



SPRING 2024

CFNU REVIEW

MESSAGE FROM CFNU PRESIDENT LINDA SILAS

FROM PHARMACARE TO NURSE-PATIENT RATIOS, NURSES ARE A POWERFUL FORCE FOR CHANGE

Dear members,

I know the challenges facing you are daunting. Working excessively long hours, with little to no support, stretching yourself thin to care for your patients. I know it can feel draining, at the worst of times even thankless.

I want you to know that you're not alone. People in Canada value what you do, and they have your back. A resounding 97 per cent of Canadians recognize the critical importance of nurses in our health care system, according to a recent poll by the CFNU.

Canadians know the challenges you face — high workloads and stress, burnout and fatigue, and insufficient staffing — and they care. More than 90 per cent are deeply concerned about the nursing shortage, while 71 per cent believe investing in publicly employed nurses is essential.

These are more than just numbers. This is a rallying cry of support for Canada's nurses. The message from Canadians is clear. They see the value you bring and the urgent need for change.

Together, we will not let our politicians off the hook.

Finally, provinces are finalizing their health funding agreements with the federal government.

Now that plans have been signed, we're fighting for accountability. We know this funding needs to translate into the respect and support you need on the front lines. We will fight to ensure you see the impact of these investments at the bedside. Working together, we will ensure safe nurse-patient ratios becomes a reality in health care across the country.

Investing in our public health systems and the nurses who keep our systems running has never been more important.

As recent reports from *The Globe and Mail* revealed, overreliance on private for-profit nurse staffing agencies has led to skyrocketing costs, all but bankrupting our health care systems while shareholders' wallets get thicker and thicker.

We will not allow our taxpayer dollars to continue to be poured into for-profit companies, where spending is unaccounted for.

Together, we will fight for a better public health care system for everyone. Together, we fought for and won prescription coverage of two critical types of medication as a part of our universal health care system. Finally, we're on the road towards a fulsome, universal pharmacare program. In large part due to nurses' tireless advocacy.

Together, we are a powerful force for change. We are the largest movement of frontline nurses in North America — 250,000 strong — from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. Working together, we can ensure our public health system is strong and return nursing to one of the best jobs in our communities.

In unwavering solidarity,

Linda Silas, CFNU President



February 14, 2023 — Françoise Ramel, Vice-présidente de la FIQ; Linda Silas, CFNU President; Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP; and Pauline Worsfold, RN, Chair, Canadian Health Coalition (CHC), at the CHC rally, "Profit Doesn't Care - Stop Privatization | Pharmacare for All!"

‘FINALLY, OUR GOVERNMENT IS GETTING THE PRESCRIPTION RIGHT’ — LINDA SILAS

STATEMENT ON UPCOMING PHARMACARE LEGISLATION BY CFNU PRESIDENT LINDA SILAS

Together, we're making history.

The Liberals and NDP are set to introduce legislation that lays the foundation for a national pharmacare program.

This is our win. For nurses, patients and everyone in Canada.

After nearly 40 years of nurses' and health care workers' tireless advocacy, our governments are finally getting the prescription right.

Imagine watching a patient leave your care, knowing full well that they can't afford the medication they need to stay healthy. Or seeing a patient return time after time in diabetic shock because they can't afford their insulin. Nurses witness tragedies every day because millions of Canadians can't afford medications that are essential to their health and well-being.

This is why the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) has been a staunch advocate for equal access to necessary pharmaceuticals since 1985.

We know that shortfalls in prescription drug coverage result in daily deaths and illness among people with treatable

conditions — a grim finding from CFNU's 2018 study, *Body Count*.

Introducing a framework for a single-payer universal public pharmacare program is more than a policy change. It will save lives and put Canada on the right track toward a healthier future for everyone. No longer will Canada be the only country in the world with a universal health care system that does not provide universal coverage for prescription medications.

Coverage starts with birth control, diabetes medications and a fund for critically needed diabetic equipment.

This is a victory, but I know it isn't the full dose of pharmacare that Canadians need.

The incoming legislation is expected to lay out the next steps for expanding coverage to include essential medications, including the most commonly prescribed and clinically important drugs.

Nurses will continue to be there every step of the way to hold our leaders' feet to the fire and ensure people in Canada get the comprehensive pharmacare program we all need.

SAFE HOURS SAVE LIVES

Heart disease, driving drowsing and patient safety – these are just some of the grim impacts of nurse fatigue, detailed in CFNU's new report *Safe Hours Save Lives*.

Overtime demands and a crisis-level staffing shortage mean nurses are working longer hours than ever before. The imperative is clear: we owe it to both nurses and our health care system as a whole to proactively address fatigue.

Released in January 2024, *Safe Hours Save Lives* reveals a critical need to address nurse fatigue and outlines key recommendations to mitigate fatigue-related risks. Authored by researcher Dr. Heather Scott-Marshall, the report examined three outcomes of occupational fatigue: risks associated with patient safety, risks of workplace conflicts and lateral violence, and risks posed to nurses' overall health and well-being.

For nurses, the risk of safety incidents, including medical errors, increases after eight consecutive hours of work and doubles by the 12th hour. By the 16th hour, the risk can be three-fold.

Currently, no federal or provincial regulations limit how many hours a nurse can work in a day or week. But because fatigue is a well-known safety risk, safeguards exist for other safety-sensitive industries such as trucking, rail, nuclear and aviation.

"Fatigue has real consequences, and we must cultivate environments that support the safety of nurses and their patients. Rampant overtime has become a norm in health care, but the safety of nurses and patients is just as important as the safety of pilots and passengers," said Silas. "We are pushing for fatigue to have accountability, making nurse and patient safety a fundamental obligation. We owe it to our nurses and our patients. It's a matter of safety and respect."

Key recommendations to reduce fatigue-related risks

- Stopping the practice of mandating nurses to work overtime
- Establishing legislation and regulatory limits on consecutive work hours for nurses
- Adopting international standards for managing risks related to fatigue, including measures such as designated napping spaces, fresh food for nurses on extended or overnight shifts, and providing nurses' transportation home post-shift
- Employer implementation of formal fatigue risk management programs



WATCH THE

SAFE HOURS SAVE LIVES

WEBINAR AND FIND THE

FULL REPORT HERE:



NURSESUNIONS.CA/SAFE-HOURS-SAVE-LIVES

SUPPORTING OUR NURSING STUDENTS

The CFNU is proud to represent nursing students as a part of our federation. After years of being apart, we were glad to connect with nursing students in person at the Canadian Nursing Students' Association's National Conference in January.

The CFNU Secretary-Treasurer Angela Preocanin took to the stage for a motivating talk on the future of nursing and what nurses can achieve when we work together in solidarity.

The conference offered the opportunity for nursing students to connect directly with the CFNU about their concerns around entering the workforce, such as paid preceptorships, early-career support and career longevity.

Nursing students are a critical piece of the workforce puzzle. This is part of why we are working with Dr. Kim McMillan, a nurse and researcher, to examine how young nurses' needs have evolved in this changing landscape and to understand emerging trends in workplace culture. Dr. McMillan connected with students on the ground at the conference in Edmonton to kick off the research project. Expect more updates from the CFNU on this exciting new research, as well as a student-specific position paper with our key advocacy asks.

YOUR FEDERAL VOICE

Nurses know our health care systems inside out. You see firsthand how untenable working conditions threaten patient safety — and your own. In 2023, the CFNU took nurses' concerns directly to our federal and provincial health ministers and premiers. We profiled members in each province, highlighting challenges on the front lines as well as nurse-led solutions.

We are encouraged by the federal government's increase to the Canada Health Transfer, and that provincial agreements are taking shape. But we know this funding must be tied to ensuring nurses have the support they need now. The CFNU is calling on provinces and territories to use the increases to bolster the nursing workforce, enabling the robust recovery of our country's health care system.

"As Canada's nurses unions, we're ready to champion better working conditions. Working in collaboration with governments and employers, we can strategically tackle key challenges facing our workplaces by implementing strong retention initiatives," explains CFNU President Linda Silas. "Better data and planning, safe nurse-patient ratios, enhanced mental health services, ethical recruitment of internationally educated nurses, supporting nursing students, and phasing out private staffing agencies."

Nurse union leaders took two critical challenges to our federal and provincial health ministers in the fall of 2023: the unsustainable and unsafe hours nurses are working, and the rising costs associated with private nursing agencies to address record vacancies.

When we spoke to MPs and senators in December, we highlighted the toll that unsafe staffing is taking on nurses and patients alike.

Whether at policy briefings, in [open letters](#), on billboards and bus shelter ads, in letter-writing campaigns, on social media or in [newspaper opinion pieces](#), the CFNU is taking every opportunity to hold our leaders to account and demand action on solutions.

The solutions are clear, and they start with respecting and supporting nurses.



Page 4 photos: The CFNU National Executive Board speaking with Minister of Health Mark Holland

SO-SO-SO-SOLIDARITY!

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY FUND

For over a decade, the CFNU has supported international and Canadian organizations working for social and economic justice, and reconstruction and development through our International Solidarity Fund (ISF). This fund supports worker-to-worker exchanges, provides humanitarian assistance and strengthens the capacity of workers to advance the right to health.

In 2023, nurses traveled to Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Ireland and Senegal on worker exchanges with the support of the ISF. Nurses completed missions such as being a camp nurse, teaching English, and being a part of teams performing orthopedic and ophthalmology surgeries.

So far, two trips are planned for 2024. Nurses can apply for funding on the CFNU website (nursesunions.ca) — applications for the ISF to support worker-to-worker exchanges close on December 31 every year.

WORKERS UNITED AGAINST HATE

We know confronting hate and discrimination is a shared responsibility. The CFNU is one of many union supporters of Workers United Against Hate, a Canadian Labour Congress initiative to fight back against the rise in hate and division toward the LGBTQI2S+ community. In 2023 we took to Parliament Hill with labour unions to show our support for diverse and inclusive communities.

Everyone deserves to be who they are and to feel safe, valued and supported at work, school or in their community. Canada's unions will always fight for a fair, just and more equitable future for all — including our children. When workers organize together, we lift everyone up.

GLOBAL NURSES UNITED

United around the fight for global health and social justice, the CFNU joined union nurses from across the world for the 2023 Convention of Global Nurses United in California.

“Nurses are a global force for change, and we know that in the face of a global nursing crisis, our voices, care and leadership are as important as ever,” said CFNU President Linda Silas in her speech. “Acting in solidarity across borders, we can build on our collective wins and create a healthier future everywhere.”

Silas joined union leaders from Brazil, Ireland, the Philippines and the United States for a panel discussion about the global fight nurses are leading to protect patients in times of crisis, valuing nurses and other health care workers, and advancing a vision of a future based on care.

In nursing, Silas emphasized that our global goals align with our goals in Canada: protecting and investing in the nursing profession; ensuring nurses have safe and healthy working conditions where their rights are respected; and advancing strategies to recruit and retain nurses so we can end workforce shortages.



The CFNU National Executive Board at the 2023 Convention of Global Nurses United in California

HAPPENING NOW

FEDERAL UNION-LED ADVISORY TABLE

CFNU President Linda Silas has been appointed to the federal government’s Union-Led Advisory Table created to provide ministers with expert advice on key labour files. The advisory table brings together unions and trade associations to advise the government on priority areas for helping workers navigate the changing labour market.

“As the largest part of the health care workforce, nurses’ voices are an important part of discussions on how to help workers in the face of a changing labour market,” said Silas. “Whether we’re solving challenges in the health workforce or the broader labour market, collaboration is key. I look forward to what we can achieve together for nurses and all workers.”

2024 MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

This spring, the CFNU will be releasing the results of our annual national nurse survey. The results of this survey help inform our understanding of the impact the critical nursing shortage has on you and your work. Building on past research, these results help us advocate for better working conditions and patient care. Thank you to everyone who completed the survey in January and February! Keep an eye on our social media for the survey results.

INVEST IN NURSES, NOT PROFITS

For-profit nurse staffing agencies are charging up to \$300 per hour, while a full-time publicly employed nurse only earns between \$27 and \$52 per hour. A recent report on a large private nurse staffing agency revealed shocking profits and over \$1million in unaccounted for expenses. Health care is about people, not profit. Private for-profit corporate health care staffing agencies are not the solution to Canada’s nurse shortage crisis. Our new anti-privatization campaign tells ministers to invest in nurses, not profits. We’re demanding sustainable public health care solutions that put patients before profit. Join us.



www.profitdoesnotcare.ca



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The National Executive Board and staff at the February 2024 NEB Meeting

WE ARE CANADA'S NURSES

We are the voice of nearly 250,000 unionized nurses and nursing students across the country. We are proud to advocate for our members and promote the nursing profession on the national level, and we work tirelessly to protect the quality of health care for our patients and our universal public health care system.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Logos for member organizations: CNSA AEIC, Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland & Labrador, UNA United Nurses of Alberta, ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION, pei nurses, BC NURSES' UNION Standing up for health care, Nova Scotia Nurses Union, sun SASKATCHEWAN UNION OF NURSES, New Brunswick Nurses Union NBNJ SUNB Syndicat des infirmières et infirmiers du Nouveau-Brunswick, Manitoba nurses Union A COMMITMENT TO CARING

AFFILIATIONS

Logos for affiliations: CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS CONGRES DU TRAVAIL DU CANADA, GNU Global Nurses United