shannon Winchester from Local 196 (Edmonton Zone Community). UNA shared photos of this year's other scholarship recipients in the Spring 2025 edition of the NewsBulletin. Secretary Treasurer Christina Doktor and President Heather Smith are at left.

□ LEE COUGHLAN - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

deserve for injuries that arise in the workplace. Once legislation changes, UNA encourages nurses to come forward with claims for traumatic onset injuries so they can receive the treatment and support they deserve.



If you are unsure whether or how to submit a claim or if you have submitted a claim and been denied, please contact a staff representative to discuss whether and how we can assist you. 🍷

To contact UNA's Provincial Office in Edmonton, call (780) 425-1025 or 1-800-252-9394, or email ProvincialOffice@una.ca.

To contact the Southern Alberta Regional Office in Calgary, call (403) 237-2377 or 1-800-661-1802, or email CalgaryOffice@una.ca.



UNA's Know Your Rights Workshop is about nurses finding their voice



Duane McEwan
UNA Educator

■ **OVER** the past year, nearly 400 front-line members of United Nurses of Alberta have taken part in the union's Know Your Rights workshop.

For many, this one-day course has become more than just an education session – it was a powerful reminder of why they became nurses in the first place, and how knowledge fuels both compassion and courage.

Each workshop begins with introductions and connections but quickly moves to the foundations of union membership. For many participants, it's the first time they've ever looked closely at their collective agreement.

Over the day, they learn how to identify and distinguish between Professional Responsibility Concerns such as being asked to take on more patients than is safe, Occupational Health and Safety issues like violent incidents or dangerous working conditions, and violations of the collective agreement, as when members are denied appropriate breaks or time off.

As a nurse who recently attended her first workshop in more than a decade said, "I always felt something was wrong, but I didn't know how to put it into words. Now I do."

UNA's Know Your Rights Workshop doesn't just focus on problems, though. It also emphasizes the importance of speaking up – not just for us, but for our coworkers and patients. Raising concerns isn't complaining. It's making the system better, safer and more humane.

A big part of the day at each workshop is spent exploring the role of the collective agreement. Our agreements aren't just legal documents, they're tools that directly affect job satisfaction. When nurses understand their rights, they're less likely to burn out. They feel more confident asking for what they need. They can focus more on what drew them to nursing in the first place: providing care.

Health care in Alberta is increasingly complex. Nurses work short, face overwhelming caseloads, and deal with shifting policies in under-resourced facilities. The chaos of the health care system has made it harder to do the job the way nurses were educated – with time, attention, and dignity.

Education is empowering. By the end of the workshop, participants often feel something they haven't felt for a long time: control. They realize they're not alone and that our union exists not just for emergencies, but for everyday support.

One section of the workshop challenges each participant to think about what kind of advocate they want to be. For some, that means standing up to unsafe workloads. For others, it's checking in on a colleague who looks burned out. For all, it's about bringing care not only to patients, but to each other.

The Know Your Rights workshop takes just one day, but the knowledge gained, and the confidence built, last far longer. It's a small investment in education that leads to a stronger voice, a safer workplace, and better care for all. 🇺🇦



Changes to Charge Pay for those other than staff Nurses


■ **THERE** have been changes to the In-Charge Article in the new Collective Agreement. For staff nurses, charge pay has increased from \$2.00 per hour to \$3.50 per hour. Any employee in a higher rated classification who is designated In-Charge of a unit, must be paid an hourly rate which is no less than what a Staff Nurse at the same pay step would be paid when designated In-Charge. This could affect Assistant Head Nurses, Nurse Clinicians, Head Nurses, Instructors, or Clinical Nurse Specialists. Please note that these positions are not automatically In-Charge. In order to receive the additional payment, members in the higher rated classifications must work in an area that is designated as a “unit” and must be designated In-Charge of that unit. If there is any confusion, please call your Labour Relations Officer.

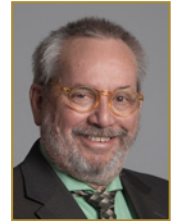
HEALTH CARE RESTRUCTURING DOESN'T AFFECT NURSES' UNA MEMBERSHIP

Remember that employees currently represented by UNA will continue to be represented by UNA when they are transferred to the new employer under the government's continuing restructuring of public health care in Alberta.

A Letter of Understanding in the new Provincial Collective Agreement signed by UNA and AHS retains and expands the rights of employees affected by the creation of any new provincial health agencies.

For more information about this LOU, please read the full story on Page 10 of this edition of UNA News Bulletin.

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




Report from
Director of Labour Relations
David Harrigan

LAPP key to retirement security for UNA members

■ **INVESTING** in your retirement security is one of the most important things any worker can do, which is why United Nurses of Alberta held two online information sessions for members about the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) on April 15.

The virtual seminars hosted by UNA Labour Relations Officers Richard West and Carolyn Olson explained the importance of the LAPP and shared information about its value, participation rules, contributions, pension calculation, and the retirement process for members enrolled in the pension plan.

In addition, the sessions covered LAPP Disability and Canada Pension Plan Disability, the 2-per-cent matching supplement RRSP or TFSA provision in UNA's Provincial Collective Agreement, and post-retirement benefit plans.

UNA members are encouraged to learn more about LAPP and watch a video summary of the information sessions. 



<https://www.una.ca/1669/lapp-key-to-retirement-security-for-una-members>

WHEN PROFIT COMES FIRST, people come last.



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