



# United Nurses of Alberta

## Local 115

### Foothills Medical Centre & Satellites

December 2006  
Issue 34

**Southern Alberta Regional Office, Local 115, Suite 300, 1422 Kensington Road NW, Calgary AB T2N 3P9.**  
**Web site:** <http://local115.una.ab.ca> **Email:** [mсенkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:mсенkow@una.ab.ca) **Phone number:** (403) 670-9960



## Message from the President

Welcome December and that special time of Year. As we continue as nurses to work short-staffed, do many hours of overtime and give professional care to our patients under crisis conditions - I certainly hope there is some downtime. It's a special time to spend with family and friends - to experience the magic of the peace and quiet.

Congratulations to the Executive and Committee members elected to Local 115 at our AGM. It was great to have a good attendance and interest in our union. Demand Setting Meeting in Nov was attended by 43 local delegates and over 500 nurses from Alberta. Good discussion and debate as we enter another Negotiating year. Best wishes to the Negotiating Committee for a wonderful and prosperous 2007, Thank-you for your hard work.

Please remember to call us for help with Grievance, PRC or OH & S issues. Documenting the concerns really does make a difference. I know it is frustrating but put your pen in action and help to remedy a problem. Together with strength in Unity- UNA is strong.

Best wishes to you and yours for a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year- 2007.

Michelle M. Senkow  
President, Local 115  
United Nurses of Alberta

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### Local 115 Info Meeting

To Discuss the Proposal Package Adopted at the Demand Setting

**Date/Time: January 8, 2007 from 1600 – 1800**

**Where: Coombs Theatre – FMC.**

### Local 115 Open Forum

To Discuss the Proposal Package Adopted at the Demand Setting Meeting.

**Date/Time: January 10, 2007 from 1100 – 1300**

**Where: Auditorium – FMC.**

### Ratification Vote

Advanced Poll: Vote on Proposal Package Adopted at the Demand Setting Meeting.

**Date/Time: January 10, 2007 from 1400 – 1800**

**Where: Coombs Theatre – FMC.**

Regular Poll: Vote on Proposal Package Adopted at the Demand Setting Meeting.

**Date/Time: January 11, 2007 from 0600 – 2000**

**Where: Coombs Foyer – FMC.**



## Nurses meet on negotiation proposals

UNA is closer to setting its proposals for the provincial round of contract negotiations after the three-day Demand Setting Meeting held in Edmonton last week. Nearly six hundred UNA members debated various proposals from Local members over the three-day meeting.

“There was certainly a lot of debate and the concerns of members were brought forward time and again,” said UNA President Heather Smith following the meeting.

Cancelled vacations, being called repeatedly in to work, and excessive overtime were some of the many concerns nurses raised at the meeting.

“We talked a great deal about how to improve working conditions so we can keep the experienced Registered nurses this province needs,” Heather Smith said.

The provincial Negotiating Committee brought forward its recommendations after reviewing the hundreds of proposals from nurses. The delegates debated and amended the recommendations.

## Next steps in provincial contract talks

The final set of negotiations proposals will go to members for a ratification vote that is to be held at all Locals participating in the negotiation round. That vote will be held on January 11, 2007.

After the UNA package is voted on by members, the talks are slated to begin in January with the exchange of proposals with the employers.

All Health Region-employed nurses as well as many long-term care nurses, and Alberta Cancer Board nurses are included in the provincial negotiation round.

## UNA President optimistic about new PC leader

Heather Smith is “optimistic” about the election of Ed Stelmach as the new Progressive Conservative leader.

“We’ve heard Mr. Stelmach say he supports publicly-funded health care. We hope he will go on to protect our system by also supporting not—for-profit public delivery,” she said after the leadership results were announced.

Heather Smith also said she wants to meet Mr. Stelmach to talk about the staffing crisis in Alberta’s hospitals and community health care.

“Sufficient staffing is by far the biggest problem facing our health system right now. This should be a major concern for Mr. Stelmach and I want to speak with him about how to retain the experienced nurses we have and recruit more nurses.”



She said she wants to meet Mr. Stelmach if possible before provincial negotiations begin in January.

## Pharmacists get power to prescribe



# Pharmacy

Early in November the Alberta government gave pharmacists the power to prescribe drugs and administer some injections. Pharmacists’ new roles will begin April 1 next year. The Alberta College of Physicians supported the move, but the Alberta Medical Association was actively warning patients. “It will be patient beware,” AMA President Gerry Kiefer told the

media. “We support pharmacists prescribing in a collaborative team setting, but we continue to have concerns about them prescribing independently without physicians being involved,” he said.

## New regulation allows pension transfers between PSPP and LAPP



In October, the Alberta government formalized a new reciprocal agreement, which allows employees to transfer pension service between the two major public pension plans. This affects employees who are active members in either the Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) or the Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP) and who have entitlements in both plans.

After January 1, 2007, Alberta Pensions Administration (APA) Corporation will provide eligible members with transfer choice packages based on the new reciprocal transfer agreement. If you are eligible, you will receive one of these packages in the mail, and it will help you decide if you would like to transfer your entitlements from PSPP to LAPP or vice versa.

UNA members who formerly worked under the Alberta Mental Health Board, in the Public Service Pension Plan will be the main group affected by this change.

The transfer agreement provides a formula for calculating how much pension benefit will be credited in your new plan. People transferring may also have the opportunity to “top up” the entitlement from their previous plan that they are bringing in to the new plan.

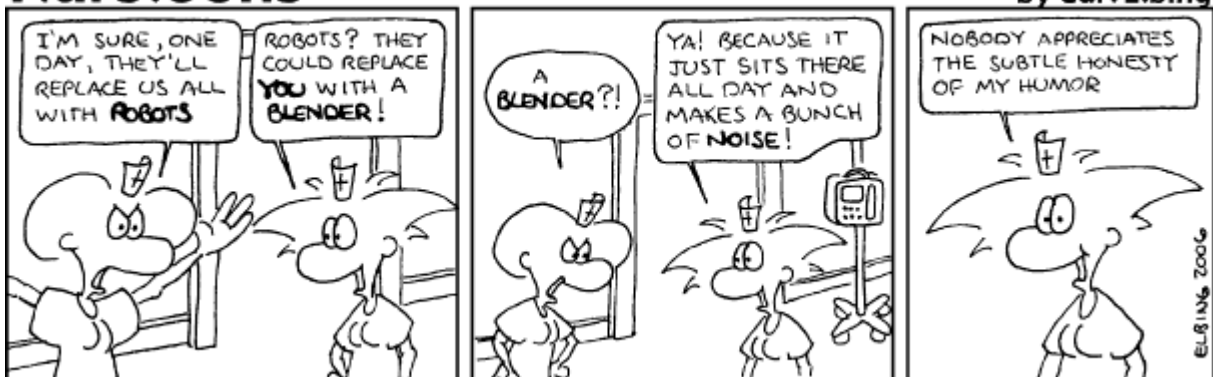
More information, including a detailed Question and Answer section, is available on the LAPP website at <http://www.lapp.ab.ca>

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### Nurstoons





Alberta's nurses say that the growth of registered nurses working in Alberta and Canada is good news, but it remains far short of what our health system needs.

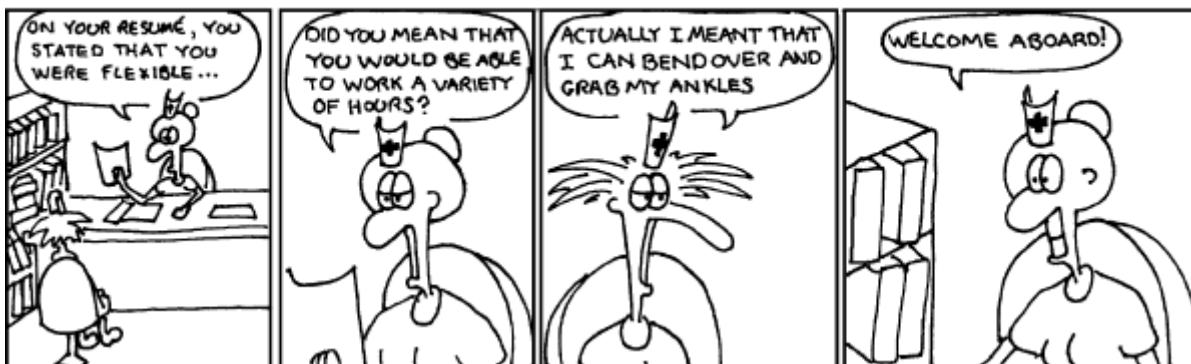
The national report released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (cihi) showed that Alberta has one of the lowest rates of full-time nursing employment. The national average is 54% of nurses working full-time but in Alberta it is significantly lower at 38.2%.

"We haven't actually gained as much as the total numbers suggest," points out Bev Dick, RN, UNA Vice-President. She also points out that studies show that the best nursing care is delivered when about 70% of nurses are working full-time. "We're far below what is optimal for continuity of care and quality outcomes."

The report also shows that 9,824 of the province's 26,355 RNs—over one third—are 50 years of age or older.

"The big retirement crunch that has been predicted for years will really be starting now," Bev Dick says. "We can, and we must, encourage nurses to stay in the profession and also to encourage more nurses to work full-time. If we don't, the shortage will be much worse and the effects on our system will be even more serious."

## Nurstoons



## Nurses face growing stress 47% report emotional abuse

Michelle Lang (), Calgary Herald; with files from The Canadian Press.  
Published: Tuesday, December 12, 2006

Working in the cardiology unit at Foothills Hospital, Heather McCulloch has learned to keep one eye on heart monitors and the other on Alzheimer's patients transferred to her ward because of bed shortages.

It's all part of the job description when you're a nurse in a system that is strapped for space. "I really like being a nurse," said McCulloch, a 22-year veteran of the profession, "but I can't say I like the (health) system now. I find it hard to do my best job."

A new Statistics Canada survey suggests that, like McCulloch, nurses in Alberta and across the country face a litany of job stresses -- from emotionally abusive patients to unpaid overtime.

And the research suggests the situation may be taking a physical toll on nurses.

The study of 19,000 nurses across the country suggests Alberta nurses take more sleeping pills and face slightly higher levels of depression than their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

About 11 per cent of Alberta nurses took sleeping pills in the past month, compared with the national average of 8.5 per cent. Another 10 per cent experienced depression in the past year, compared to the Canadian average of nine per cent.

The study also found 47 per cent of nurses in this province face emotional abuse from patients, compared with 44 per cent nationally. Meanwhile, 53 per cent of Alberta nurses work unpaid overtime.

Michelle Senkow of the United Nurses of Alberta said the study results are a "sign of the times," arguing shortages of health professionals and the space crunch at Calgary hospitals are hurting some nurses.

"People get run down, they get burned out and it shows in their health," she said. Across Canada, the study found several other issues that could be putting the health of nurses at risk.

About 10 per cent faced on-the-job injuries in the previous year -- from being poked by needles to assaulted by patients. In Alberta, one in four reported being assaulted by patients.

"Their jobs seem to be much more physically demanding than some other professions," says Kathryn Wilkins, a senior analyst with Statistics Canada.

Despite the stresses of the work, 88 per cent of nurses in the survey said they're satisfied with their jobs and only four per cent were considering leaving the profession.

In Alberta, the study also found 91 per cent of nurses have a good working relationship with physicians, the highest rate in the country.

Noreen Linton, the associate chief nursing officer at the Calgary Health Region, said she's aware that stress is an issue for nurses around Canada.

The CHR has a strategy in place to recruit and retain nurses to address the situation, she said.

"We're trying to recruit aggressively to ensure we have additional staff so we don't need staff to stay and do overtime," said Linton.

[mlang@theherald.canwest.com](mailto:mlang@theherald.canwest.com)



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## ***Information Meeting***

**To Discuss the Proposal Package Adopted at Demand Setting Meeting**

WHEN: JAN 8 / 07

WHERE: COOMBS THEATRE - FMC

TIME: 4-6 pm

United Nurses of Alberta  
Membership Card Check

**\* OPEN FORUM TO REVIEW INFO  
(11-1300) JAN 10/07 AUDITORIUM**



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# ***Ratification Vote*** **Thursday,** **January 11, 2007**

**Vote on Proposal Package  
Adopted at Demand Setting  
Meeting**

**WHEN: JAN 11/07**

**WHERE: Foyer COOMBS**

**TIME: 0600 - 2000**

United Nurses of Alberta  
Membership Card Check

**\* ADVANCE POLL - JAN 10/07  
2-6 Foyer COOMBS**





## **SPOTLIGHT on your UNA Contract**

### **Overtime**

# **16 hours work is the MAXIMUM**

## **Nurses cannot work safely without rest**

With the increasing shortage of RNs some nurses are being asked to work more than a double shift, more than 16 consecutive hours. This practise is unsafe and contravenes the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement.\*

*Article 8.03 No Employee shall be requested or permitted to work more than a total of sixteen (16) hours (inclusive of regular and overtime hours) in a twenty-four (24) hour period beginning at the first (1st) hour the Employee reports to work.*

### **Working extra hours can have professional conduct implications**

The Nursing Practice Standards published by the College and Association of Registered Nurses also indicate that:

- 1.8 *The registered nurse ensures their fitness to practice.  
Fitness to practice means that the registered nurse restricts or accommodates practice if he/she cannot safely perform essential functions of the nursing role due to mental or physical disabilities.*

The College also published WORKING EXTRA HOURS: GUIDELINES FOR REGISTERED NURSES which says:

*When fatigue or other factors negatively affect your fitness to practise safely, registered nurses have a right and a duty to withdraw from or refuse requests or requirements to work extra hours.*

*\*Other UNA Collective Agreements also contain this protection, if you are not under the Provincial Agreement, check your agreement. From the UNA Provincial Collective Agreement*



# United Nurses of Alberta Local 115

## Foothills Medical Centre & Satellites

### Contact Information

#### Executive Members

##### **President**

**Michelle Senkow:** [msenkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:msenkow@una.ab.ca)

##### **1<sup>st</sup>.Vice.President**

**Bruce Chatterton:** [bchatterton@una.ab.ca](mailto:bchatterton@una.ab.ca)

##### **2<sup>nd</sup>.Vice.President**

**Amy Li:** [ali@una.ab.ca](mailto:ali@una.ab.ca)

##### **Treasurer**

**Ross Pambrun:** [rpambrun@una.ab.ca](mailto:rpambrun@una.ab.ca)

##### **Secretary**

**Diane Mak-Kaplan:** [dmak-kaplan@una.ab.ca](mailto:dmak-kaplan@una.ab.ca)

#### Grievance Committee

Kevin Champagne

Bruce Chatterton: [bchatterton@una.ab.ca](mailto:bchatterton@una.ab.ca)

Barb Lauzon: [mblauzon@una.ab.ca](mailto:mblauzon@una.ab.ca)

Amy Li: [ali@una.ab.ca](mailto:ali@una.ab.ca)

Michelle Senkow: [msenkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:msenkow@una.ab.ca)

Mary-Jane Szigety: [mjszigety@una.ab.ca](mailto:mjszigety@una.ab.ca)

#### OH & S Committee

Susan Mayer

Dianne Schwab: [dschwab@una.ab.ca](mailto:dschwab@una.ab.ca)

Michelle Senkow: [msenkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:msenkow@una.ab.ca)

Malcolm Weisgerber: [mweisgerber@una.ab.ca](mailto:mweisgerber@una.ab.ca)

#### PRC Committee

Kevin Champagne

Bruce Chatterton: [bchatterton@una.ab.ca](mailto:bchatterton@una.ab.ca)

Jacalyn Elias-Tarnasky

Melanie McLeod

Heather McCullough: [hmcculloch@una.ab.ca](mailto:hmcculloch@una.ab.ca)

Charlotte Parkinson: [cparkinson@una.ab.ca](mailto:cparkinson@una.ab.ca)

Tina Scott

Michelle Senkow: [msenkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:msenkow@una.ab.ca)

#### Membership Secretary

Diane Mak-Kaplan: [dmak-kaplan@una.ab.ca](mailto:dmak-kaplan@una.ab.ca)

#### Newsletter Committee

Al Perreault: [aperreault@una.ab.ca](mailto:aperreault@una.ab.ca)

#### **Southern Alberta Regional Office (SARO)**

Suite 300, 1422 Kensington Road, NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2N 3P9

Mon – Fri: 8:30am to 4:30pm (Sat, Sun, Holidays: Closed)

**SARO Phone: (403) 237-2377, Local Office Phone: (403) 670-9960, Fax: (403) 270-5749**

**Email the President:** [msenkow@una.ab.ca](mailto:msenkow@una.ab.ca)

**Local 115 Web Site:** <http://local115.una.ab.ca>