

United Nurses of Alberta

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Honourable Fred Horne
Minister of Health
#208 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Sir:

I am writing today to express the serious concern of the United Nurses of Alberta that the quality of care within the Devonshire Care Centre continues to suffer as a result of owner Park Place Seniors Living's refusal to negotiate a fair first collective agreement with its Registered Nurses and its response to the legal strike by those nurses.

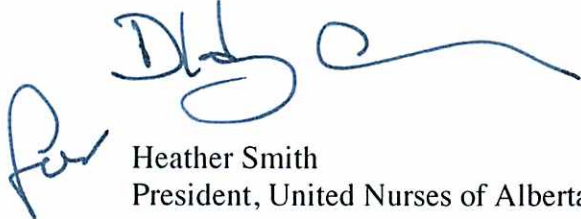
While the strike began only on Dec. 31, 2012, UNA has already heard several disturbing reports of residents going without scheduled treatments, late administration of prescription drugs, mishandling of narcotic drugs and unqualified staff members being asked to administer drugs. Clearly there are serious problems already within the facility as a result of this situation, and I would ask you as a matter of urgency to instruct Alberta Health Services to look into the quality of care now being provided at Devonshire Care Centre.

As you know, this situation has come about because an out-of-province employer which received taxpayer subsidies based on province-wide wage standards is determined to pay its Registered Nurses less and pocket the difference to pad its profits. Surely the Government of Alberta sees this as the misuse of taxpayers' dollars meant for nursing care that it obviously is. It is particularly troubling that instead of negotiating in good faith, Park Place Seniors Living thinks it is an appropriate bargaining strategy to threaten residents with lower-quality care unless it can pay these health care professionals as a significantly lower rate than in virtually all public and private health care facilities in Alberta.

Again, this should be cause for serious concern by the Government and I would ask you to make it clear to Park Place that it is not acceptable for this for-profit company to take public funds meant to pay for nursing care and based on the true cost of nursing care and try to convert them to private profit at the expense of Registered Nurses.

In conclusion, I urge you in the strongest terms to instruct AHS to investigate and remedy the declining care standards at Devonshire Care Centre and, further, for Alberta Health to make it clear to Park Place Seniors Living that it is not appropriate to redirect public subsidies intended to meet basic care standards required by law in Alberta to private profit.

Sincerely and with best wishes to you personally for the New Year,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Heather Smith', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Heather Smith
President, United Nurses of Alberta