

SEPTEMBER 17 DAY OF ACTION

My MLA's Phone Number:

SUGGESTED MESSAGE

Hi there,

My name is
and I am a constituent. I am calling to express
my support for Alberta nurses and nurses
across the country.

From coast to coast, nurses and our allies are
joining a day of action today. We're rallying in
the streets, picketing in our communities, and
sharing the message however we can.

Canada is facing a critical nursing shortage,
and Alberta is no exception. Nurses are
overworked, underpaid, burnt out, and many
are unable to take time off due to a lack of
staff.

To top things off, after months on the
pandemic's frontlines, nurses are being
disrespected and undervalued by our
government.

If we don't take action to end the critical
nursing shortage, we will only see higher
wait times, more bed closures and cancelled
surgeries, and less time to provide the care for
patients and Albertans in long-term care.

Nurses are **DONE ASKING** for the basic
respect, safety and fairness. I stand with
Alberta nurses and **DEMAND** action to
support health care workers and our public
health care.

This includes:

- ▶ A moratorium on nursing and health worker cuts
- ▶ No more attacks on nurses' contracts, wages and benefits
- ▶ No more mandatory overtime, no more cancelled time off
- ▶ Wages that match the value of the work nurses perform
- ▶ Permanent work for all health care workers, especially in long-term care

Nurses deserve better. Patients deserve better.
Albertans deserve better.

I would like to know how my representative
will take action to support nurses and public
health care.

DONE ASKING

DAY OF ACTION
#SupportNurses

MORE KEY POINTS

- ▶ Overtime and workloads were already high pre-pandemic. Since the pandemic began, this situation has worsened significantly, with dramatic increases in both overtime and workloads, made worse by the shortage and increases in vacant nurse positions.
- ▶ In the first quarter of 2021, Statistics Canada reported that the number of vacancies in health care and social assistance stood at about 100,000: RNs and RPNs had the highest year-over-year increase in vacancies, with almost half of these vacancies remaining open for 90 days or more.¹
- ▶ Canadian nurses' average weekly overtime hours increased by 78% during the pandemic, according to Statistics Canada data comparing May 2019 to May 2020.²
- ▶ Nurses have faced extended days - routinely working up to 24-hour shifts, and have experienced very high patient- and resident-to-staff ratios.
- ▶ The shortage hurts nurses and patients: it has had far-reaching and damaging effects on workers' mental health and well-being, as well as on patient care.
- ▶ Nurses' mental health was already poor before the pandemic. Most nurses (63%) had symptoms of burnout, and almost one in four had clinical levels of burnout requiring medical attention. The top source of extreme stress nurses report was short-staffing, with 83% indicating that the regular core health staff was insufficient to meet the needs of patients, residents or clients.³
- ▶ The shortage is costly: billions are spent every year by governments on nurse overtime, because many employers use a 'just in time' approach to scheduling rather than providing the nurse staffing required to meet population health needs. That money would be better spent by hiring more full-time, permanent nurses.⁴
- ▶ Despite poor working conditions, nurses have provided extraordinary care to patients in hospitals and residents in long-term care. When families could not be by their loved ones as they suffered and sometimes died, nurses have been there for their patients.
- ▶ Nurses were unable to take time off in 2020; many nurses are being told they will also have little or no time off in 2021; nurses' annual leaves are being cancelled or postponed indefinitely, meaning they are unable to recover from the mental and physical impacts of the pandemic.
- ▶ Prior to the pandemic, a staggering 60% of nurses said they intended to leave their jobs within the next year, and more than one quarter of these nurses wanted to leave the profession altogether.⁵

1 Statistics Canada. "Job vacancies, first quarter 2021." Available here: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210622/dq210622a-eng.htm>

2 Statistics Canada. "Overtime work among professional nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic." Available here: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00074-eng.htm>

3 Mental Disorder Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada (June, 2020) by Andrea M. Stelnicki PhD, R. Nicholas Carleton, PhD, and Carol Reichert, MA. Available at: <https://nursesunions.ca/research/mental-disorder-symptoms/>

4 Overtime and Absenteeism Fact Sheet. Available at: <https://nursesunions.ca/research/overtime-and-absenteeism-fact-sheet-2017/>

5 Outlook on Nursing: A snapshot from Canadian nurses on work environments pre-COVID-19 (December 2020) by Linda McGillis Hall, PhD, RN and Sanja Visekruna, PhD, RN. Available at <https://nursesunions.ca/research/outlook-on-nursing/>