

News from AHEC

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

OCTOBER 2008

The Alberta Healthcare Employees Committee was started about four years ago when we decided there needed to be a voice for all healthcare employees. Our sector is always under attack by the governments and our jobs are threatened with contracting out, P3s and the general misunderstanding of our work and the important role of the support staff.

We meet approx. four times a year in Red Deer as this is central for most members. We discuss many topics and issues, Long Term Care, Lodges, Acute Care, Designated Assisted Living, Blood Services, Sodexo, etc. We talk about our common concerns, short staffing, low wages, and our collective agreements to see where we can improve.

We want to continue to keep on top of anything that may affect our seniors and the type of care they receive. This information also

goes back to Alberta Division, as well as CUPE National, both have provided tremendous support on Senior Care.



Our Health Care Coordinator Yvonne Fast has been so helpful in compiling information as well as lining up courses and speakers to talk to us on subjects such as contracting out, P3's, and Market Adjustments throughout the province. We and look forward to new ideas and courses we can put on to help our members with day to day

work issues

Last Feb. we lobbied the MLAs in the province to support our seniors and last Sept. we did a leaflet campaign to promote Seniors Care in the province, carried out on Grandparents Day. Some of the locals did cakes, chocolates etc. at seniors housing for example. This spring we are putting out bargaining surveys to see if we could line up some of our language and monetary concerns. It was also good to see where all our locals were at with negotiations coming up.

We try to keep our meetings fairly informal and by doing so I think everybody is comfortable and relaxed. We also have fun too. Together we can make a difference. For more information or to affiliate please contact Yvonne Fast (yvfast@cupe.ca).

In Solidarity,
Carol Boklaschuk
Chair, AHEC

Grandparents Day



Local 408 continued the distribution of cake this year. They had enough cake for 100 at the hospital for the general public to enjoy, as it was a Sunday that was lots, they also did the 2 floors of the hospital that have long term on them but due to Norwalk they couldn't get in and take lots of pictures. Extencicare sure looked forward to it this year. They plan to keep doing this as it was even more popular this year. They also took cake to Cardston at the 2 long term care sites they have there, they were thrilled with the cakes. They get them done at Costco and they do such a nice job of the decorating.



Did You Know?

Repetitive Strain Injuries are a family of painful disorders affecting tendons, muscles, nerves and joints. They cause persistent or reoccurring pains most commonly in the neck, shoulders, forearms, hands, wrists and elbows.

These injuries are caused by repetition and also by force, rapid movement, overuse, static loading, excessive strain, uncomfortable positioning of limbs or holding an unnatural posture for too long.

Often when members feel pain from doing work in one way they may try to compensate by doing work in another way which causes other strain injuries. As a result, their pain and injuries persist or get worse.

The following actions can help combat RSIs:

- Refuse unsafe work.
- Report RSI hazards.
- Conduct regular workplace inspections to uncover RSI hazards
- Put RSIs on the Health and Safety committee agenda.
- Demand employers improve working and ergonomic conditions that cause RSIs.

National Health Care Issues Committee



The National Health Care Issues Committee provides advice on how CUPE can advocate for and promote a publicly-funded and delivered health care system in Canada. They develop strategies to fight back against pressures to privatize health care or contract out health care work to private health care providers. The committee also develops strategies to work in coalition with health care workers and public health care advocates.

The Committee provides advice to the CUPE National Executive Board on how CUPE can:

- Advocate for and promote a publicly funded and delivered health care system in Canada governed by the principles of the Canada Health Act;
- Negotiate improved wages, benefits, pensions and working conditions for health care workers through coordinated and centralized bargaining, solidarity pacts and any other means at our disposal;
- Develop coordinated strategies to fight back against any and all concessions that CUPE health care workers face at the bargaining table;
- Develop coordinated strategies to fight back against the continued pressure to privatize health care and to contract out health care work to the private, health care providers;
- Make recommendations on national campaigns and actions in support of public delivery and in opposition to the privatization of health care;
- Organize health care workers employed by both public and private employers;

- Develop strategies to work in coalition with health care workers and public health care advocates in Canada and around the world.

One board won't meet the needs of three and a half million people

Health Minister Ron Liepert announced today that the Conservative Government plans to merge the provinces nine regional health authority boards with the Alberta Mental Health Board, Alberta Cancer Board and Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), creating a super authority responsible for every aspect of medical care in the province.

“This is absolutely the wrong direction for our province to be moving in,” said Canadian Union of Public Employees Alberta Division President D'Arcy Lanovaz.

“This is a big province, and response times are challenging enough with the existing boards.”

“Merging into one super authority will create catastrophic bottlenecks for Albertans when they're at their most vulnerable.”

The major problems right now in health care delivery are wait times for patients and workloads for staff. The decision to create a super authority fails to address either of those concerns

“The members of this board will be appointed, not elected” continued Lanovaz. “What Albertans want and deserve is more accountability, and this decision is a step backwards in this regard.”

On this front, CUPE has immediate concerns over the appointment of Ken Hughes as interim chair of this board.

“When someone from the insurance industry has been put in charge of a public health board,” finished Lanovaz “It raises alarms about the possibility of a move towards two-tiered healthcare in this province.”