



Statement on Nurses Week 2014

Nursing Week is celebrated each year throughout Canada and the world during the week of Florence Nightingale's birthday on May 12. This is a time to recognize the dedication and achievements of nurses that contribute to excellence in health care and to increase awareness among the public and government of the issues and challenges all health care workers face.

Unifor appreciates that there are many health care workers who deliver front-line care in Canada. In addition to nurses, this includes personal support workers, continuing care attendants, and health care aides, all of whom have risen to the challenge of caring for patients in a variety of settings with increasingly complex care needs. We commit to supporting all nurses and other care givers, who are essential to meet the current and future needs of our aging population and to provide competent and skilled care with dignity and compassion, including the women and men who provide an ever-increasing amount of unpaid care, as services are moved out of the in-patient system to the home.

Unifor recognizes the risk of ever-present occupational disease and injuries challenging all health care workers. They regularly face exposure to communicable diseases, chronic short-staffing, increasing patient acuity, and escalating situations of violence which have become all too common in our workplaces. We recommit to ensuring that prevention strategies are a priority and will actively challenge both government and employers to create safer workplaces.

Our union acknowledges that while we celebrate the contribution of nurses during Nurses Week, they ultimately practice as an important part of an entire team of dedicated health care providers. Without the support and contribution of other allied personnel in the operation of our health care facilities, it would be impossible for nurses to provide such skilled, dedicated care. But far too many health care workers, including nurses are subject to a precarious work environment where they must work two or more part time jobs to earn a decent standard of living.

Our union recognizes the need to respect the contribution of nurses and other health care workers by ensuring fair and equitable employment conditions and we will actively resist government pressure for a compensation freeze, which ultimately does nothing to benefit our struggling economy. Enhancing their working conditions will benefit everyone who is touched by our health care system.

In this time of economic upheaval and uncertainty, Canadians rely on their health care system more than ever and so we commit to deepening our fight to defend the principles of the Canada Health Act and expanding its scope to include pharmacare, home care and long-term care.