

what's **nu?**

May 2020



Frontline **FACES**

**The Realities
of Confronting
COVID-19**

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President's Notebook

Janet Hazelton, BScN RN, MPA

Too Soon to Let Our Guard Down

It is an understatement to say that the circumstances of the last few months have been surreal. Nova Scotia has been relentlessly hit, blow after blow, leaving us numb and sometimes at a loss for words. We've been struck by blatant and brutal tragedies on top of an unforgiving pandemic.

There has been unimaginable heartbreak in our province and widespread sorrow, some directly related to the virus. Loneliness in isolation, lost celebrations, loss of income and opportunity, lacking childcare services, the inability to properly mourn together, and so much more have been harmful side effects of COVID-19.

Our rally cry, Nova Scotia Strong, is the mantra of a dreadful year that's not yet half over. But it is also a reminder of our long history of resilience and our ability to collectively pick up the pieces and forge ahead. Something nurses are adept at doing and more than capable of achieving as we face down this obstacle.

Since the inception of COVID-19, life has changed dramatically, including our nursing practice. Though we are well educated and most often prepared to deal with the unexpected, no one could have anticipated this new reality.

Throughout our nursing careers we've understood where and when the risk of infection loomed, allowing us to respond and adapt. Now, with the discovery of this insidious virus, it's vitally important that we be on our guard.

Gone, at least for now, are the days of handshakes, hugs and hockey. Society has placed emphasis on designer masks, Lysol wipes, cashless checkouts, toilet paper and virtual gatherings. Phrases like social distancing, stay-at-home, self-isolate, bubbles, and zoom-bombing have become part of our everyday vernacular.

Although these are early days, we have learned valuable lessons about contamination and containment, stockpiling PPE and safe staffing. Much is being said about an inevitable second wave of the virus, which means we must focus our attention on phase-two planning.

Long before the NSNU released a report on issues in long term care, *Broken Homes*, the NSNU and other organizations worried about staffing ratios and care team models, hours of care, and numerous other concerns in that sector. When we released our report in 2016, we had high hopes that reform was in the cards and that conditions would indeed improve. Now, COVID-19 has brought to light

many of the shortcomings in long term care.

As witnessed across the country and here in Nova Scotia, once this disease takes hold in a long-term care facility, its grip is formidable, and the results can be devastating. At the time this newsletter went to print, close to 60 residents at Northwood Halifax Campus had succumbed to COVID-19.

There are numerous factors that contributed to the rate of infection and mortality at Northwood, which is the largest LTC facility east of Montreal. This older facility, like others, has shared rooms, hundreds of workers, and many visitors. And, like all nursing homes, a higher rate of acuity than in years gone by.



Signs showing our support for Northwood pepper the properties of both organizations



The Northwood campus in downtown Halifax is the epicentre of the province's biggest COVID-19 outbreak

Had it not been for nurses and others who were deployed or recruited to work at Northwood and other clinics, the situation could have been unmanageable. It is important to acknowledge those who went to Northwood, the epicentre of Nova Scotia's COVID-19 map, and contributed so much. That is the epitome of the caring professions.

Once this crisis has passed, we as a nation must commit to an inquiry into long term care. Until such time, we must concentrate on the second wave and the prospect that many more people could become infected. We must review our staffing models so that long term care and other areas of care have the health human resources required to sustain another outbreak.

In the meantime, we should acknowledge all the individuals, businesses, NSNU locals, and other organizations that rallied to support Northwood and other facilities with gestures of food, warm drinks, gifts and other inspirational acts and words of kindness.

We, like all Nova Scotians, grieve with the families who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. We stand with our fellow NSNU members and other workers at Northwood who lost residents, many of whom they'd known for years and were like family members. Their grief is real.

We need time to heal and time to regroup, catch our breath, and rebound from the turmoil of the last several months.

With that said, we can be proud of our frontline teams across all economic, service and care sectors – those who kept the world on its axis during the first wave of this pandemic. Our teams on the ground tested more people per capita than most other provinces. Our assessment centres and labs did an outstanding job of acquiring and turning around test results. We cannot forget this important work and the extraordinary efforts of all health care workers.

As the number of cases and deaths due to COVID decrease and

governments open-up our economy and lift restrictions, we cannot be reckless. We must not let our guard down. The temptation to travel, meet with family and friends, shop, dine out and return to some degree of normalcy is understandable. However, we must continue to exercise caution and make informed decisions until more is known about this illness. We must use moderation in resuming our old routines.

It is critical that the Nurses' Union continues to apply pressure so that members can safely practice. We will continue to advocate for safe working environments, PPE, safe staffing, occupational health and safety standards that address all aspects of disease and injury prevention, while keeping all lines of communication open.

We are committed to protecting our frontline. We thank you, our members, for your commitment and courage as we work through this challenging time. We're in this together.

NSNU Office Remains Closed

The NSNU office was closed in March in compliance with public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As many of these measures are still in place, the office will remain closed for the time-being. As much as possible, staff are working from home and visitors are prohibited from entering the building.

Some staff do work from the office on occasion, as the need arises, but this is sporadic and only a maximum of five people at any given time are allowed in the building.

As this situation evolves, the NSNU will continue to keep members informed via e-memo, newsletter, social media and on our dedicated COVID-19 webpage, nsnu.ca/coronavirus.

If you wish to speak to a labour relations representative or another NSNU team member visit our website for contact information at nsnu.ca/staff, call 902-469-1474 / 1-800-469-1474, or email nsnu.office@nsnu.ca.

Events Postponed and Cancelled

As members know, most events have been cancelled or postponed, including the NSNU Annual General Meeting and the Canadian Labour Congress convention. When these events have been rescheduled, we will communicate that information.

NSNU would like to thank members for their understanding and cooperation during this time.

Offering a Helping Hand

Tracy d'Entremont is an NSNU member employed by VON Yarmouth. At her home base in the southernmost tip of the province, the impact of COVID-19 has not been harshly felt, prompting her to answer the call when Northwood Halifax Campus sought volunteers to assist with their severe outbreak.

A reduction in her caseload due to the pandemic meant that she was able to consider the option to stay and work in Halifax without impacting clients in her region. She knew that the risks were high, given the extent of the outbreak, and that safety precautions would be paramount.

The community care nurse accepted that the setting, staff, residents and the city would be unfamiliar but that most of the work itself would be within her scope of practice. Supports put in place to welcome recruits have gone as smoothly as possible.

"The first few days were nerve wrecking and sad, and the layers of PPE made me feel numb," says d'Entremont, who describes the initial experience as mentally exhausting.

The decision to volunteer to work at the beleaguered long-term care facility came after much introspection, questioning and discussion with her VON employer and her family.

"I left behind my husband, my children and friends, whom I miss. I've been worried for my daughter and her in-laws in Ontario who are recovering for COVID-19. And, naturally, I've been concerned about



NSNU VP Community Care, Tracy d'Entremont, volunteers at Northwood

my own exposure, even though I do feel that I have protected myself to the best of my abilities."

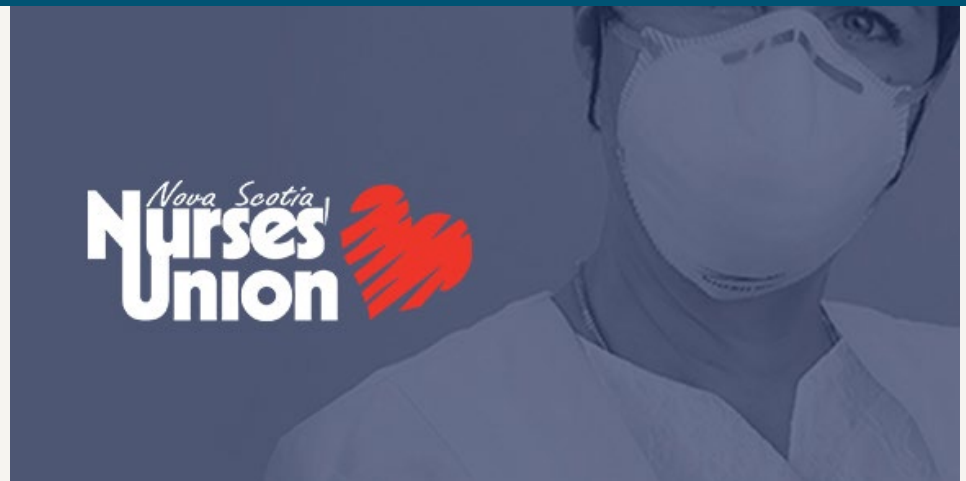
Tracy, like many others, gave up a clean bill of health in an area with no known cases to join the fight against an invisible enemy. She says it has been a valuable professional experience and the rewards have been plentiful.

"This experience has reminded me of how fragile life is. Also, that difficult times can bring out the best in people. Everyone has been amazing and supportive."

The contributions that Tracy and others have made during this traumatic and turbulent time in Northwood's long history will forever be appreciated and remembered.

COVID-19

Keeping NSNU Members Informed



Once Nova Scotia grasped the imminent threat of a pandemic, the NSNU, like employers, began providing members with information to adapt to the realities of working during a pandemic.

Your labour relations representatives have been fielding countless calls and emails about COVID-19 while also tending to general inquiries, college complaints, grievances and arbitrations.

In order to keep you up to date, staff and your president, Janet Hazelton, have been engaged in daily virtual meetings and conference calls.

President Hazelton has been in daily-to-weekly talks with your Board of Directors, government, other health care unions, our national affiliates, your employers, and has conducted numerous media interviews with local and national news agencies.

The NSNU developed a COVID-19 webpage on nsnu.ca and created the Escape webpage to help members with fatigue and stress related to the pandemic. We have regularly posted content on our social media platforms and our MyNSNU app, distributed multiple e-memos each week, held Telephone Town Halls (Union Calling events), and began

Facebook Live panel discussions. The NSNU produced video messages for members and we redesigned our National Nursing Week campaign to reflect the current situation.

This is the second newsletter that NSNU has produced since the onset of the pandemic.

In the coming months, the NSNU will monitor the needs of members to determine the volume of information we distribute as well as the frequency. We thank you for your feedback and appreciate any information you may share with us in the future.



Recognizing that there is a higher degree of pressure on the job, and perhaps at home, the NSNU has developed a webpage to offer some escapism and relaxation.

The webpage allows members to step away from our current situation and engage, for a few minutes or even hours, in non work-related

virtual activities. The NSNU Escape webpage has something for everyone.

It is important to take a break, find a distraction, and relax, as best you can. This page is dedicated to giving nurses, and others, a break from the rigors of the job during heightened stress, workload and anxiety.

Please enjoy the videos, music, recipes, virtual tours, quotes and other activities. Some of the content automatically refreshes, while staff will seek out new content as it is available. If you have suggestions for items that could be added to this page to improve user experience, please send your ideas to nsnu.office@nsnu.ca.

Protect NS Frontline

In mid-April, the NSNU, other health care unions, and unions representing other essential workers launched a public campaign to help secure the supply and accessibility of personal protective equipment.

From the onset of the pandemic, our priority has been to effectively respond to the valid concerns of workers on the frontlines where safety is not negotiable.

Access to personal protective equipment has been the topic of conversation around the globe. Without the right equipment, workers and the public are being put into harm's way.

The Nova Scotian unions followed the lead of Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick where provincial governments signed formal agreements to ensure adequate health and safety controls for

frontline workers, and allowing health care professionals to use their clinical judgement to determine the controls necessary in the line of duty.

The campaign, *Protect NS Frontline*, is a joint effort by NSNU, CUPE Nova Scotia, IUOE, NSGEU and Unifor who collectively represent more than 40,000 frontline workers. The microsite contains important information and a letter campaign.

As some restrictions ease, and as the number of COVID-19 positive cases in Nova Scotia decline, we must not become complacent. We must remain vigilant in order to ensure that we have an ample supply of PPE should we encounter a second wave of the virus in the coming months.

Visit protectnsfrontline.ca.



Keep health care workers safe, so they can care for all of us.

Give them the protective equipment they need.








Masks with a Message

ORDER FACE MASKS FROM CFNU!



Whether you're shopping or travelling, masks are likely to be a part of our everyday lives going forward.

Now NSNU locals or individual members can order these non-medical face masks designed specifically for nurses. The masks are available in two designs, exclusively for CFNU member organizations, at the cost of production - \$8 per mask.

To order, fill out your form to reserve masks for you or your local and return it to CFNU. All orders are direct to CFNU and shipping is free. Please note, these masks are not intended for use in a medical setting.

A link to the form is available at nsnu.ca/coronavirus.



A Special Thank You

The NSNU would like to sincerely thank Janis Ritcey for working with the union during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

When not working in Day Surgery at the Dartmouth General Hospital, Janis managed to spare several hours each week to assist our labour relations staff with the overflow of inquiries, mostly related to pandemic preparedness, PPE and general labour relations.

During that time, the NSNU experienced a much higher-than-

normal volume of calls and email from members who had many valid questions and concerns about this unprecedented crisis.

Janis, an experienced nurse and labour savvy activist, was able to provide much needed support.

As president of the NSNU DGH local, she has a lot on her plate. Accepting the NSNU request to help service our members was very generous and typical of her nature.

Thank you, Janis.



In Memory of Heather

On April 18th and 19th, twenty-two innocent Nova Scotians lost their lives at the hands of a gunman who

terrorized victims, including an NSNU member, Heather O'Brien.

The news of Heather's passing spread quickly throughout the close-knit community of the Victorian Order of Nurses, where she was employed. Their grief was compounded by the knowledge that a young mother and co-worker, Kristen Beaton, had also been murdered in the same killing spree.

Heather, a resident of Masstown, was a 55-year-old married nurse, mother of six and grandmother of 12, who had been working extra hours with the VON because of COVID-19 and was making plans the morning of her death to see friends and family when tragedy struck.

She worked for VON for over 16 years and loved her job with a passion. Heather was a healer who wanted to make the world a better place. As her obituary so lovingly stated, she was an incredible woman with a heart of gold.

The NSNU extends sincere and heartfelt condolences to both the O'Brien and Beaton families for their unthinkable loss. Our thoughts continue to be with their



Heather O'Brien

friends, loved ones, and their VON family who have been greatly affected.

NSNU VON locals across the province donated funds to the families of Heather and Kristen, an NSGEU member, to help ease some of their deep burdens.

My they rest in peace.



Correction

Earlier this year, it was reported in this publication that some members of the Board of Directors had not re-offered to run for their current board positions and had chosen to retire from the nursing profession.

This correction is intended to clarify that Ann Marie Murdock, long-standing Vice President of Northern Region, has not retired and will remain in her nursing post, providing excellent care to her patients and nursing leadership.

Although Ann Marie is not reoffering for the Board, we would like to thank her for her many years of service, and wish her well in her continued career.

Observing the Day of Mourning from a Distance

The National Day of Mourning is held every year on April 28th to remember those who were killed, injured or became ill due to workplace hazards. The event focuses on workplace safety, and the need to improve conditions to ensure these tragic events do not continue to happen.

In 2019, 22 Nova Scotians lost their lives due to their work. According to the Workers' Compensation Board, "five Nova Scotians died from acute traumatic injuries on the job. There were also 17 fatalities classified as chronic – 12 related to occupational diseases and five caused by health-related issues, such as heart attacks."

Day of Mourning provided our community at large an opportunity to mourn those losses, and recommit to fighting for the living.

Traditionally, Day of Mourning ceremonies are held in a public forum where people can mourn together, finding strength in the collective determination to make

things better. This year, families and organizations like the NSNU found ways to pay their respects without gathering in person.

Many people chose to honour those who were lost by lighting a candle and observing a moment of silence. The NSNU and others published virtual memorials on their websites and social media. Labour organizations posted using the hashtag #StopthePandemicAtWork,

calling attention to the dangers that workers contend with on the job that lead to these tragedies, including violence, employer neglect, and unsafe workplaces.

As always, we continue to emphasize the employer's obligation to ensure a safe and healthy workplace, and acknowledge workers' right to know, to participate, and to refuse unsafe work. One workplace death is one too many.



Year of the Nurse 2020

In honour of the 200th birthday of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale, 2020 was designated the Year of the Nurse by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

It's safe to say, this year has not turned out the way anyone expected. With more pressure on nurses than ever, a pandemic sweeping across the globe, and nurse deaths in the hundreds, the celebration we envisioned for 2020 has not been possible.

In light of this year's challenges, there have been discussions around extending Year of the Nurse through National Nursing Week in 2021. Although this has not yet been confirmed by the WHO, the NSNU and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions support this initiative. Nurses deserve to be celebrated all the time, not only in the midst of a global health crisis.

In the meantime, the NSNU is continuing to observe Year of the Nurse in the ways that we can. Our website is still home to a page dedicated to the event, our customized logo is still being used on various platforms, and we are still posting content on social media in recognition of nurses. Although all of our plans cannot go into effect, we hope nurses feel the gratitude and respect not only of your Union, but from the public as well.

Happy Year of the Nurse to all members of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union.

National Nursing Week 2020

We thank nurses for their commitment and courage, especially during these challenging times.

Please stay home to help them save lives.



#NationalNursingWeek2020



National Nursing Week 2020 took place from May 11-17. During the week, nurses were lauded for their hard work and dedication, in particular in the midst of a global pandemic and unprecedented challenges in the workplace.

Each year during NNW, the NSNU launches a campaign. It typically includes a theme around working conditions or nurses' professional practise. But during this unconventional year, the message extended to a broader audience by asking the public to stay home to help nurses save lives. The campaign included web content, shareables, print and digital advertising, and a new commercial that highlighted this important theme. You can view those materials on the NSNU website at nsnu.ca/nnw2020.

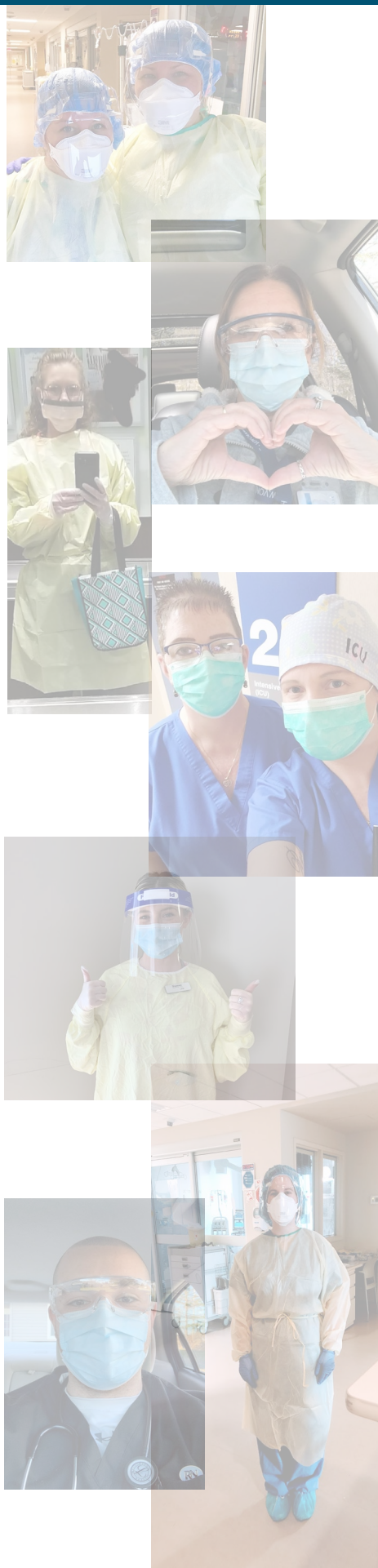
NSNU president Janet Hazelton also took time during NNW to speak to media outlets about the celebration, discussing some of the difficulties nurses have had to

overcome during the pandemic. She also recorded a message for NSNU members expressing our gratitude for your tireless work in these uncertain times.

"I've been a nurse for 36 years, and never have I seen such selflessness and support for those in need," she said. "It has been inspiring to witness nurses coming out of retirement to lend a helping hand, and others for agreeing to work with COVID positive patients."

She added, "Take comfort in knowing that the Nurses' Union is committed to working with you and for you. Nurses are the heart of NSNU."

You, as nurses, are more than just caregivers, you are advocates, and you should be acknowledged not only during Nursing Week, but all year round. Thank you to the more than 7,500 members of the NSNU for your courage and commitment to patient care.



A Subdued Nursing Week

National Nursing Week 2020 was unusual - one for the books. Not just because it's the Year of the Nurse and the public embraced the value of nurses like never before, but because nurses have had their work and their personal lives upended.

Prompted by the pandemic, some nurses engaged in deep and introspective self-dialogue, while others involved their families in difficult conversations about the risky nature of their work and its potential impact on family life.

Many nurses struggled with childcare issues or have loved ones who lost their jobs and steady income. Some have children, extended family and close friends whose career or educational plans have been disrupted. Many nurses lost loved ones and were left to grieve in isolation. Some nurses, like our colleagues at Northwood, lost residents who are like family. Their pain will be felt for many years.

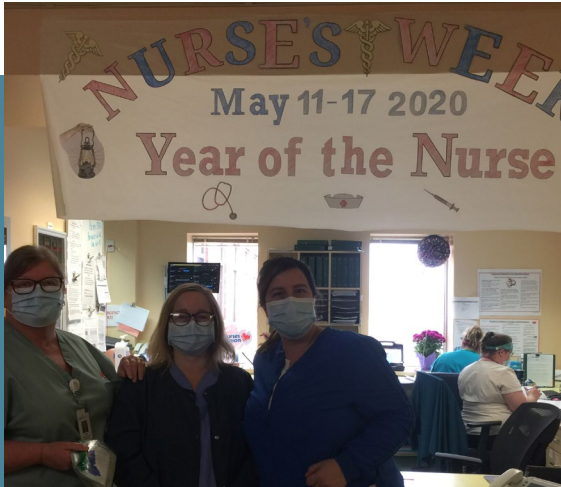
National Nursing Week is marked this year more on the calendar, than in our hearts. It wasn't easy to celebrate. Numerous Locals found different, yet meaningful ways to acknowledge Nursing Week, while others postponed their festivities for a later date. Businesses paid

homage to nurses this week with generous donations to show their gratitude. Some businesses quietly recognized Nursing Week by giving to foundations and charities that will have a long-term impact on the determinants of health, as well as the well-being of individuals, families and communities.

This year, celebrities, world leaders, small children and ordinary folks expressed sentiments for nurses usually reserved for military heroes. Though most nurses are not comfortable with comparisons to superheroes, it is because of your humble and steadfast commitment to our most vulnerable citizens that you deserve this badge of honour.

Nurses repeatedly and quietly demonstrate leadership and professionalism. You are protectors, healers and advocates for our weak and our fallen. For at least one week of the year, your compassion, optimism, skill and kindness should not go unnoticed.

In 2020, as the world says a collective "thank you" to nurses, who themselves say they signed up for the good and the bad aspects of nursing, pat yourselves on the back, take a bow, and please accept our genuine appreciation.



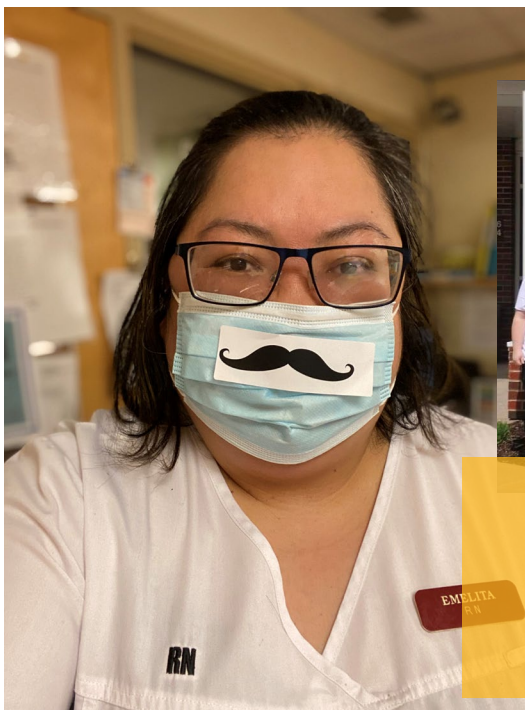
Nurses at the Aberdeen were treated to a Covid Care Kit by their Local executive.



Nurses from Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital and Harbourview Lodge pictured with their signs reading, "Stay Safe Save Lives".



Nurses from VON Cape Breton show off their beautiful Year of the Nurse sign




Top: The team at R.K. MacDonald Nursing Home show their support for each other and their fellow healthcare workers.

Left: R.K. nurse Emelita makes the most of the mandatory surgical mask policy.



Frontline FACES





Leadership and Practice Premiums during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult to access many activities that would contribute points towards your leadership and practice premium.

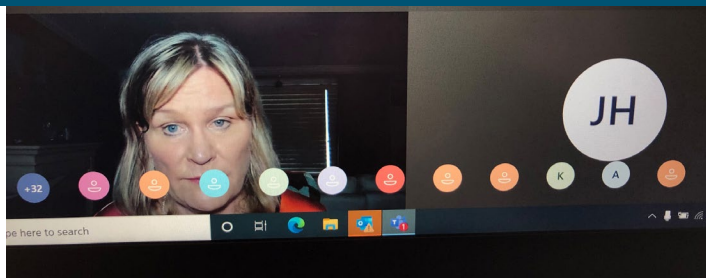
For the leadership premium, many conferences and research projects have been put on hold. However, it may be possible to maintain roles on committees and in professional associations if activities are run by teleconference or videoconference.

For the practice premium, it is worth remembering that there are online opportunities to gain premium points. We have some courses in the MyNSNU App (use your phone or device app, or visit nsnu.itacit.com) that are labeled as valid for practice premium points since they

were approved by the NSHA, and are typically acceptable to other employers as well. The Nova Scotia College of Nurses (nscn.ca), the Canadian Nurses Association (cna-aiic.ca) and other organizations also offer online learning. Remember, shorter courses can sometimes be combined to make up the 1-hour required for 5 practice premium points.

We recommend that you review the relevant section in your collective agreement, and check with a manager about the eligibility of an activity before participating.

Have a lead on a good source for online education? Send a note to Justin at justin.hiltz@nsnu.ca.



Janet participates in a Zoom classroom visit

NSNU President Speaks to Dalhousie Class Online

For students of all ages, the 2020 school year was interrupted in March as public health directives came down, prompting campus closures across the country and around the world. Schools shifted to online learning, and universities made significant changes to course structures to ensure students could continue with their studies and graduate on time.

On May 4th NSNU president Janet Hazelton joined one of those virtual classes for Dalhousie BScN students to discuss collective agreements and safe clinical practice guidelines for clinical hours to work. This was a particularly special event because for the first time, Janet was able to speak to nursing students from both the Halifax and Yarmouth campuses at the same time.

Although this was far from the traditional campus visits Janet is used to doing, she still enjoyed a great conversation with engaged students, and appreciated the opportunity to talk to them during this historic time.

Nursing Program Challenges During COVID-19

Due to the pandemic, most nursing clinicals were suspended by the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The Nova Scotia College of Nurses is working with universities to ensure that nursing students, in particular those graduating this year, will be prepared to enter the workforce, even with the interruptions to their education.

Another element that has been affected by COVID-19 is the NCLEX-RN exam. While some testing centres have remained open on a limited basis, access to testing has been delayed for many graduates. However, it remains mandatory for all new grads to complete this test before becoming licensed to practise.

We recognize that this is a hard time for all students, in particular new and soon-to-be graduates who are waiting to begin their careers that they have worked so hard for. We thank them for their patience, and for their determination to take on this rewarding career during these challenging times.

NSNU and CFNU Donate to Feed NS

Food insecurity is a challenge in Nova Scotia and across the country. Even in the best of times, there are thousands of Canadians who rely regularly on Food Banks to feed their families and access basic household and personal necessities.

During COVID-19, another pandemic has raged below the surface, as millions of people have lost their income. During these times, the demand for Food Banks has grown exponentially. That's why the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union and Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions chose to make a donation of \$5,000 to Feed Nova Scotia, to help them serve those most in need.

NSNU president Janet Hazelton was happy to host a virtual cheque presentation with Nick Jennery, Executive Director of Feed Nova Scotia, on April 7th.

In response to the donation, Jennery said: "Wow... what an incredibly thoughtful and generous donation. Your gift is so humbling given that you and your members are tackling your own difficult challenges on the front line. We are all so very grateful for what you are doing for so many. Your donation is also motivating for our team as we ramp up our support for communities in need, and help those who are most vulnerable. Thank you so much Janet and a big virtual hug to you and all your members for their kindness and generosity. Together we will get this done."

We hope others will consider donating to this and the many other organizations and charities that are facing challenges due to COVID-19.



Nick Jennery and Janet Hazelton video chat on April 7



Cross Country COVID-19 Check-In

As the country contends with the novel coronavirus, provinces have faced unique challenges as they seek to stamp out the virus. Our fellow provincial nurse unions have been speaking out on behalf of their members for improved access to personal protective equipment, and seeking better supports for nurses on the frontlines of care. This is a snapshot of the COVID-19 pandemic in CFNU member organization provinces.

New Brunswick

Cases of COVID-19 began to dwindle in New Brunswick in April, one of the earliest provinces to flatten the curve. With no new cases for a number of days, and no reported deaths, New Brunswick was one of the first provinces to begin the process of reopening to business and recreation.

Part of the success in New Brunswick was the result of an agreement between the province, the New Brunswick Nurses Union and other healthcare unions that enabled nurses to conduct point-of-care assessments to determine what PPE was needed on a case-by-case basis. Nurses were empowered to exercise their clinical judgement, and employers were required to have the appropriate PPE on hand for when it was needed. Similar agreements were signed in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Prince Edward Island

After taking an aggressive approach to managing COVID-19, Prince Edward Island is one of the provinces and territories to make it through the first wave of the illness with relatively few cases and no deaths. In total, about 30 residents were infected with the coronavirus, and all have since recovered.

During the height of the outbreak, the PEI Nurses Union spoke out about some of the work being done to ensure nurses were prepared to care for COVID patients. They refreshed their familiarity with donning and doffing specialized protective equipment, and ran scenarios to practice for the day when a COVID case would walk through the door.

Although PEI was short on PPE, like all provinces, the prep work done by nurses helped them to be confident that they were ready to handle whatever would come. That, along with casual and part-time nurses stepping up to take on more hours when needed, helped the province weather the storm.

Ontario

As one of the hardest hit provinces, Ontario has seen thousands of cases and almost 2,000 deaths as a result of COVID-19.

Early on, the Ontario Nurses Association began calling for an inquiry into the response at the province's long-term care homes, where the majority of outbreaks occurred. Heeding the concerns of the Union and other prominent voices, the provincial government announced they would be launching a commission to investigate the situation. The independent, non-partisan commission is expected to begin their work in September. To date, more than 1,400 long-term care residents in Ontario have succumbed to the virus.

Sadly, in May, ONA member Brian Beattie, an RN working in long term care, became the first nurse in Canada to pass away from the illness. He contracted COVID-19 at work – something that should never happen.

Newfoundland and Labrador

In the midst of the pandemic, the RNUNL was able to achieve a tentative agreement that reflected their value and contributions to the province. Newfoundland and Labrador sadly experienced three deaths, and a small case load of COVID-19, when compared to other provinces. Their nursing staff worked tirelessly to care for patients as they dealt with or died from the virus. This agreement will ensure that registered nurses in NL will receive fair compensation, while putting on hold further negotiations for bargaining in 2022.

A few of the contract highlights include a salary increase of 4% over the first 18 months of the 2-year extension, changes to the cost-sharing formula for group insurance benefits upon retirement, and discussions and studies on other issues of importance to nurses.

RNUNL members will vote on the tentative agreement in mid-June.

Manitoba

With fewer than 300 cases of COVID-19, Manitoba has withstood the pandemic better than most. Unfortunately, even with a lower case load, they have still suffered seven deaths from the illness.

Throughout the pandemic, the Manitoba Nurses Union has been vocal, speaking out for nurses and maintaining a consistent media presence to talk about issues important to healthcare workers. Like other provinces, the availability of PPE has been an issue in Manitoba, with nurses having limited access to equipment, and being asked to reuse surgical masks. The Union argued that nurses should be able to use their clinical judgement to decide when a mask was needed, and what kind of PPE was appropriate at any given time.

Even as cases wind down in that province, the Union continues to push for more transparency around PPE accessibility, and a measured approach as the province begins to reopen the economy and regular health services.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan has seen an unusual trend in their cases of COVID-19, with fewer cases in major city centres, and larger outbreaks in rural northern towns, in particular in First Nations communities. The province has taken a targeted approach to managing travel restrictions in recent weeks, focusing in on regions with more severe outbreaks, while simultaneously loosening restrictions on other parts of the province.

Although much of the focus has been on Northern communities, smaller outbreaks have occurred throughout the province, prompting concern from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. They called out the province for a lack of consultation in advance of making their plans to reopen the economy and some health services. They say most of their questions are going unanswered.

Since the outbreak began, Saskatchewan has had six deaths and approximately 600 cases.

Alberta

Like other provinces, nursing homes in Alberta have become epicentres of the COVID-19 outbreak. Nearly three-quarters of the province's coronavirus deaths have occurred in long-term care settings.

In May the government of Alberta announced a spending plan that would infuse the long-term care sector with an additional \$170 million in 2020, averaging out to \$14.2 million more per month. The money is intended to pay for more staff and extra cleaning as nursing homes contend with the virus.

By mid-May, Alberta had close to 7,000 cases of COVID-19, and had suffered almost 130 deaths. The province has started the process of re-opening the economy, despite still having hundreds of active cases, and new cases confirmed every day.

Quebec

Although the Fédération Interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ) is not a member of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, a COVID-19 update would not be complete without looking at the province hardest hit by the illness. With hundreds of new cases daily and more than 3,600 deceased in Quebec, Montreal has been the epicentre of the COVID crisis in Canada, and nurses in that province are among those most challenged by the pandemic.

Early on Quebec made changes to make it easier for essential workers to do their jobs, including bringing in childcare options. However, the burden has been compounded by more than 5,000 healthcare workers who have contracted COVID-19, taking them temporarily out of the workplace. The pressure left on

the remaining workers quickly became untenable as vacations were cancelled, part-time and casual workers were given full-time hours, and healthcare workers with immunocompromised family members were not exempted from working with COVID-positive patients.

In May, nurses began protesting outside the provincial legislature, claiming the government had not provided adequate PPE and that their rights were being violated. They were met with derision from the premier and others in council, demonstrating the lack of support from the top.

As Quebec rushes to open the economy outside of Montreal, the city remains the most significant outbreak in Canada.

Nurse practitioners step into new role in Emergency Department

Originally Published on May 14th by the IWK

At the end of March, the Emergency Department (ED) at the IWK divided into two spaces in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One space is devoted to caring for infectious patients and the other for non-infectious patients. With this setup, the health centre is well-prepared to safely respond to potential COVID-19 cases that might come into the ED. But to support providing care in two spaces instead of one, more resources were needed.

Gina O'Leary and Tricia Lane, both nurse practitioners, answered the call for help. Although O'Leary works in cardiology and Lane works in orthopedics, they were quick to respond and bring their expertise to the ED team, despite some initial apprehension.

"I think apprehension is a good emotion to describe what we felt at first. For everyone being reassigned, we have to step outside of our comfort zones," says Lane. "I've been a nurse practitioner for almost 20 years and have been in orthopedics for 10 so this is a big adjustment. But I am happy to be here and to be helping."

O'Leary agrees, adding "I think apprehensive is the best description because I wasn't terrified or upset. It was more of a positive emotion of 'ok, I hope I can do a great job and I'm really pleased to have been asked."

In their role as nurse practitioners, O'Leary and Lane have the scope to diagnose, prescribe, and order



NSNU members Tricia Lane (left) and Gina O'Leary (right) are among many nurse practitioners working in hospitals and emergency departments across the province.

and interpret tests. This allows them to see patients and move them efficiently through the system and support the overall capacity of the two Emergency Departments.

"Everyone wants to get patients in and out, including the patients, and that's what we're doing. I feel like we're demonstrating our competence as nurse practitioners to our colleagues, both nurses and physicians, and I am proud of that," says Lane.

"At first, I went down there thinking 'oh my gosh, there are diagnoses x-y-z that I'm not going to be familiar with,'" says O'Leary. "But I realized after I'd been there a couple of shifts that I overlooked how, after 20 years of working in pediatrics, there is so much I can do for a patient and a family. We're trained to act as the most responsible provider and that's a skill we can use in the ED."

Having nurse practitioners present in the ED is a change at the IWK. But it's just one of many changes impacting the practice of nursing, and health care, right now. Although most times it is out of necessity, both O'Leary and Lane feel there are positive takeaways from all of the change taking place.

"I am seeing every challenge as a learning experience right now," says Lane. "There are so many positives to what we're doing and so many things are being streamlined that we can learn from."

O'Leary adds "When life gives you lemons, sometimes you make lemonade and that's what I'm hoping happens here. In the past we've looked at 'why can't we make this happen?' but now I think we're operating from a perspective of 'how can we make this happen?' and I think that's a better attitude."

NSHEPP Year in Review

In May the Nova Scotia Health Employees Pension Plan (NSHEPP) released a year in review document looking at their activities during the 2019 fiscal year. All acute care and most long-term care members of the NSNU are covered under NSHEPP.

The review includes sections on benefits, funding, administration, the pension systems modernization project, investments and governance. It is very important to remain informed about the activities of your pension program, and therefore members who are covered under NSHEPP are encouraged to read the brief two-page document, available online.

A link to the NSHEPP year in the review can be found on the Members Only page of the NSNU website. Members can also visit www.nshepp.ca to learn more about their pension plan.

LTD Plan Trustees Report

The Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations Long Term Disability (NSHAO LTD) Plan provides security and stability to over 20,500 health care employees and their families. If employees are unable to work due to injury or illness and their LTD application is approved, they receive a monthly benefit to help cover living expenses and programs designed to help them safely return to work when the time comes. The NSNU is represented at the NSHAO LTD table by Janet Hazelton, who serves as a Trustee.

Members can keep up to date with the activities of the NSHAO LTD plan on the Members Only section of the NSNU website, where meeting minutes are posted regularly. There, you will also find the LTD Trustees' report for the 2018-19 fiscal year. More information about LTD benefits is available at healthassociation.ns.ca.

Membership Information Form for New Hires

Local representatives are asked to inform new hires about the NSNU and guide them to the Membership Information Form on our website, which they must fill out and return to us via mail, email or fax. It is essential that all new members complete this

form so they can begin to receive communications from their Union.

The Membership Information Form can be downloaded on the NSNU website at nsnu.ca/formsandguides.

If you are an existing member who has moved, changed employers or changed your contact information, please contact nsnu.office@nsnu.ca so we can update your information in our database.

St. Martha's Alumni Annual Banquet

St. Martha's Alumnae Annual Banquet is tentatively scheduled to take place October 1, 2020. The celebration will be held at St. Ninian Place in Antigonish, beginning at 6 pm with a reception, followed by dinner at 7 pm.

Tickets can be purchased at Janet's Canteen on the main floor of St. Martha's Hospital, or by calling Janet Gottschall at 902-863-9414 or atlanticcathedralpainters@gmail.com. The final day to purchase tickets is Friday September 25, 2020.

Please note, this event may be subject to change in accordance with public health directives.



Kelsey MacAulay

IWK Nurse Awarded Johnson Insurance Education Grant

The NSNU is happy to announce that Kelsey MacAulay, RN, IWK has won the \$1000 NSNU Post-Secondary Education Grant Contest from Johnson Insurance.

She will receive a \$1000 Grant from Johnson Insurance. Kelsey is enrolled in the Master of Nursing Program at Athabasca University.

Congratulations Kelsey.

Are You Paying the Correct Amount of Union Dues?

If you work at more than one NSNU Facility and pay union dues more than once in a pay period, you may be eligible for a refund from the Provincial Office. Members who have been paid for less than 7.5 hours in Acute Care and less than 8 hours in Long Term Care in one bi-weekly pay period may also be eligible for a refund from the Provincial Office.

The Provincial portion of NSNU union dues (\$29.24 for RN's and \$21.48 for LPN's) will be refunded by cheque on a quarterly basis. Your rebate will only be retroactive for a period of up to 12 months prior to contact with the NSNU.

If either situation applies to you, please contact the NSNU Provincial Office c/o B.L. Moran at 902-468-6748 or bl.moran@nsnu.ca.



Scholarship Program 2020

OPEN: April 22, 2020

*"Teacher's pet?
That's me."*



Johnson Insurance is proud to offer 50 scholarships, valued at \$1000 each, to eligible students completing high school in 2020 and starting post-secondary education in the fall of 2020.

Johnson Insurance has awarded over 1500 scholarships valued at more than \$1 million to support young Canadians across Canada in pursuit of their post-secondary education.

Application Deadline: July 15, 2020

To learn more, visit [Johnson.ca/scholarship](https://johnson.ca/scholarship)
Toll Free : 1-844-567-1237
scholarshipfund@johnson.ca

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Have You Tried the MyNSNU App?

The MyNSNU app is your hub for NSNU news, education, resources, bargaining updates, polls and more.

The app is available to download the Apple and Google Play stores, and can also be accessed online at nsnu.itacit.com.

Learn more at nsnu.ca/MyNSNUApp.



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