



United Nurses of Alberta

Local 115

Foothills Medical Centre & Satellites

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

Message from the Treasurer

(October 2009)

Contract Negotiations

Last month the local 115 executive spent two days reviewing the questionnaires received. We had a return of 223 questionnaires from a membership of nearly 3000. From these we learned the majority of members work part-time versus full-time, with a few more who work 12 hour versus 8 hour. ER and ICU were the two units with the majority of responses. Some of the highlights from the responses were:

- between 0% – 3% for wage increases
- deletion of X-days for part-time staff (this was not sent as a local proposal as was considered a rollback)
- shift premiums to increase \$2 - \$5
- increases to benefits and a health spending account
- increases to sick leave, vacation and named holidays

...just to name a few. In addition, the executive also recommended many contract language changes in response to grievances encountered throughout the year and in the past. At the last local meeting the membership approved a list of almost 150 items to be sent to the provincial negotiating committee as local 115's proposals.

Over the summer, and more recently, the provincial government and the Alberta Health Services board sent out strong signals and clear messages regarding the future of health care in Alberta. These communications have elicited strong reactions from the nursing community. The government and AHS have been successful in creating an atmosphere of fear and distrust amongst nurses. The questionnaires we received back clearly indicated this fear. The two greatest messages were job security and no rollbacks. Evidence the government has succeeded in creating the apprehension about jobs. Distrust comes from their message of 'lower cost alternatives', pitting the RN against the LPN. We are all nurses working together for the wellness of the patient; we need to stay strong collectively to fight this strategy, and not to enable the politicians and Alberta Health Services.

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- Do you have an issue on your unit?
- Do you have a contract question?
- Would you like to be more involved with the United Nurses of Alberta?



Who are ya gonna call?
Local 115 at (403) 670-9960

UNA Local 115 General Meeting

Date: Nov 3, 2009
Time: 1600
Location: FMC, AGW4



Follow UNA News "Tweets" at
<http://twitter.com/UnitedNurses/>

Message from the Treasurer

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Last week, the negotiating committee spent five days and evenings coming up with a comprehensive, and achievable proposal package to present to the delegates at the Demand Setting Meeting in November. Every local proposal, including proposals from the Labour Relation Officers and the Director of Labour Relations were looked at. The local proposals from across the province – both facility and community – ranged from minimal to those of high expectations. As a committee, it was a challenge to find a balance between these extremes and to keep in mind the changed economic and political climates. We need to not only maintain what we have, but to enhance the requirements and needs of the registered nurse. This is the time to make our contract stronger for the betterment of all nurses, both young and old er... more experienced!

In solidarity and service,

Malcolm Weisgerber

Treasurer, Local 115

United Nurses of Alberta,

Ph: 403-670-960 / Fax: 403-263-2908

Email: mweisgerber@una.ab.ca

AFL/CLC Annual 2010 Jasper Labour School

The school will be held at the Jasper Park Lodge and there will be courses offered on steward training, collective bargaining, campaign organizing and more. For more info please call the Local 115 Office at (403) 670-9960 or visit <http://www.afl.org>

Jan 11 – 16, 2010 Courses:

Pensions / Advanced Steward Training / Collective Bargaining / Advanced Health and Safety / Duty to Accommodate / Facing Management / Labor History: Learning from the Past / Labor Law / Organizing for Success / Popular Economics: If People Counted / Union Counseling / Young Workers in Action.

Jan 17 – 22, 2010 Courses:

Advanced Steward Training / Arbitration / Balancing Work and Family / Bargaining for Equality / Campaign Organizing / Conflict Resolution / Facilitator Training / Human Rights are Worker's Rights / Parliamentary Procedure & Public Speaking / Union Action or Climate Change and Green Job Creation

Nurstoons

by Carl Elbing



www.nurstoons.com

Nearly 500 march against massive cuts at Alberta Hospital Edmonton



UNA 2nd Vice-President Jane Sustrik addresses a rally of nearly 500 at Alberta Hospital Edmonton.

Jane Sustrik's speech at the rally

I am here today representing over 25,000 thousand Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and other health workers across Alberta - healthcare workers who are concerned about what is happening with health care.

I want to start by thanking each of you for coming here today! By coming here and making your concerns known you are standing up and being counted. You are standing up against some very bad decisions.

We do not know for sure how much of Alberta Hospital Edmonton our government plans to shut down. As each day marches on, it sounds like they are going to close more and more of this facility. From day one, in their public memos, the only commitment made was the forensic units would remain.

The current rumours are that forensics too will be gone in one to three years, possibly to the new remand centre. Alberta Health Services and Mr Duckett have not been clear or honest from day one. Staff were initially told only those patients who did not need to be in hospital would be discharged to more appropriate community settings and only when available. They denied the closure of any acute care beds.

Over time, announced bed closures have come to include all four geriatric units and all the adult psychiatry beds. Only 50 beds are unaccounted for.

Just last week, a request to rezone this land was made to Edmonton City Council! Apparently the request was based on upgrading the food building... BUT the rezone was for 62 hectares! That's a pretty big food building. The rezone was also termed as "specialized zoning with multiple uses." Hmmm - what could that mean???

Could it mean a private developer in the future? Is this land sitting on the proposed LRT line?

These directions and decisions are ill thought out, foolish, and you could even say they are wacky and irrational.

There is something liberating about saying that here.

Their plan is..... CRAZY! It's CUCKOO! Cuckoo!

When you think about it, in order to get admitted to Alberta Hospital Edmonton... and remember there are people desperately waiting to get in and get help... in order to get admitted, a patient has to be acutely ill - very, very sick.

And now we're going to lose many, if not all, of the beds where these people could have received first-class care.

This plan is INSANE!

What do you do with insane government? What do you do with a government that is AN IMMINENT DANGER to itself, and to OTHERS? A government that is menacing our society?

Clearly we don't have enough beds to hospitalize all 70 Conservative MLA's! Do we look for an alternate level of care, send them back to their community, find a home or street for them to go to, and make sure they can't return by closing down the legislature? Or do we make sure they go to a more appropriate setting, rebuild our democracy and keep the legislature open for those who need it to do some real good, to provide for all Albertans the services that are so important and needed?

We CANNOT sit back. I want to express my appreciation to all of you for standing up today. I know you are here because you care about the well-being of these patients and their families. You are standing up for some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

That's exactly what Dr. Patrick White said in the Edmonton Journal last week. Thank you to Dr. White for speaking out and saying publicly what so many of the staff here at AHE have been saying.

"This is just not fair and it smacks of striking at a vulnerable group," he said. The other good quote from Dr. White is one we are exemplifying here today. He said: "I am not going to sit back and watch them save money on the mentally ill."

We cannot sit back. We MUST not sit back. We WILL NOT sit back. We will fight for the proper treatment and care for Albertans!



"Don't ask, don't tell, doesn't protect Albertans."

Friends of Medicare ask gov'ts to police extra-billing

Friends of Medicare has retained legal counsel to send letters to both the provincial and federal health ministers asking them to fulfil their responsibilities under both provincial and federal laws that protect our universal public health care system.

"Under the law our governments have a duty to protect Albertans from extra-billing and user charges and we are asking them to do so," says David Eggen, Friends of Medicare Executive Director.

Friends of Medicare is concerned that user fees and extra billing may be going undetected. "Based on the information currently available, we cannot be sure that the Alberta government is doing its job and adequately monitoring for extra-billing and user charges", says Eggen.

Each year, Health Canada issues a Canada Health Act Annual Report summarizing the provisions and operation of the Canada Health Act. This report includes an overview of healthcare services and health care payments in each province and territory.

"The report's section on Alberta does not identify extra-billing or user charges at all. In the summary tables, the columns referring to private

for-profit facilities and the payments to physicians show entries of "not available". If Albertans are subjected to extra-billing or user fees, it should be reported here," Eggen says. "There is no way of determining, from the information provided, the extent of extra billing and user charges in Alberta."

The annual CHA report is on-line at:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/pubs/cha-lcs/2006-cha-lcs-ar-ra/index-eng.php>.

"The practice appears to be that the Federal government does not ask about extra-billing or user charges, and the Alberta government does not tell. It's don't ask, don't tell," says Eggen.

"This is a failure of both the provincial and federal governments to protect citizens from extra charges or user fees," he says.

The Canada Health Act requires that federal transfer payments be reduced if a province is allowing extra fees.

Alberta was penalized in this way when it allowed extra-billing by doctors in 1984. The financial and political pressure exerted by reducing transfer payments worked, and Alberta relented and extra-billing was stopped.

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Act prohibits extra billing and other user charges for insured services.

"We asked Minister Ron Liepert to ensure there is reporting in place to comply fully with the Canada Health Act," says David Eggen. "We don't know if the Minister gets detailed information on whether extra-billing and user charges are occurring. We do know the information does not appear in the Report on the Canada Health Act."

The letter to Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq asks her to compel full reporting from Alberta to determine Alberta's entitlement to full cash payments under the Canada Health Act.

"It's the federal government's responsibility to ask and the province's obligation to tell. Anything less leaves Albertans exposed to extra billing and two-tier health care," David Eggen said.

More information and Letters to Health Ministers at Friends of Medicare Here

<http://www.friendsofmedicare.org/>

Foothills ER nurses letter have also taken Duckett to task.



We, the Registered Nurses of the Foothills Hospital Emergency Department, would like to respond to an article by Dr. S. Duckett in the Calgary Sun, September 19, 2009.

It is very interesting that recently we were advised that we could not voice our opinions regarding our workplace for fear we would suffer the possible consequences of job termination. Yet, it is perfectly acceptable for Dr. Duckett to slander a whole profession, violating the AHS Code of Conduct. It is obvious by his statements that he questions the value of registered nurses as a profession.

We are complying with a mutually agreed collective agreement Dr. Duckett. Currently, we are not paid for 3 of our breaks in a 12.25 hour shift. There are times when we do not get our breaks at all. Perhaps Dr. Duckett would like to face an already angry public that have waited for several hours to get into the Emergency Department, not have a break and be able to do his job with patience and compassion.

Nursing is a predominantly female workforce, many of whom are parents trying to juggle family and work. Many work 12 hour shifts, weekends and holidays. Often nurses take a part time position and agree to work extra shifts so they can have flexibility. Dr. Duckett's comments feel as though he is threatening to take away these part time jobs.

Leaders should lead by example, i.e.

- Granting a 25% raise to members of the health board - but stating nurses are paid too much;
- Hiring a Vice President during a hiring freeze;
- Receiving bonuses while making health care cuts, and,

- Slandering a profession, which is in complete disregard to the Code of Ethics Dr. Duckett himself endorses.

We chose this profession because we care about people. If we had chosen a career for monetary reasons, it would not have been in healthcare. Other university educated professions have the ability to increase their earning potential as Dr. Duckett personally knows, while we reach our maximum after 10 years.

Is Dr. Duckett aware of what a registered nurse actually does in this country? The job description here is very different than that in England or in Australia. We invite, and encourage him, to spend a 24 hour period in the emergency department and see what it is that we actually do.

We are proud of what we do and honoured to be part of this profession. Nursing has traditionally been held in high regard, but Dr. Duckett is doing his best to sway public opinion.

Events Calendar

Local 115 Local Meeting

Date: Nov 3, 2009

Place: FMC – AGW4

Time: 1600-1800

UNA Annual General Meeting

Date: Oct 27, 28 & 29 - 2009

Place: Edmonton

UNA Demand Setting

Date: Nov 24, 25 & 26, 2009

Place: Edmonton

AFL / CLC Annual 2010 Labor School

Dates Jan 11 - 16, 2009 / Jan 17 – 22, 2009

Place: Jasper

For more info call Local 115 at (403) 670-9960 or visit <http://www.afl.org>



SPOTLIGHT on your UNA Contract

For Professional Safety Reasons

Insist on Reasonable Orientation

Some RNs are being “floated” to units with little or no orientation to the procedures of the unit. The practice can put patients, and their nurses, at risk.

What happens if you are “floated” to a unit you are unfamiliar with and something goes wrong? You are responsible for your practice even if the Employer has assigned you to a unit or position where you have not been orientated or sufficiently prepared.

Protect yourself – insist on adequate orientation and if that has not been provided, file a Professional Responsibility Committee (PRC) complaint immediately.

Staffing problems are NO excuse for management practices that compromise safe, quality care to professional standards.

If you encounter a safety or staffing problem that you find professionally unacceptable, there is something you can do about it. Contact UNA.

Breaks

Nurses need their breaks

Safe nursing practice includes meal periods and breaks. They are essential to good practice and our Collective Agreement safeguards Employees’ breaks. The Agreement specifies that every Employee gets full breaks, or if it is absolutely not possible, they must be paid for scheduled work during breaks and paid double time if the break is not re-scheduled.

Article 7.01

c) Although meal periods are excluded in the calculation of regular hours of work, Employees required to be readily available for duty during their meal period shall be so advised in advance and paid for those meal periods at their Basic Rate of Pay.

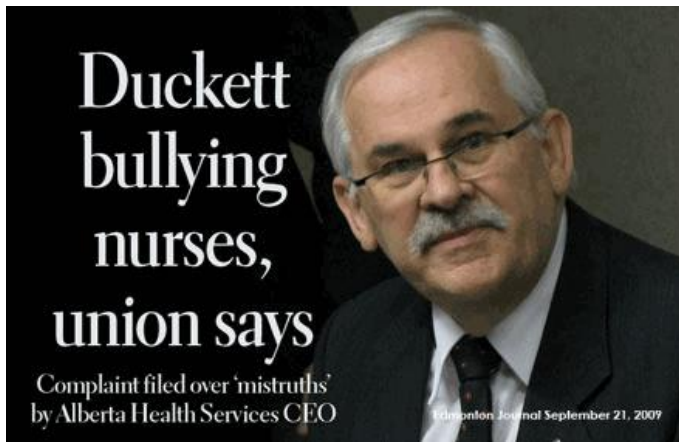
(d) Employees recalled to duty during their meal periods or rest periods or unable to take a rest period or meal period, shall be given a full meal period or rest period later in their Shift, or, where that is not possible, be paid as follows:

(i) for a rest period, at 2X their Basic Rate of Pay rather than at straight time; or

(ii) for a meal period for which the Employee is entitled to be paid under Article 7.01(c), at 2X their Basic Rate of Pay rather than at straight time; or

(iii) for a meal period for which the Employee is not otherwise entitled to be paid, at 2X their Basic Rate of Pay.

UNA Provincial Agreement 2007-2010



Nurses' complaint about Duckett ethics makes headlines

On Friday, September 18, UNA filed a Code of Conduct complaint about misleading or untrue remarks AHS CEO Stephen Duckett has been making about nursing in Alberta.

The complaint notes that "His mistruths are creating an environment that hinders nurses' ability to perform their functions." UNA also charged Duckett's remarks are tantamount to bullying.

It's the first time the union has ever filed such a formal complaint, Bev Dick, first vice-president told the Edmonton Sun. "I think we would want him to recognize you can't have two sets of rules, one for the peasants and one for the king," she said.

The complaint specified four instances of public statements by Duckett that misrepresented nursing or circumstances in Alberta health care.

On September 18, 2009, CEO Stephen Duckett was quoted in the media as saying, "Somewhere between 25% and 70% of what a nurse does in a hospital ward could be done by someone else." In fact the CARNA study he was supposedly quoting said 27%.

On September 15, 2009, CEO Duckett wrote on his blog, "We are not currently looking at lay-offs and we will not consider lay-offs unless and until it becomes absolutely necessary." But, on Friday September 11, 2009, representatives of AHS met with the nursing and other staff at Brooks and announced that layoffs will occur.

On September 18, 2009, CEO Duckett was quoted in the media saying: "I don't want to say part

time is a bad thing, but many of them say: 'I'm going to work three days a week and get paid and then do another two days of shifts and get paid for six days a week.' That's not on." But of course, it is only the employer who can determine who works and when. No employee can decide if she will work additional shifts.

And, in an article published in the Calgary Sun Sept. 18, Duckett also said "A nurse working in our system for a long time gets more money than any other province. Not only that, in order to get that money they work fewer hours because of the length of time for lunch breaks and morning tea breaks and afternoon tea breaks and coffee breaks and everything else."

Like the others, this incorrect statement is highly misleading. " Nurses have one meal break, which is unpaid. Nurses have two paid rest periods per shift, as scheduled by the Employer, each of which is 15 minutes in length. This does not result in nurses in Alberta working fewer hours. Nurse agreements in all but one Canadian province provide for rest periods of this length or longer.

UNA's complaint says Duckett's remarks conflict with several points in the AHS Code of Conduct.

"CEO Duckett's conduct has adversely affected the interests of Alberta Health Services and has caused serious morale issues. He has not chosen his words carefully when speaking with the media. His mistruths are creating an environment that hinders nurses' ability to perform their functions and in many ways must hinder his own ability to function."

UNA Secretary Treasurer Karen Craik, and 2nd Vice-President Jane Sustrik jointly made the complaint.

"I personally think he wants to incite nurses. He wants to take the public image of nurses down," Sustrik told the Edmonton Journal.



Fishing for facts on the Nursing Shortage?

Visit the UNA Web Site for more info



Contact Information

Local 115 Executive

Kevin Champagne

President

Email: kchampagne@una.ab.ca

Kathleen Hamnett

Vice President

Email: khamnett@una.ab.ca

Malcolm Wwisgerber

Treasurer

Email: mweisgerber@una.ab.ca

Ruth Duffy

Secretary

Email: rduffy@una.ab.ca

Newsletter Committee

Al Perreault

Email: aperreault@una.ab.ca

Grievance Committee

Local 115 Executive

Email: local115exec@una.ab.ca

Marilyn Vavasour

Email: mvavasour@una.ab.ca

PRC Committee

Kevin Champagne

Email: kchampagne@una.ab.ca

Ruth Duffy

Email: rduffy@una.ab.ca

Daryl Kostiuk

Email: dkostiuk@una.ab.ca

Michelle Senkow

Email: msenkow@una.ab.ca

OH & S Committee

Kathleen Hamnett

Email: khamnett@una.ab.ca

Jaye McCool

Email: jmcool@una.ab.ca

Laura Ross

Email: lross@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 for the Local 115 Executive: local115exec@una.ab.ca

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