



# United Nurses of Alberta

## Local 115

### Foothills Medical Centre & Satellites

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## Trustee Report to the members of Local 115

In June 2007, Local 115 was placed into Interim Trusteeship by the Executive Board of UNA to investigate concerns raised by members of the Local Executive and members-at-large. An external Investigator was appointed by the Executive Board. Local Executive members and members that raised concerns were given an opportunity to speak with the Investigator. The Investigator provided a final report to the UNA Executive Board in September 2007.

Based on the Investigators recommendation to continue the Trusteeship, the Executive Board passed a motion at the September Board meeting supporting the continued trusteeship. The following Trustees were appointed:

### **Karen Craik**

Secretary Treasurer UNA - Member of local 115

### **Blanche Hitchcow**

South Central District Rep - Member of local 308

### **Tanice Olson**

South Central District Rep - Vice Pres local 1

### **Teresa Caldwell**

North Central District Rep - Vice Pres local 301

It was a decision that was not taken lightly. The goal of the Trusteeship is to stabilize the Local so that elections for Executive members and committees can be held by December 31, 2008.

The Trusteeship was reviewed again at the November 2007 Executive Board meeting. The Executive Board supported the appointment of an additional member from Local 115.

The following motion was passed:

"That Karen Craik, Blanche Hitchcow and Tanice Olson be reappointed as Trustees and further that Daphne Wallace be appointed as Trustee."

Teresa Caldwell will be stepping down as a Trustee, effective December 15, 2007. Teresa has been a valuable resource to the Trustees. Her experience in running a local comparable to the size of the Foothills assisted greatly in the transition period when the Trustees assumed the duties of the previous Local Executive. Thank-you Teresa.

Active Local committee members have been asked to continue in their roles on the committees. The Trustees thank all the committee members who have agreed to continue to represent

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the membership. You have been a valuable asset to the local.

Local 115 was well represented by forty-eight member delegates at the 2007 UNA Annual General Meeting. The Trustees thank the delegates who attended the AGM.

The priority of the Trustees is to increase general membership participation at Local meetings and expand communications with, and involvement of, the ward reps.

The 2008 Local budget concentrates resources in the following areas:

- i) One day special education for current ward reps and potential new reps will be held at the end of February. The Trustees, in conjunction with the UNA Education Officer, will develop a workshop that includes an overview of UNA, Local Executive/ward rep functions, contract interpretation and an open forum on "your vision for the future running of the local".
- ii) Encourage exposure to other UNA meetings/education by having draws for active members to attend District meetings, Executive Board meetings, UNA Labour School and the CLC convention.

Other plans for encouraging membership participation include:

- i) Local membership mail outs (prn) to outline plans for 2008 and Trusteeship update. This may include membership surveys.

ii) Re-establish Local newsletter and have available for local meetings and ward rep distribution. Encourage general members to sign up for email receipt of the local newsletter and sign on to UNAnet.

iii) Trial q 2 month Local meetings with a general membership/ward rep educational in alternate months. The educational will focus on issues such as contract interp, PRC's, nurse abuse, etc.

2008 will be a challenging year but we believe the initial groundwork has laid the foundation to move the local forward in restoring membership participation and representation. We look forward to working with and representing the needs of the members in the coming year.

Have a safe and happy holiday season.

Submitted by Karen Craik on behalf of the Trustees,

Blanche Hitchcow, Tanice Olson, Teresa Caldwell and Daphne Wallace

## UNA wraps up 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AGM



Hundreds of UNA members joined together to celebrate their Union's 30th Anniversary at the AGM in Edmonton this past October. The backdrop was a provincial announcement to increase government oil royalties. On the floor there was an overwhelming feeling that if this had been done years ago, cutbacks inflicted on healthcare could have been avoided. While it was an upbeat convention, there was widespread recognition that the costs of those so called savings are still being paid in the form of chronic shortages of nurses.

There was much to celebrate. Alberta nurses have a new collective agreement that sees them the best paid in Canada. This is also UNA's 30th year, and recognition of this milestone was central to the meeting. The slogan was "30 years strong and still making a difference." A giant banner was prepared for the meeting featuring a stunning collage of pictures of members going back over 30 years. Recognition was given to nurses who had attended UNA's first convention along with those who were attending a UNA convention for the first time. Organizers were pleased to note that there were so many younger nurses present. UNA President, Heather Smith, wasn't sitting on recent successes though and got the convention rolling to the sound of Trooper's "Raise a Little Hell." "If you know there's something wrong, Why don't you right it," was just one of the lines that carried a relevant message to nurses.

The meeting was addressed by Mike McBane who made a case for universal Pharmacare and Maude Barlow speaking about the "Profit is not the cure" campaign and continental immigration. CFNU president, Linda Silas, provided a national context concluding with a reminder that leadership is not about positions but about action.

Along with the celebrations, the delegates voted for new processes to help UNA's Locals adapt to the new larger bargaining units that had been imposed by the provincial government. There were no provincial Executive Officer elections. 1st Vice-President Bev Dick and 2nd Vice-President Jane Sustrik were acclaimed. Two new members were elected to the provincial Executive Board. Both JoAnne Rhodes and Daphne Wallace were elected to represent the Calgary area South Central District.

## More patient lifts are the best news in Alberta's "Health Workforce Action Plan"

### Plan falls far short of the boost our health system needs in nursing numbers

On September 11, three cabinet ministers met at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton to announce, with great fanfare, the new Health Workforce Action Plan.

The best news the ministers announced was \$27.5 million to buy patient lifts across the province and talked about core retention and recruitment issues.

However, the government's own strategy admits: "Despite the expansions, projections show that Alberta won't be able to produce the 15,000 health providers it needs by 2016."

The government's plan includes \$5.2 million for expanding health training including 258 new seats immediately. But only 37 of those are in general Registered nursing, 9 in graduate nursing and 35 in nursing specialties. There are also 128 extra spots for LPNs.

It might be acceptable for the government to suggest that the shortage is insurmountable and out of their hands, except for one damning fact: it was the Alberta government that short-sightedly and drastically cut the education of nurses and other health workers during the 1990s.

According to government numbers, in 1990 the province graduated 898 Registered nurses but by the end of the decade, 1999, only 440 RNs graduated. Since 2000 the numbers have been steadily increasing, and we are now graduating close to 1,500 a year.

However, the 1990s collapse in education has left our health system with a huge gap in the demographics of our health workforce. Today there are about 27,000 Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses providing care in the province but 10,000 of them are now over 50 and are starting to retire in significant numbers.

The government's action plan contains many good elements, including saving nurses' backs with mechanical patient lifts, and several strategies for increasing the education and recruitment of health workers. It even recognizes the importance of 'growing our own' health workers and that we need many more educators in nursing and other health discipline programs. It is however, too little, too late. This has serious implications for all of us who expect to retire and look forward to good care in our health system in the future.

The Alberta government must revisit its Action Plan and scale it up appropriately to adequately meet this pressing problem. To not do so would be seriously remiss in their responsibility to the people of this province.



## OH&S Alert: Hazard Assessment & Your Collective Agreement

During the recently completed negotiations United Nurses of Alberta was successful in achieving new language in Article 34: Occupational Health and Safety Committee that provides your local OH&S committee representatives with greater access to hazard assessments performed in your workplace. Employers are required to perform hazard assessment under the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code. UNA occupational health and safety representatives should be familiar with the requirements under the OHS Code in order to insure that their employer is in compliance.



### Article 34.07

As a result of recent negotiations\* there have been some changes to Article 34: Occupational Health and Safety including a new provision, Article 34.07. Under the wording of Article 34.07 your employer is now required to conduct ongoing hazard assessments including pandemic, disaster or emergency response. These hazard assessments must be provided to your Occupational Health and Safety Committee for their review and input.

In addition, the assessment must include information regarding the control measures taken to eliminate and/or reduce the risk of workplace injury and illness.

### Letter of Understanding re: Occupational Health & Safety – Hazard Assessments, Administrative Policies and Procedures and Personal Protective Devices

A number of your Collective Agreements\*\* now contain a new Letter of Understanding which obligates your employer to provide your Occupational Health and Safety Committee with information regarding hazard assessments, policy and procedures for the use of latex, personal protective devices and safety-engineered sharps devices.

The wording of this Letter of Understanding is as follows:

Pursuant to Article 34: Occupational Health and Safety, within 60 days of ratification, the Employer will provide the Occupational Health and Safety Committee with copies of hazard assessments, administrative policies and procedures regarding the use of latex supplies and equipment, personal protective devices, “safety-engineered” needles and other medical sharps devices.

If your employer has not yet provided this information to the OH&S committee your Local representatives should be requesting this information to be provided to the OH&S committee members prior to or at the next meeting of the committee. The employer must provide the committee with the most recent hazard assessments. If the employer fails to comply your local should contact their LRO regarding further action.

Contact the UNA Provincial OH&S Officer regarding any questions or concerns about the material provided or if your employer has not performed the required hazard assessments.

### Article 34.07

The Employer shall:

- (a) conduct ongoing hazard assessments, including those for a pandemic, disaster or emergency response. Such assessments shall review:
  - (i) engineering controls,
  - (ii) administrative policies, procedures and compliance; and
  - (iii) appropriate personal protective devices and other equipment.
- (b) share information with and obtain input from the Occupational Health and Safety Committee pertaining to all hazard assessments.

## **Alberta OHS Code – Part 2: Hazard Assessment Elimination and Control**

Part 2 of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code requires employers to perform hazard assessments in their workplace(s). It also specifies the methods the employer must implement in order to eliminate or control the workplace hazards identified in the assessment process. Part 14: Lifting and Handling Loads and Part 27: Violence also requires specific hazard assessments regarding these two workplace hazards. UNA local occupational health and safety representatives should be familiar with the requirements under the OHS Code in order to insure that their employer is in compliance with the Code. New language in Article 34: Occupational Health and Safety requires some employers to provide copies of hazard assessments to OH&S committees.



### **The Hazard Assessment Process:**

Employers are required to assess a work site and identify existing or potential hazard before work begins. There are two important phrases used in this section. The reference to “before work begins” requires employers to identify and then eliminate or control hazards when designing or building new worksites, renovating old worksites, introducing new work processes, and changing current work processes. The requirement to identify “potential hazards” means that a hazard does not have to have resulted in workplace injury or illness in order to be considered a workplace hazard.

The assessment must be thorough and identify hazards often grouped into four categories:

#### **1. Physical Hazards**

- lifting and handling loads (patients)
- repetitive motions
- slipping and tripping
- fire
- electricity
- noise
- lighting
- temperatures
- radiation
- violence

#### **2. Chemical Hazards**

- disinfectants
- asbestos
- solvents
- anesthetic gases
- chemotherapy
- scents
- latex

#### **3. Biological Hazards**

- virus, fungi, bacteria
- parasites
- mould
- blood and body fluids

#### **4. Psychological Hazards**

- workload
- staffing levels
- management styles
- shiftwork
- abuse, harassment and bullying
- lack of control over work

The employer must produce a written hazard assessment report that includes the results of the hazard assessment and the methods used to eliminate or control the hazards identified. The assessment report must be available to workers at the worksite (sec. 8 OHS regulation). **Worker Participation Required!** When performing a hazard assessment in a work site or work area your employer is required to involve workers in that work site or area in the assessment process. Workers should have meaningful involvement. All affected workers should have the opportunity to provide input when identifying workplace hazards and determining appropriate control methods.

### **Hazard Elimination and Control**

This section of the Code sets out a hierarchy of control methods that employers must follow. The control method should attack the source of the hazard not its outward signs (e.g. noise, fumes, dust) it produces. Whenever possible, hazards should be eliminated or controlled at their source (as close to where the problem is created as possible). If these options are not possible then the hazard should be controlled before the hazard reaches the worker (along the path between the source and the worker). Administrative controls (policy and procedures) and personal protective equipment (PPE) are the least effective control methods. If eliminating the hazard is not possible then engineering controls are the next option for the employer. Safety engineered sharps devices and mechanical patient lift devices are good examples of engineering controls.



## ***SPOTLIGHT on your UNA Contract***

### **Dispute on Lump Sum payment for part-time employees**

UNA and the Health Region Employers are going to grievance mediation on the amount Lump Sum payments should be for part-time Employees. Full-time Employees got the full amount of the Lump Sum (\$750 for this year's installment) even if they have been on vacation, education leave or short or long term disability leaves. Part-time employees got a pro-rated amount of the \$750, but Employers have NOT included vacation and short term and long term disability in their pro-rating calculation. UNA believes this is incorrect.

Grievance mediation has been set for December 14, 2007 with mediator Dale Simpson.

### **Education leaves included in lump sum payments**

Employers agreed that education leaves must be included in their lump sum calculations, however not all payroll systems have included this. As a result, errors may have occurred and part-time or full-time employees should report any errors in their lump sum calculation to their payroll department and, if necessary to their Local or Labour Relations Officer.

### **Are the Lump Sum payments pensionable?**

Another necessary clarification on the Lump Sum payments is whether they are pensionable, and whether Employees and Employers must make pension contributions for total incomes that include the Lump Sum payments. UNA maintains that the payments must be included in pensionable earnings, the Employers are saying they are not. UNA is taking the case to the Local Authorities Pension Plan for a ruling to resolve the issue.

### **Calgary Employees on education leave need to apply for Lump Sum payment**

Part-time Employees who are on an approved education leave are eligible for the Market Condition Lump Sum payment. Calgary Health Region's payroll system could not process the payment automatically for those on education leave.

Calgary Employees on education leave should put in a request in writing for payment of the Lump Sum to their manager and copy Kim LeBlanc at CHR as well as their Local President.

The Lump Sum payment is \$750 for the half year ending September 30. It is pro-rated for part-time and casual employees to their regular hours actually worked, which includes time on educational leave.





# ***SPOTLIGHT on your UNA Contract***

## **Fairness in Vacations— Article 17 in our Collective Agreement ensures that vacation time is scheduled fairly**

### **The Vacation Planner**

- Your manager must post a Vacation Planner on your unit by January 1st of each year (Please call the Local if this has not occurred). You submit in writing the time period you wish to take your vacation(s) by March 15th.
- The manager must post the approved Vacation Planner by April 30th.
- Seniority provides the guiding principle for allocating vacations.
- The Employer may not “carve out” a specific time period in which Employees are not able to request vacation e.g. Christmas and New Years. The vacation year includes the whole calendar year and you are entitled to request vacation anytime throughout the year.
- Vacation requests after April 30th must be submitted in writing to the manager. They must respond within 14 days of your request.
- If your vacation request was not approved (or not responded to or delayed) by your manager, you have 10 working days to contact your UNA representative to raise your concerns regarding your vacation request and to file a grievance, if necessary.
- Your manager may not cancel or reschedule your vacation unless there is a critical, unforeseen emergency and the Employer can demonstrate that a bona fide attempt was made to address and resolve the emergency situation.
- If your manager does cancel your vacation, you are entitled to receive double time (2X your basic rate of pay) for all shifts worked during the period of vacation cancelled by the Employer. In addition, the Employer shall reimburse all non-refundable costs (e.g. airline or other tickets) related to the cancellation of the vacation.

### **Vacation entitlement depends upon your years of employment.**

- To calculate the amount of your vacation entitlement, please refer to Article 17 of the Collective Agreement.
- If you do not use all your vacation entitlement during the calendar year you may make a request in writing to carry it forward to the next vacation year, which must not be unreasonably denied.
- Article 17.03 (b)(i) “Where the number of Employees indicating a preference for a specific time period exceeds the number of Employees that can be allocated vacation during that period, vacation time is to be granted in order of seniority.”



## Contact Information

### Trustees

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