

# CHALLENGER

Volume Number 18 Issue Number 1

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Does this Emperor have Clothes?

In October I wrote about the impending Tory Leadership election. All indications suggested the coronation of Jim Dinning, and if I had been so foolish as to lay money on the outcome, I would have lost my shirt. Much to most people's surprise, "Honest" Ed Stelmach was elected on the second ballot, and is now the Premier of our province.

So has his ascent to the top job in our government signaled a meaningful change in the Alberta government?

By all accounts, Mr. Stelmach comes by his nickname honestly, if you will pardon the pun. He is reputed to be forthright and dependable, and free

of the nastiness and spite that sometimes characterized his predecessor.

We had no response to our invitation to the leadership candidates to meet or share their platforms for the benefit of HSAA members. Mr. Stelmach was no exception, though he did respond to our congratulatory letter after his election.

In the mandate letters provided to each of his Ministers, the Premier gives an indication of direction. There are a number of encouraging signs in these instructions, which include:

"public service renewal initiatives; access to quality, affordable child care options;

[con't on pg 2](#)

### Advertising Blitz Targets Flagstaff EMS Impasse

As the Challenger was going to print, HSAA was gearing up for a strike vote among ambulance employees in Flagstaff County. For the last ten months, HSAA has been trying to bargain a first contract for ambulance staff. The County has been dragging its heels and has refused to agree to an on-call rate, something that exists in every unionized ambulance contract in the province.

In contrast, after just one day of bargaining, HSAA reached a tentative contract for its ambulance members in Wainwright. The Municipal District of Wainwright and the County of Flagstaff share a common border, yet their

administrations are poles apart in their willingness to treat their ambulance staff with dignity and respect.

HSAA ran full page advertisements in several newspapers and ads on radio stations encouraging citizens of Flagstaff County to pressure their local politicians to help settle this dispute. HSAA considers a strike as a very last resort. What it wants are meaningful negotiations that lead to a fair contract. Check our website ([www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca)) for updates.

## Does this Emperor have Clothes? [con't from pg 1](#)

an updated plan to expand long term care and improve standards of care; a Housing Task Force to develop a plan to increase the availability of affordable housing”

Health and Wellness Minister Dave Hancock’s mandate reads as follows:

- Implement health care productivity reforms and long term sustainability initiatives in consultation with health care professionals and regional health authorities.
- Implement a comprehensive workforce strategy to secure and retain the health professionals needed over the next 10 years.
- Implement a new pharmaceutical strategy to improve the management of government drug expenditures to ensure that Albertans have access to sustainable government drug coverage.
- Strengthen public health services that promote wellness and injury and disease prevention and provide preparedness for public health emergencies.

Mr. Hancock’s mandate may be the most directly relevant to health care workers, and we are seeking to meet with him to encourage him to meet that mandate within a public context. In HSAA’s 2006 Quality Working Environment Survey, staffing was confirmed to be the most important single issue, and we will emphasize the workforce strategy, which we have been urging both the federal and provincial governments to pursue for years. In addition to our continued support of the PUBLIC health care system, we will advocate for its enhancement. While the policy directions are encouraging, other aspects

of Mr. Stelmach’s young leadership are less so. Unfortunately his stated intention of being more inclusive is not borne out by his cabinet selections, which include only two women, few urban MLAs, and not a single member of a visible minority. The aborted fundraiser, which would have given preferential access to the Premier for a mere \$5000, cannot be dismissed as inexperience – he has been a Member of the Legislature since 1993, and held four Ministry positions in the Klein government. Direction to the President of the Treasury Board to “Review options for identifying and managing more capital projects through the use of alternative financing models” suggest that privatization is not dead. And finally, his rejection of an oil sands development moratorium will likely make the achievement of many of his laudable goals impossible.

There is much work ahead for HSAA and its allies. We will support positive and constructive initiatives, but will not hesitate to challenge those that threaten quality public services and our communities. We will be watching to see if this emperor has clothes.

In Solidarity  
Elisabeth R. Ballermann

### ***HSAA WINS DISMISSAL ARBITRATION - EMPLOYER DID NOT USE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE***

HSAA recently won an arbitration decision in the Palliser Health Region, where an employee was dismissed for alleged insubordination and unprofessional conduct. HSAA successfully argued that, even though some discipline may have been warranted in the circumstances, the fact was that the employer in this case did not utilize the accepted process of progressive discipline. The

grievor was reinstated with back pay of sixteen months, but was issued a two-week suspension. This decision is important in that it reiterates to employers the need to follow a system of progressive discipline for rehabilitative purposes, so that employees can be alerted to the importance of improving their performance or face potential discharge.



# FEEDBACK

## WHY DO I NEED A SOCIAL WORKER?

The question I am asked so many times in a day... "Why Do I Need a Social Worker?" Here is a snapshot of my day and the many things social workers do, many of which could never fit into a job description.

I start out my day at 8:00 listening to phone messages and checking my latest emails, entering my stats from the day before into the computer. To start off the morning I go to rounds on my unit where we discuss the discharges for the day and any issues with patients that need to be addressed. This is where I get to plan my day based on the priority of the cases on my caseload and where I pick up new referrals.

During my day I see patients and their families for a number of different reasons. I link patients and their families with community resources and provide support around illness adjustment and grief and loss. Patients are seen for substance abuse and addictions issues, financial needs, housing options, domestic violence and child/elder abuse. I am called in to provide crisis intervention and to assess family dynamics. I arrange family meetings and act as a liaison between the medical team and patients. I talk with families about legal matters (guardianship, personal directives etc.) and help them make decisions about care at the end of



life. I occasionally get a case where I coordinate the return of a patient to their home country or province. I try to be a strong advocate for my patients; often testing the very "system" we are all a part of.

Every day is different in my job and you never know what might be waiting for you when you arrive in the morning. You quickly learn to "not take your work home with you" and I lean on other social workers for their expertise when I feel emotionally drained. The job itself can be mentally exhausting but comes with the reward of knowing you have made a difference with a patient and their family. When I go home at 4:30 I am thankful for my family and the life that I have. When I return tomorrow and am asked "Why Do I Need a Social Worker?" I know I will have an answer.

Heather Pyper BSW, RSW  
Foothills Medical Centre  
Calgary Health Region

(Editor's note: If you would like to share your thoughts about the work you do, or better still, if you know of an HSAA member who is involved in their community, please contact David Kirkham in the Edmonton office. (davidk@hsaa.ca)

### Getting Involved In Your Union

Here is a great way to become more involved with HSAA. Become a committee member. Your union has several standing committees. There is bound to be a committee that interests you. The committees are: finance, members' benefits, bylaws & resolutions/policy, elections/credentials, public

relations/communications, events, occupational health & safety, and political action/education.

If you are interested in serving on a committee, send us a letter explaining why. Letters should be sent to Nancy Beattie in the Edmonton office by May 25, 2007.

### *HSAA Welcomes New Members in Killam*

On January 24, HSAA was awarded the bargaining certificate to represent eight professional/technical employees at the Killam General Hospital. These include five CLXTs (Combined Laboratory X-Ray

Technologists), a Health Record Technician, a Recreation Therapist, and a Dietitian. HSAA welcomes you and looks forward to representing you in the years ahead.

## HSAA Congratulates Nancy Littke as APA President

HSAA congratulates Nancy Littke for her appointment as president of the Alberta Physiotherapy Association (APA). Nancy is only the second APA director representing the public practice sector of Alberta's physical therapists to hold the President's position. Nancy recently served for four years as the APA's Public Practice Committee Chair. She lives in Olds, and has worked as the sole charge physical therapist at the Sundre Hospital for 17 years. Previously, Nancy worked in several other rural hospitals, and in home care in Edmonton.

In making the announcement in December, the APA said,

"She brings extensive experience in administration and involvement in volunteer boards and committees at the local, national, and international level and has lectured on

sport related injuries in archery in several countries. She currently sits on two standing committees in the International Archery Federation, the Medical and Sports Science committee and the Youth Development committee. She also represents the Alberta Physiotherapy Association on the Grant MacEwan College Physical Therapy Assistant Advisory Committee."

HSAA applauds Nancy's dedication to her discipline and the community at large. Nancy has set a great example for other HSAA members to become involved in their professional associations. We should note that several HSAA members sit on the executive boards of a number of professional associations/colleges.

### No Initiation Fee For New Members in Existing Units

The HSAA Board has decided to drop the initiation fee for new members in existing bargaining units. The \$2.00 fee will only be collected during organizing drives. Employees in existing bargaining units will still have to

fill out an application to become a member, but there will no longer be a fee. This policy takes effect on March 1, 2007.

### Annual Labour School a Great Experience

The Annual Labour School, jointly facilitated by the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, was held in Jasper from January 22nd to February 2nd. The school, held in late January to February for a two-week period each year, provides week-long courses in topics such as labour law, labour history, collective bargaining, human rights, arbitration, economics, health & safety, and many others. It also provides the opportunity to meet activists from other unions, to share information and ideas, to discuss common concerns, and to build friendships.

Labour History was my course choice from the 2007 school lineup. I know, most people groaned when they had to go to history class in high school, and for someone to actually ask to go to a history class when they don't have to boggles the mind! But really, it was a great course. You may still think that a history course would be a yawner, but you would be surprised how interesting it was. Have you ever heard someone say it is hard to see where you are going if you don't know where you have been. I could not agree more.

Did you know that child labour was commonplace in Canada during the early 1900's? Or that an employer used to have the legal right to beat an employee as long as he was not permanently injured? We have come a long way but many workers in the world still work in the poor conditions we fought against prior to WWII.

As a final note, a portion of your union dues is used to send our members to conferences, courses, and workshops. Raise your hand when HSAA offers these opportunities to us, and make an effort to attend the Annual Labour School in the future. It is well worth it. By empowering our membership with knowledge, we can bring about positive changes locally, nationally and globally.

For more information on the history of labour in Canada, visit [www.labourhistory.ca](http://www.labourhistory.ca)

Todd Ball,  
Paramedic, Grande Prairie

# DISABILITY MANAGEMENT

## 1. What is disability management?

Disability management is an active process of minimizing the impact of an impairment on the individual's capacity to participate competitively in the work environment.

## 2. Why disability management?

Historically, employers' initial motivations were no doubt purely monetary. Although we take them for granted today, disability benefits, including sick leave, are actually a relatively new phenomenon in workplaces, having become widely available only in the 1960's and 70's. The monetary history of these benefits is that they have become more and more expensive.

Part of the reason for that monetary history is that disabled workers were left to deal with third parties to their place of employment - doctors, insurance company reps, WCB Case Managers, etc.. Employers often stood on the side lines. Workers often saw no reason to keep in touch with work. The result was that workers were often away from work for longer than need be, and sometimes never returned to jobs they would have been capable of doing given proper accommodation.

There is now widespread consensus between employers, labour, and healthcare providers that an active role for the employer can reduce disability duration, to the benefit of the employer, the disabled worker, and coworkers.

## 3. Making it work

There is a lot of very nice theory about disability management. In the literature, the processes and results

sound almost utopian. The practical reality is somewhat different.

Often line managers with no real grounding in what they are supposed to be doing are placed in the front line of managing the process. They often misunderstand what the process is about. We get many complaints from members about attendance awareness policy discussions with managers who make their workers feel like fraud artists. Another common complaint is that managers ask for more medical information than they are entitled to. HSAA has seen many of the best written attendance awareness policies undermined by the failure to properly educate and reinforce with line managers the real purpose of the policies.

Sadly, in some places, there are really no policies at all, or what is in place is not followed consistently.

When we are informed of policy developments, HSAA works with employers to try to ensure that policies are written to ensure appropriate roles for all parties. In particular, we try to assert a role for HSAA in the development of Return to Work proposals. Ideally, we would be working with employers on an ongoing basis to get good policies in place, and then follow up on them on a regular basis to make sure they are working. Members must play a key role in this regard. If new policies show up in your workplace, call your LRO to make sure that they have been informed about the policy. If a policy is in place, but not working the way you think it should, let us know about that too.

Doug Fischer  
Labour Relations Officer

## Timing is Everything When Claiming Licensing Fees

Timing is Everything When Claiming Licensing Fees  
Among the items that can be claimed under the Professional Development Allocation (PDA) are licensing fees. Some members have had their claims rejected because they have submitted their expenses at the wrong time. Each region/employer may follow different rules. You should contact your human resources department to find out when to submit the claim. Make a note of this deadline in your collective agreement.

For example, a physical therapist's licensing year is January 1 to December 31, and employees are required to pay their fees by December 1. A physical therapist in Capital Health must submit their claim between January 1 and March 31 (the end of the PDA fiscal year). There is a grace period of 60 days after the end of the fiscal year to submit all claims. The final deadline is May 31.

Jodie Zaplotinsky  
Labour Relations Officer

The Alberta Labour Relations Board has ruled that sixteen Mental Health Therapists (MHTs) and two Clinical Supervisors employed by East Central Health are properly included in the HSAA paramedical professional bargaining unit, even though all 18 employees have an educational background and current registration as Registered Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses. The Board decided that the primary functions of these employees, which are to provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental health patients, are paramedical professional functions rather than direct nursing care

functions, and that the community of interest of these MHTs is more closely associated with their MHT colleagues with a social work or psychologist background.

HSAA is now in the process of negotiating with East Central for the integration of the employees into the HSAA collective agreement. HSAA does not plan to file any further determinations for MHTs in other health regions until the wage issues are provincially addressed. A copy of the decision can be found at [www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca).

## Calgary Health Region Changes Parking Policy

After a number of discussions, the Calgary Health Region has decided not to impose parking charges for all employees in HSAA who require a vehicle for work purposes.

This means that for new and previously employed HSAA employees of the Calgary Health Region who have been determined to require a vehicle to do their job (this requirement is essential), there will be no charge while parking at their home site. The region will discontinue its new practice.

The charges were removed on January 26, 2007. If you have questions on this issue, please contact the Calgary office.

We will ensure that language in the contract is addressed in the next round of bargaining.

Bryan Randall  
Labour Relations Officer

## HSAA Launches New Public Awareness Campaign

A radio campaign is underway across the province to highlight the importance of Health Sciences disciplines. The ads use common nursery rhymes to raise public awareness of the role of Health Sciences members in our health care system. The ads are being broadcast from February 12 to March 4 on the following radio stations:

- Calgary: Country 105 (105.1 FM), Lite 96 (95.9 FM)
- Central Alberta: CFCW (790 AM)
- Edmonton: Magic 99 (99.3 FM), CISN Country (103.9 FM), EZ Rock (104.9 FM)
- Fort McMurray: CJOK (93.3 FM), CKYX (97.9 FM)
- Grande Prairie: SUN FM (97.7 FM), CJXX (93.1 FM)
- Lethbridge: CFRV The River (107.7 FM), CHLB (country 95.5 FM)
- Medicine Hat: CHAT (94.5 FM), CFMY (96.1 FM)
- Red Deer: CKGY (95.5 FM)

If you haven't heard the ads, visit our website at [www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca)

## DKML Organizing Update

Readers may recall that the stars were aligned against us in our 2006 efforts to organize a union at Dynacare Kasper Medical Laboratories (DKML). One sign that the stars may be moving into more favourable alignment is that our labour relations officers are receiving calls from unhappy DKML employees. Not a lot of calls, but enough to let us know that there is still interest in unionization.

This month, we mailed the Challenger to DKML employees at base lab and collection sites who supported our organizing drive. We would like to stay in touch with these employees and encourage them to contact us if they have issues they would like to discuss with us.

For the latest on Health Sciences' organizing activities, visit [www.strongertogether.ca](http://www.strongertogether.ca) or our main website [www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca)

Doug Meggison  
Policy Analyst



Canadian Association  
Physiotherapy  
Association      Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie

**Alberta Physiotherapy Association**

### DISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF APA MEMBERSHIP!

The Alberta Physiotherapy Association is a strong, unified and recognized voice for PTs in Alberta, communicating effectively within and outside the profession. We advocate on behalf of PTs and are a leading stakeholder in policy development and service delivery for physical rehab in Alberta. We celebrate the diversity of PT practice, promoting and marketing the profession and enhancing opportunities for professional development. Our members are our strength.

For further information, please visit our website at <http://www.albertaphysio.org/join/join.html> or contact the APA Office Toll-free at 877-431-0569

*"With a unified voice, the Alberta Physiotherapy Association supports, promotes, educates and advocates on behalf of the profession to enhance the practice of physiotherapy in Alberta."*



PHYSIOTHERAPY.  
IT'LL MOVE YOU.

## Help Us Help You

It has come to our attention that a number of HSAA members are modifying their work schedules without signing proper agreements and working overtime without proper compensation. The provincial contract allows for a modified work day (Article 45) as long as there is a written agreement between the employer and employee. Article 45 places limits on the number of consecutive hours worked in a day and in the cycle of a shift schedule. These limits are in place to ensure the health and safety of employees.

Modified work schedules are designed to provide flexibility for both the employer and employee. However, when members agree to unwritten side deals they run the risk of creating unsafe and unhealthy work environments. And when they agree to work overtime without proper compensation, they undermine HSAA's ability to bargain effectively. This ultimately hinders all Health Sciences members in achieving a fair contract.

This behaviour is occurring as HSAA meets with employers to discuss the *Creating a Quality Work Environment survey*. The number one issue raised in this survey is lack of staff and heavy workload. How can HSAA be taken seriously when some members agree to work additional shifts at straight time? How can HSAA be taken seriously when employers rely on the so-called "goodwill" of our members? This behaviour does nothing to solve staff shortages and heavy workload. In fact, it encourages employers to avoid hiring the staff necessary for a quality work environment.

HSAA will be contacting employers in an attempt to end this practice. If we are unsuccessful, we will file policy grievances. It is important that this issue is addressed for the benefit of all Health Sciences members.

John Vanderkaay  
Director of Labour Relations



Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses To:  
10212 - 112 Street Edmonton, AB T5K 1M4

## HSAA EVENTS

Winter/Spring Workshops (see [www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca) for details)

### *Duty To Accommodate:*

February 27 Edmonton, March 1 Calgary

### *Bullying In The Workplace:*

March 7 Calgary, March 14 Edmonton

### *Pension/Retirement Planning:*

March 8 Edmonton, March 15 Calgary

### *Employee Management Advisory Committee:*

March 20 Red Deer

### *Ace The Interview:*

March 22 Calgary, March 29 Edmonton

### *Balancing Work And A Young Family:*

April 17 Edmonton, April 24 Calgary

### *The Sandwich Generation:*

April 18 Calgary, April 25 Edmonton

### *Annual General Meeting*

May 24-25, 2007 – Edmonton

Special Guest Speaker: **Stephen Lewis, former United Nations special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa.**

Visit [www.hsaa.ca](http://www.hsaa.ca) for details and watch for the AGM booklet in the mail in April.

### *Occupational Health Safety & Wellness Conference*

October 4-5, 2007 - Edmonton

### *Labour Relations Conference*

November 2-3, 2007 - Calgary

## Events and Conferences

### *February is Psychology Month*

A seminar on how to use psychology as a component of health and to make it a part of every day life will be held on February 28 at NAIT in Edmonton. For details visit [www.psychologistsassociation.ab.ca](http://www.psychologistsassociation.ab.ca)

### *International Women's Day*

March 8 is International Women's Day. Events are being held across Alberta and around the world. Visit [www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com) or contact the Alberta Federation of Labour.

### *Public Interest Alberta Calls for Democratic Renewal*

Public Interest Alberta (PIA), an advocacy group supported by HSAA, is holding public forums across the province to discuss the need for democratic renewal in Alberta. PIA's eight public forums will be held in Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Athabasca, Edmonton, Camrose, Calgary and Grande Prairie. For dates and information visit [www.pialberta.org](http://www.pialberta.org)

### *World Social Work Day*

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has declared March 27 as World Social Work Day 2007. The IFSW is working to have World Social Work Day approved by the United Nations. The IFSW website is [www.ifsw.org](http://www.ifsw.org)

### *Alberta Federation of Labour Bi-annual Convention*

May 10-13, Calgary

HSAA will sponsor six members to attend the convention. Those interested in attending should contact Cheryl Drummond in the Edmonton office by March 2. For more information, visit the AFL website at [www.afl.org](http://www.afl.org)

### *Prairie School for Union Women 2007*

June 17-21, 2007, Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is holding this four day school at the Waskesiu in Prince Albert National Park. For more information, email [sfl.debbie@sasktel.net](mailto:sfl.debbie@sasktel.net) HSAA will sponsor two female members to attend the school. Those interested should contact Roni Hermanutz in the Edmonton office by March 2.

### *NUPGE Convention*

June 22-24, 2007, Fredericton, New Brunswick

HSAA will sponsor two members. Those interested in attending should contact Cheryl Drummond in the Edmonton office by February 23. Visit the NUPGE website [www.nupge.ca](http://www.nupge.ca)

