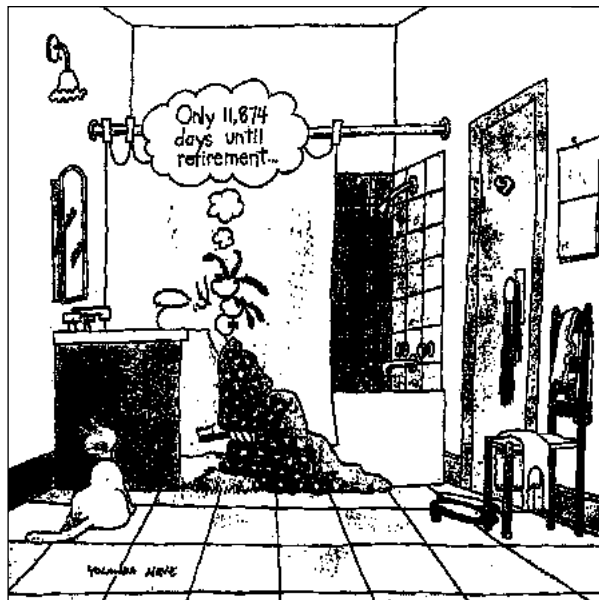


LONG TERM CARE news



JULY 2006



OVERTIME COULD MAKE YOU SICK

A new study shows long hours increase the risk of illness and injury... / 3

Long term care problems continue

Not much has changed for seniors since Auditor General's report

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UPDATES FROM OUR LOCALS AROUND THE PROVINCE / 2



LETHBRIDGE CUPE MEMBERS NEGOTIATE SUCCESSFUL PENSION DEAL/ 4

CUPE WORKING TO IMPROVE RESIDENTIAL AND CARE SERVICES FOR ALBERTA SENIORS / 4



BY D'ARCY LANOVAZ | PRESIDENT CUPE ALBERTA

Remember about three years ago the Conservative government raised the fees for long term care facilities? They really jacked up the prices. Some seniors had their fees go up by 50%. It could be as much as \$400-\$500 per month in additional costs.

Families were devastated. Life savings were wiped out. Inheritances were raided. Seniors groups were up in arms, the children and caregivers of residents were furious and desperate.

At the time, Seniors Minister Gary Mar explained this massive cash grab as necessary to improve service to seniors. This money was to go towards improving staffing levels, fix crumbling buildings, and make sure our loved ones got the care they deserved.

The anger and the outrage quieted down because most of us realized that the system was in disrepair. We may not have liked paying the bill, but we knew it had to get paid by someone – and god knows the Tories weren't going to do anything about it.

Three years later, it appears that all the gouging of seniors and their families

has not resulted in any meaningful improvements to care.

The report of the Auditor General, now a year old and gathering dust was scathing in its criticism of the government. Seniors facilities are understaffed, the employees are underpaid, the buildings are under maintained, and the residents are undernourished and over medicated.

What a shameful legacy for a province rich in oil and gas resources. Why are we doing this to our family members?

The government isn't going to act, so it's now up to us, as CUPE members to fight for improvements. We don't hold the purse strings, but we have a few cards we can play.

We have to step up at the bargaining table and demand higher wages to reduce staff turnover.

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Local Bargaining Updates CUPE locals at long term care facilities across the province are active on many fronts ranging from bargaining preparation, averting raids, recruiting shop stewards and trying to resolve workplace issues with employers.

★ **LOCAL 2158 – Grande Prairie Care Centre**

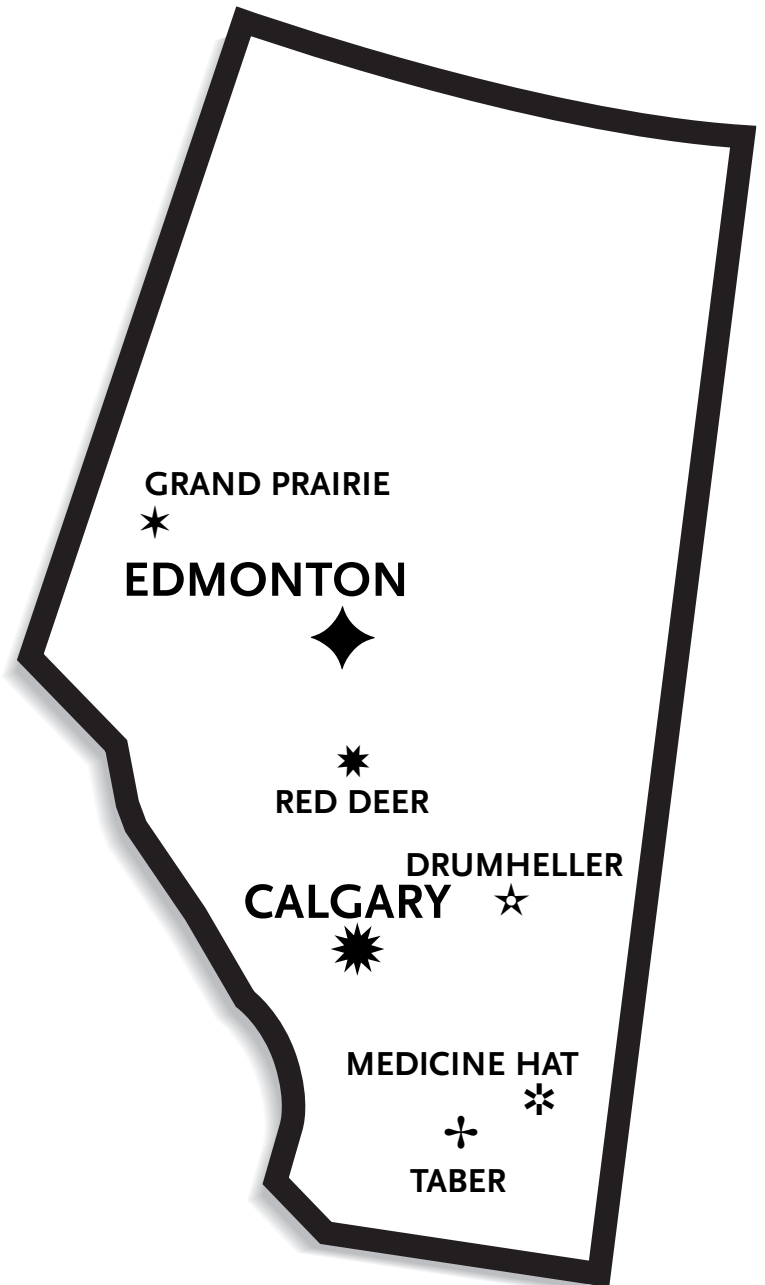
- The centre is a 64-bed facility operated by Chantelle Management. Chantelle was the successful bidder in a proposal to Peace Regional Health to provide a 90-bed facility which will see part of Mackenzie Centre close and those beds come to Chantelle.
- The local is currently in bargaining.
- The facility is facing problems with recruitment and retention of Nursing Assistants and Licensed Practical Nurses. Staff are working up to **three** people short on a **five** person shift.
- The local has affiliated with the Alberta Health Employees Committee (AHEC).

LOCAL 2832 – Westlock Foundation

- Members are upset at new scheduling codes providing more working days in a 10-week cycle. Many members live on farms are unhappy with the extra trips into town. Two have taken early retirement and one quit leaving the facilities short staffed.
- The local has affiliated with the Alberta Health Employees Committee (AHEC).

✱ **LOCAL 8 – Calgary**

- Local 8 has merged with components of two other locals. A new executive was elected in April after the merger was completed.
- McKenzie Towne Assisted Living recently negotiated its first contract.
- A new contract at Renoir Lodge gives employees 15% wage increases over three years, better sick leave, bereavement leave and seniority provisions.
- A new group of 135 employees at Beverly Care Center just joined the local after voting 92% to unionize.



† LOCAL 2038 – Taber Clearview Lodge

- The local represents thirty employees in the Enhanced Lodge facility.
- The Lodge is having problems in the retaining Personal Care Attendants.
- The contract will expire soon and the union is preparing for negotiations in the new year.
- The Chinook Health Region is going to partner with Good Samaritan to put an enhanced (Assisted Living) facility in Taber.

* LOCAL 838 – Red Deer Piper Creek Foundation

- The local signed a new contract giving members 3.5% per year over two years. The contract also improved vacation for employees to three weeks after one year, bereavement leave was increased to five days, and improvements to sick leave, plus a training premium of \$1/hour.
- Short staffing is an issue.
- The local is improving communication and averting problems with the employer through a Union-Management Advisory Committee.

* LOCAL 3623 – Grande Spirit Foundation (Grande Prairie, Spirit River, Beaver Lodge/Heights)

- The employer is having recruitment problems and approached the local with a proposal to collapse the pay grid. The original proposal rewarded new employees without recognizing long service staff, and was rejected by the union. The employer countered by offering to accelerate the timing of the next wage increase. After that was accepted, the employer again approached the local indicating that they needed to raise wages further. This time, the parties signed an across the board increase of \$2.00 per hour to form part of the contract.

* LOCAL 46 – Medicine Hat Cypress View Foundation – Teeoda Lodge

- The work-site is an 80 unit independent living facility; in the process of building 40 bed expansion to accommodate assisted living. The employer has also taken over a new facility called The Wellington with 160 units, opening in three phases and staffing will be monitored over the next year.

☆ LOCAL 715 – Sunshine Lodge (Drumheller)

- The employer has agreed to examine participation in the Nursing Home & Related Industry Pension Plan.
- The employer is having a difficult time attracting and retaining staff.

Extendicare locals

- A new contract has been negotiated, ratification votes to take place in late June.
- Due to staff shortages, vacations have been cancelled. Every shift has been short staffed.

Overtime hours could increase sickness and injury says study

Working overtime could make you sick. A new study shows long hours increase the risk of illness and injury, no matter what the job type.

When U.S. researchers at the University of Massachusetts analyzed information from 110,236 job records, they found 5,139 work-related injuries and illnesses. More than half of those injuries were among workers who worked long hours or overtime. Researchers say the risk has nothing to do with how hazardous the job may be.

Overall, workers who worked overtime were 61 per cent

more likely to have a work-related injury or illness than those who did not work overtime. Working at least 12 hours a day was linked to a 37 per cent increase, while working at least 60 hours a week was linked to a 23 per cent increased risk. The more hours worked, the greater the risk.

Researchers looked at the responses from 11,000 workers from 1987 and 2000. They say the results back up the theory that working long hours indirectly causes workplace accidents by bringing on fatigue and stress.

Joint health care employees committee

LETHBRIDGE – The chair of CUPE Alberta's committee of health care workers is calling on all health care locals to join forces.

"The Alberta Health Employees Committee (AHEC) is back up and running," said Carol Boklaschuk, CUPE 408 President and committee chair. "We have had 2 meetings so far, one in Nov. of 2005 and the most recent in May."

Boklaschuk said participation in AHEC is an excellent way for health care workers to share news and develop common strategies.

"We encourage any local that is related to health care in whatever form, to join in this committee," said Boklaschuk. "It gives all a chance to meet and discuss the common issues."

"The cost is 10 cents per member, and we meet in Red Deer as that seems to be the most central for all of us."

"We are planning to meet again in Oct. on the 7th and 8th. Contact your National Representative and they will get the information you need to join."

Long term care problems continue

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We have to step up and demand staffing levels that give seniors the care they need.

And we have to step up and demand a pension plan so the people who care for seniors today, can afford quality care tomorrow when they need it.

We have to stand up for ourselves, and stand up for seniors.

That's what we do – we care for seniors.

If we don't – no one will. The Alberta government sure won't. They've made that clear.

If we don't demand change, if we don't make it part of our negotiating position that seniors get the care they need, seniors lose. We lose. And Alberta loses.

And that, brothers and sisters, is not an option.

Pension progress for CUPE members working in services for seniors

Breakthrough may set a standard

BY BONNIE FERGUSON
CUPE RESEARCH REPRESENTATIVE

LETHBRIDGE – CUPE local 408 members at Ridge Country Housing have successfully negotiated full participation in the Nursing Home and Related Industries Pension Plan. Members of that local will benefit by being able to retire with a pension as soon as they turn 65.

CUPE members at Ridge Country Housing join local 838 members at Piper Creek Foundation and local 2832 members at Westlock Foundation who have also negotiated participation in the same pension plan.

The Nursing Home Pension Plan provides a defined benefit pension plan and past service credit for eligible employees when they retire. Establishing pensions for seniors care employees hasn't been easy, however each breakthrough CUPE makes improves the chances for the next local trying to bargain a pension.

For more information about negotiating this pension plan, contact your National Representative. General information about the Nursing Homes and Related Industries Pension Plan is available at www.nursinghomespension.com.

CUPE working to improve residential and care services for Alberta seniors

Survey available for distribution by Locals

BY BONNIE FERGUSON
CUPE RESEARCH REPRESENTATIVE

CALGARY – The CUPE Alberta Healthcare Employees Committee (AHEC) is undertaking a survey of CUPE members working in Alberta seniors' facilities. The survey will focus on working conditions and the challenges we face providing quality care and support for seniors in CUPE workplaces.

Staff representatives will be providing copies of the survey to all CUPE locals with members working in lodges, residential and care facilities.

We are asking locals to distribute the survey to their members during June and July.

The results will be used to prepare a report on the issues we face across the province. Reports of individual local results will also be prepared to build support for improving our working conditions and the quality of services we provide in seniors' facilities.

This project will help us to gather information from the experiences of CUPE members to help address the urgent need for improvements in services for Alberta seniors.