

January 9, 2024

Athana Mentzelopoulous  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Alberta Health Services

Fadumo Robinson  
Associate Chief Nursing Officer  
Alberta Health Services

Patrick Dumelie  
Chief Executive Officer  
Covenant Health

Sean Chilton  
Chief Operating Officer, Clinical  
Operations & Information Technology  
Alberta Health Services

Dear Athana, Fadumo, Patrick and Sean,

**RE: Nursing Student Retention and Recruitment**

Nationally, the health care system has reached a state of crisis, impacting patient outcomes and the overall health of health care providers. A National nursing shortage has been a catalyst for harmful consequences to the health care system leading to the delivery of poor-quality care. Like its provincial counterparts, Alberta faces challenges in ensuring an adequate supply of nurses to meet Albertans' health care needs. The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) requests provincial health care stakeholders to work collaboratively towards creating a viable and sustainable retention and recruitment initiative, with a primary focus on domestic nursing student retention.

UNA recognizes and appreciates the extensive work done to the recruitment of International Educated Nurses (IEN). As of October 2023, Alberta Health Services announced the addition of 70 IENs to the Alberta health care system. Furthermore, the Alberta government has committed to funding an increase of 848 Registered Nurse and 373 Licensed Practical Nurse international training seats to support domestic IENs. Amalgamation of recruited IENs and the additional international training seats will have a positive impact on the overall nursing shortage crisis. However, UNA believes a greater initiative is needed to retain the nursing students educating within Alberta.

At present, Alberta has 10 schools offering Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Science in Nursing programs. Notably, the University of Alberta has been recognized as the top nursing program in the country. In conversation with current senior nursing students, it has been discovered that recruitment to employment opportunities within Alberta is not occurring.

Ability to obtain employment as an Undergraduate Nursing Employees (UNE) is limited as well. It is imperative a robust recruitment strategy supporting entry to practice is created and implemented with the goal of retaining provincially trained nurses to remain and practice in Alberta. Such a strategy would support Alberta Health Services commitment to Letter of Understanding #7 RE: Retention and Recruitment Initiatives as per the Collective Agreement.

*LOU #7 key principle 1(c) states “AHS has committed to sufficient numbers of regular and temporary positions greater than six months available to be able to hire at least 70% of Alberta nursing student graduates”.*

In addition, LOU #7 provides for the Transitional Graduate Nurses Program and (d-g) outlines a number of positive contributors to recruiting and retaining RNs and RPNs. #2 calls requiring AHS to create at least 20 and up to 1000 regular positions in each year of the Collective Agreement. AHS needs to direct greater resources towards advertising and promoting this opportunity.

It is vital a collaborative and sustainable action plan is implemented promptly, recognizing a nursing student retained is a nurse recruited to Alberta. United Nurses of Alberta looks forward to discussing this concern in the near future.

Your truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Heather Smith  
President  
United Nurses of Alberta