



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS

High number of lost-time injuries among nurses highlights need to make our health care facilities safe

Canada's nurses statement on the National Day of Mourning

April 28, 2016 (Ottawa) – Every year, thousands of nurses are injured on the job. In fact, according to the Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC) 2014 statistics, the health and social services sector had the highest number of lost-time injuries in Canada – 41,141 accepted claims - surpassing mining, quarrying & oil wells, construction and manufacturing. This finding holds true in most provinces, suggesting a nationwide problem.

The AWCBC figures relate to the 2014 absenteeism rate for full-time nurses which at 8% is almost twice that of the average for all other occupations (4.7%). While the natural resources, construction and manufacturing industries are often thought to have occupational health and safety challenges, the data shows that nursing is also a dangerous profession.

In 2014, nurse absenteeism cost the health care system an estimated \$846 million.

“Nurses are getting hurt everyday on the job. It's costly to the system, and it's costly for nurses, especially when violence is involved - it can have devastating, long-term consequences,” said Linda Silas, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). “As a society, we need to recognize that health care facilities can be dangerous and put in place long-term solutions so that nurses can have a better work-life balance, and can provide optimal quality patient care,” Silas added.

According to the 2012-2014 data from the AWCBC, the hospital sector averaged over 8,000 accepted lost-time injuries per year for frontline health care workers. The long-term care (LTC) sector averaged in excess of 7,000 lost-time injuries annually during the same period, and home care added more than 1,000 lost-time injuries per year.

A closer look at the causes of lost-time injuries in health care shows the growing prevalence of injuries due to violence. In Newfoundland and Labrador, where injury rates due to assaults and violent acts are substantially higher for health care and social service workers, compared to the provincial average, rates more than doubled between 2007 and 2014. In Ontario, where the province has set up a Roundtable to combat growing rates of workplace violence in the health care system, workplace violence costs hospitals about 23.8 million annually. In British Columbia, violence claims among health and social services workers are the third most common cause of lost-time injuries; between 2005 and 2012, the injury rate for health care workers due to violence was 15 times the number for the law enforcement sector.

In addition to violence, musculoskeletal injuries, exposures and falls are significant causes of lost-time injuries among health care workers, including nurses.

Last year, the CFNU issued its *Overtime and Absenteeism Report* for 2014, which illustrates the toll excessive overtime and excessive workloads may be taking on frontline nurses, leading to escalating absenteeism rates. In 2016, the CFNU published *Bridging the Generational Divide: Nurses United in Providing Quality Patient Care* which offers a series of recommendations, grouped around 6 themes, including ensuring safe staffing by increasing overall staffing levels, to improve nurses' work-life balance and ensure the best quality patient care. Taken together, the measures proposed in this publication would go a long way towards reducing lost-time injuries among nurses.

"On the National Day of Mourning, as nurses we pay our respects to the thousands of workers who have been killed, injured or suffered illness as a result of a work-related incident, recognizing the right of every worker to return home safe and sound to their families at the end of the work day," said CFNU president Linda Silas. "The CFNU is committed to making 2016 a safer year for nurses and health care workers: safe from infectious diseases; safe from violence, and safe from cuts to permanent and stable employment," added Silas.

-30-

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) is Canada's largest nurses' organization representing nearly 200,000 nurses and student nurses. The CFNU has been advocating for national discussions on key health priorities, such as a national prescription drug plan, a comprehensive approach to long-term and continuing care, greater attention to health human resources, and federal government engagement on the future of public health care.

For further information please contact:

Emily Doer
Communications Officer
613-807-1340