

what's nu?

January 2022



WALKING AWAY FROM IT ALL

HEADLINES

Virtual AGM 2022

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Members

Hellos and Goodbyes

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President's Notebook

Janet Hazelton, BScN RN, MPA

Two Years In Wanting to Walk Away From it All

Who would have imagined that in January 2022 we would be talking about more postponed surgeries, untenable staffing shortages, PPE supply, lockdowns and restrictions, vaccine and testing availability, and hospitalizations due to COVID-19. But here we are.

In January of 2020, the virus was something we heard about on a late CNN broadcast, never thinking it would reach our small province on the Atlantic Coast. We went about our business, planning trips south, weddings and family gatherings, graduation ceremonies, Annual General Meetings and all sorts of events. That was how we greeted each new year – with a sense of optimism and opportunity. Two things that appear to be in short supply these days.

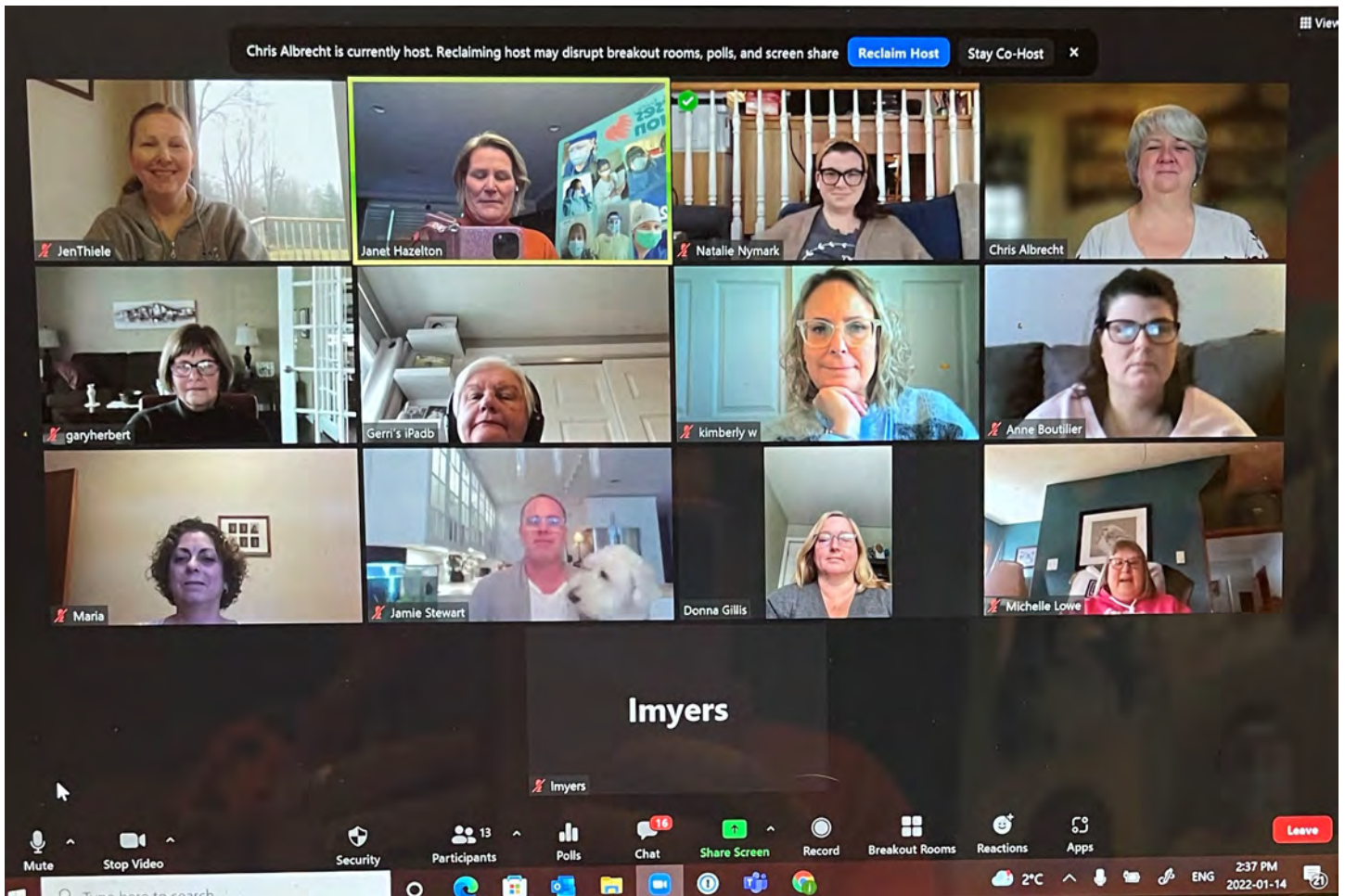
Since the holidays, I've heard from countless members who say, "Things have never been this bad." They are demoralized, exhausted and concerned about what they'll face each shift. With exposures and actual COVID infections taking a toll on staffing numbers, unpredictability on the job makes even a seasoned professional weary and troubled. Many are contemplating walking away from their career.

This sentiment is not unique to nursing. Doctors, teachers, paramedics, firefighters, policing and so many others lack reinforcement and support. Like nurses, their backup supply was not in abundance pre-pandemic.

In November 2021, my newsletter message focused on good news stories about nurses and nursing students. It was written in early November in order to meet our print deadline. At the time, we were not talking about Omicron, restrictions, unimaginable case numbers or the inability to acquire a COVID test. We were humming along, anticipating a happy holiday season, expecting to spend December with family and friends. Quickly, those expectations were dashed and now we find ourselves in what many consider the worst wave of this deadly disease.

Boosters, masking, social bubbles, physical distancing, exposures and isolating, contracting COVID, and all things COVID-related, have worn us down. However, it's working short and working unsafely that have had a significant impact – pushing nurses to the brink. NSNU labour relations representatives have been a sounding board for your concerns. They, like your Board of Directors, are having difficult, but necessary conversations with your employers about unsafe work environments.

Pre-pandemic staffing issues were significant and disconcerting. Our current situation is dysfunctional and outright dangerous. I hold phone and zoom calls with government and NSH representatives, employers and members, multiple times a week as we navigate this turbulent time. Sadly, the fix is not within our grasp.



January 14th NSNU Board of Directors Meeting

There is no nurse factory, we are depleting our backup resources (casual and part-time pools) and many senior nurses are re-evaluating their willingness to stay on.

As negative as this all sounds, and it is, adversity has a way of making us more resourceful, compelling us to rally the troops. Nurses, and other healthcare professionals, say they feel a sense of team spirit, united in their shared experience. As the saying goes, misery loves company, which can be a motivating and equalizing happenstance.

Togetherness has never held more meaning for nurses and our counterparts. Together, your Board continues to fight for your safety and your collective rights. We meet regularly to better understand the issues that confront all sectors, in all areas of the province. As we prepare for contract negotiations this year, the stories shared by members over the course of this tumultuous journey will better inform decisions made at the bargaining table.

Together with our partners in health and labour, media have been instrumental in getting our stories and our concerns to the masses. Hardly a day goes by without receiving a media request, or two or three. It's not always easy, mainly because they're rarely good news stories, but getting the message across through a wide network is imperative.

It's clear we've all been changed by the pandemic, both personally and professionally. We've taken stock of what's important to us and what we're prepared to part with. And, even though there is much to be anxious about, it is my sincere desire that we cultivate hope, find renewed purpose, and emerge stronger and more united as we endure this phase of the pandemic.

Governments must work together to combat nurse burnout, CNA, CFNU say.



For 22 months nurses and other health workers have shouldered the enormous burden of the pandemic. They are burnt out, demoralized, and have little left to give.

The emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant that is fuelling the fifth wave of this pandemic deeply concerns the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) regarding the state of Canada's health workforce. For months we have been warning that our health system is on the brink of collapse and this new variant may be the final straw.

Even before COVID-19, health care workers across Canada were under extreme stress due to excessive workloads and shortages. Now, the pandemic has not only increased the workload of nurses but has also significantly elevated concerns regarding physical safety and ethical dilemmas, which have unsurprisingly led nurses to report worsening mental health and high rates of burnout. Rates of anxiety and depression among nurses have increased over 40% during this pandemic, and we can surmise that the exponential rates of the Omicron variant in the last few weeks will only add to this trend.

Preliminary studies show that one-third of nurses have given thought to leaving their health care facility and/or the profession altogether. Critical care shortages have been further exacerbated by large numbers of health workers being unable to work due to isolation requirements.

This has forced many hospitals across Canada to close beds and scale back emergency services, directly affecting those who are seeking care. Patients must travel much longer distances to access needed services and

long-awaited surgeries are once again being postponed.

For those in hospital, critical staff shortages are challenging expected standards of care due to increasing patient-to-nurse ratios and re-deployment of staff. In many areas, multiple patients are being cared for by one nurse, putting patient safety at serious risk.

Canada's nursing workforce deserves better than this, and we cannot have a functioning health care system without a healthy workforce. How can decision-makers help?

Governments must work together to immediately negotiate innovative strategies that include financial incentives such as wages and retention bonuses, to encourage senior nurses to remain in practice, and targeted loan forgiveness programs, to support new graduates. Nurses also deserve safe working conditions, which should include immediate deployment of mental health resources to the front lines and additional efforts to ensure safe patient-to-nurse ratios. Nationally, the development of health workforce strategies is needed to guide the retention and recruitment of nurses through enhanced data and best practices.

Canada's health care system has never been tested to this extent. If immediate action is not taken, we risk pushing the health workforce past its breaking point. Without health workers, there can be no health care.

Linda Silas, B.Sc.N., RN President, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions

Tim Guest, M.B.A., B.Sc.N., RN President, Canadian Nurses Association



NURSES NEED STRONGER PROTECTIONS

Canada's Nurses are Once Again Calling for Stronger Protection

The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions is again imploring governments to provide the most basic protections for frontline health care workers.

At a time when we cannot afford to lose a single health care worker, the very people on the frontlines of this pandemic are still facing barriers to obtaining proper PPE, getting booster shots and being guaranteed sick leave when they test positive. Meanwhile, a longstanding nursing shortage – a product of decades of government neglect – has repeatedly left our health care system teetering on the edge of collapse.

With the proper PPE, health care workers can stay safe while caring for patients. But two years into this pandemic, health care workers aren't always provided a fit-tested N95 respirator – this, despite a clear scientific consensus that COVID-19 is airborne and that the Omicron variant is exponentially more transmissible than its predecessors.

Without N95s, nurses are at high risk of contracting COVID-19. Losing a nurse – whether for a week due

to COVID or months due to long-haul symptoms – is disastrous given the existing pressures on our health care system stemming from the nursing shortage.

Likewise, booster shots offer a vital layer of protection. Since vaccine efficacy wanes over time, we must urgently get boosters into the arms of health care workers. Many months ago, CFNU called on the government to prioritize health care workers, many of whom received their second dose almost a year ago. And yet, some governments are failing to fast-track health care workers and facilitate their access to a third dose.

“We must stop normalizing needlessly putting health care workers at risk,” says Linda Silas, CFNU president. “Nurses don't come to work to be martyrs; they come to work to care for patients. Governments can and must provide them with the tools and equipment they need to care for patients while also caring for themselves.”

BE HEARD

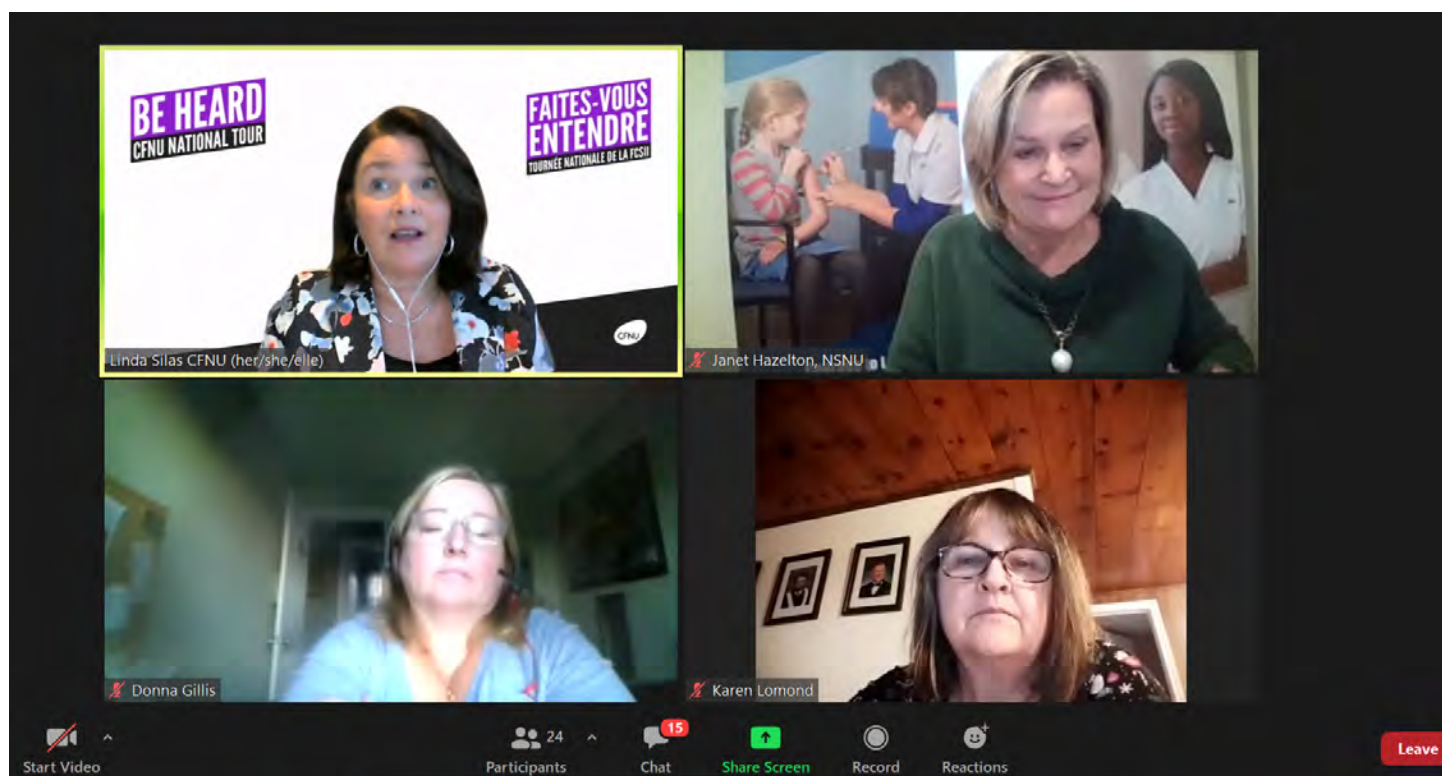
Linda Silas, president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and Janet Hazelton, NSNU president shared hosting responsibilities during a December 1st zoom event, the Nova Scotia portion of the live **BE HEARD** national tour. These live virtual sessions were open to all CFNU members.

Linda and Janet answered your questions and heard your concerns in a welcoming and informal setting. The NSNU session was a unique opportunity for members to engage and learn how nurses' unions are fighting for you. The December 1st **BE HEARD** event focused on workplace

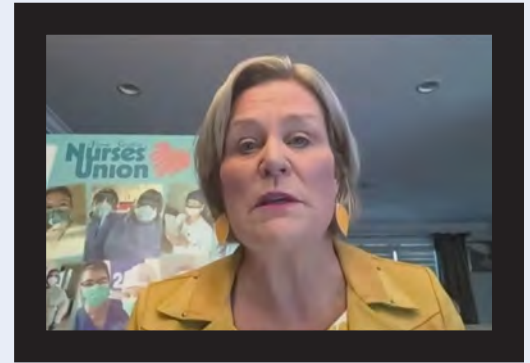
safety, staffing, long-term care, mental health, political engagement and more.

The Nova Scotia zoom was well attended. The virtual forum gave voice to many members concerns. We thank those who signed up to participate in this interactive event.

On January 20, NSNU hosted two virtual events for members to voice their workplace issues. More to come on the response to those sessions in this newsletter.



Standing Committee on Health – Impact on Staffing Shortage in Long Term Care



On January 11th, NSNU president, **Janet Hazelton** made a passionate plea before the Standing Committee on Health as they discussed the impact of staffing shortages in long term care.

The NSNU has long argued that under-funding and critical staffing shortages in this sector will continue to have catastrophic consequences.

At minimum, NSNU and other experts in LTC have recommended 1.3 hours of care per resident per day (.75 RN, .55 LPN), and 2.8 hours from CCAs for a total of 4.1 hours of care per resident per day.

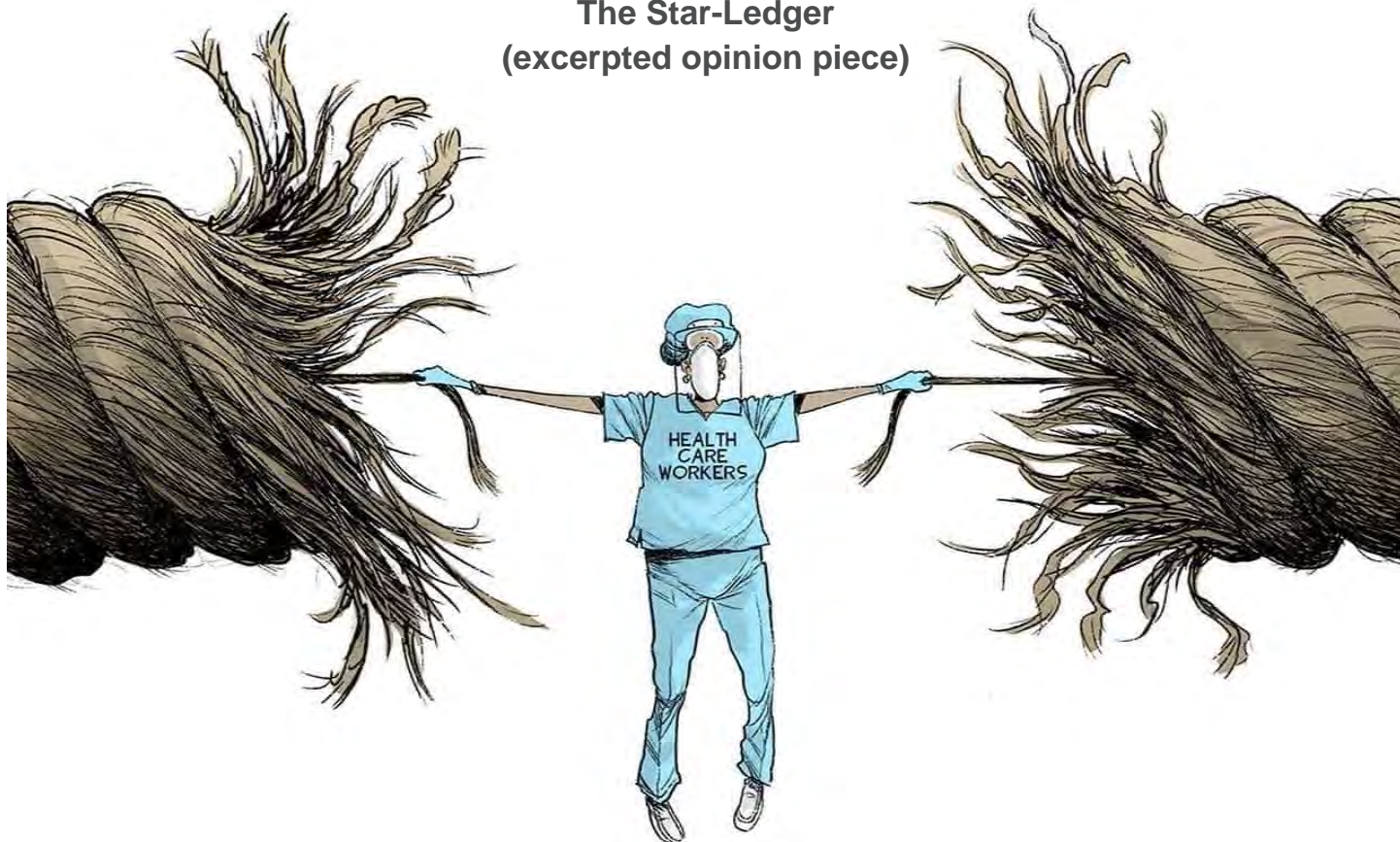
In the fall of 2021, the NSNDP tabled legislation echoing an increase of 4.1 hours of care. Also, in support of the recommendations, the Houston government committed to amending the *Homes for Special Care Act* to ensure that every long-term care facility will maintain staffing/ care levels of combined RNs, LPNs and CCAs sufficient to satisfy at least 4.1 hours of care per resident.

Janet's written presentation from January 11th can be found at nsnu.ca under Media and Policies, dropdown to Position Statements.



Health Care Workers Deserve Better

By Drew Sheneman,
The Star-Ledger
(excerpted opinion piece)



Two years. We've been in the midst of a global pandemic for two years. While most of us have the luxury of masking, distancing and marveling at the breathtaking lack of empathy on the part of those who refuse to, our health care workers do not.

For two years these dedicated professionals have clocked in and witnessed levels of human suffering few can even imagine. They have intubated countless patients whose lungs could no

longer do their jobs. They've held the phone for those same patients so their families could say goodbye. In return, they got some celebratory pot banging and congratulatory lawn signs. The trauma must be unbearable. I have no idea how they do it.

The answer is that they care. Why else would you drag yourself into a COVID ward, at great personal risk. They certainly aren't there for the money. More and more of them are deciding that the cost, both

personal and psychological, are too much. They are burned out and I can't blame them.

Hospitals are short-staffed and quickly becoming overwhelmed in what is a completely avoidable humanitarian disaster. If you haven't bothered to do the bare minimum to protect your own health, don't be surprised when there's nobody available to do it for you.

AGM 2022 – Back to Virtual

NSNU was in the process of planning an in-person Annual General Meeting for 2022 when it became evident that Omicron would impact our plans. At the January 14th Board of Directors meeting, the NSNU made the difficult decision to move to a virtual platform to again host the event.

It is our hope to host an Education Day later in the year, when it is safe to do so. Details will be made available as soon as possible.

The decision to move to a virtual environment is the responsible course of action. We are not alone in doing this. Our counterparts and other health organizations have either cancelled their events entirely or moved online.

In 2021, we proved that it can be done professionally and efficiently, providing an engaging platform for our members to participate.

Board members and required staff will be on-site at a yet-to-be confirmed venue for necessary face-to-face segments. Safety protocols will be strictly adhered to for these attendees.

A revised itinerary and agenda will be circulated and posted on the website, as will other pertinent information about the AGM.

In the coming weeks, more information will be distributed via email and online, outlining our plans. Participants will receive detailed information regarding virtual conferencing. We'll supply tips, links and credentials, as well as information to better ensure the user experience is enjoyable.

The AGM promises to be fast paced, visually interesting, engaging and dynamic. We hope you will take part.



2022 AGM Tentative Schedule:

Tuesday, April 26

8:30 am – 4:30 pm: Regional & Component Meetings, AGM Business

Wednesday, April 27

8:30 am – 4:30 pm: AGM Business

Registration Deadline

The deadline to register for the AGM is March 14th. Registration will open February 14th.

Once again, one representative from your local (likely a member of the local executive) will be responsible for the online registration of all your delegates and observers.

Nurses Top Gallup Poll for 20th Year in a Row

Nurses once again topped the annual Gallup Poll as the most honest and ethical profession for the 20th year in a row. Although the data is from the U.S., Canadian opinions mirror those of our southern neighbours.

The latest results are based on a December 1-16 Gallup poll in which people were asked to rate the honesty and ethics of 22 different occupational groups. Medical doctors, grade-school teachers, and pharmacists also ranked high this year, but not nearly as high as nurses.

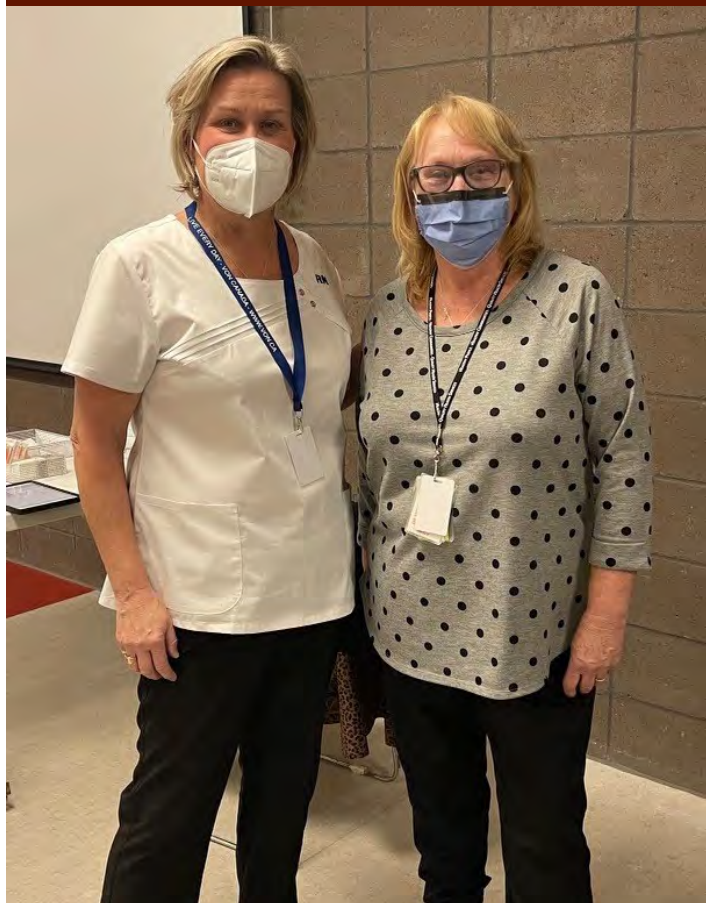
Nurses have taken the number one spot on Gallup's Honesty and Ethics list in all but one year since they were added in 1999. The exception was 2001, when

firefighters topped the list.

Nurses are speaking-up to ask government to protect them, so they can protect their patients. Nurses are using their collective power to fight for the safe patient care conditions and public health protections that patients and workers deserve.

Nurses share a sacred bond of trust with patients, to always act as their advocates, and strive every shift to live up to those duties. For these reasons, nurses rank highest. Poll results like these, fuel an ongoing commitment to patient advocacy.

Making a Comeback – From Retirement (excerpts from Global News)



Since the start of the pandemic, many retired healthcare workers have returned to the frontlines to help fight COVID-19.

Lynn Knight, an LPN from Truro who retired nine years ago, is one of them. She went back to work in March 2020 when the province began testing for the coronavirus and has been administering tests, along with COVID-19 vaccinations, ever since.

Lynn and Janet Hazelton, who once worked together for many years, were working the same vaccine clinic on Friday, January 14th – in the middle of a snowstorm.

Lynn recently told Callum Smith from Global News that she wanted to be there to help. She felt like she owed it to the people of Nova Scotia as a healthcare provider.

While she's been focused on PCR testing, she recently started administering booster doses to people in the northern health zone.

Lynn, who is 65, works five-to-six days each week in her 'retirement' and on several occasions she has travelled to Amherst to work at the primary assessment centre there.

Welcome back Lynn.

IT'S TIME TO HIT THE BRAKES!



Canada's nurses are alarmed at the rapid spread of Omicron across Canada. Decisive action is needed to keep our health care system from crumbling under the weight of this highly infectious variant.

Linda Silas, president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions says, "The combination of a highly transmissible variant along with a nationwide nursing shortage is a recipe for disaster."

CFNU wants circuit-breaker to slow down community spread. Cases have ballooned across Canada, with many hospitals already at capacity.

"As unpalatable as it sounds, we need to bring back the strategies that helped us beat back earlier waves," explained Silas. "As much as possible, we need Canadians to stay home and minimize their contacts."

Sadly, hospitals should once again look at postponing non-urgent surgeries to bolster the amount of health care staff available to tend to COVID patients and others requiring emergency care.

Nurses are equally unnerved by the dominant narrative that Omicron is "mild" and therefore doesn't require robust mitigation strategies. While the variant may be milder as compared to its predecessors, it is still deadly, and it still has the potential to bring our health care system to its knees.

The CFNU opposed having health care workers care for patients while positive for COVID-19. The nursing shortage is leading many jurisdictions to make unthinkable, hazardous and short-sighted decisions. This move puts patients at risk and makes hospital-wide outbreaks more likely.

"These aren't decisions you make in a functional health care sector," explained Silas. "Let's be clear: this is dangerous, and we're in this position because governments have ignored the nursing shortage for far too long."

A Sincere Thank-You To Our Members

This is not how we had hoped 2022 would introduce itself. We were wishing for better times. In spite of the hardships you face, we encourage you, the public, health-care stakeholders, and government, to recognize the dedication and achievements of all nurses - registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nurse practitioners - and your contribution to the health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

As we continue to deal with the ongoing impact of COVID-19, it is so important that we recognize and thank you for your commitment to the nursing profession.

On behalf of the NSNU Board of Directors, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge your contributions. Despite the many challenges, you continue to display ultimate professionalism in providing care for your patients, clients, and residents, each and every day.

Because COVID-19 remains very active in most communities we continue to provide service with safety in mind. As such, we are mailing this token of our appreciation to you.

On behalf of the NSNU Board of Directors, please accept the gift that is included in this mailing with your What's NU? magazine.

*Sincerely and with great respect,
Janet Hazelton, NSNU President*

As Employers Struggle to Staff Hospitals, LTC and Community Care Positions Provinces Contemplate Hiring Hundreds of Internationally Trained Nurses and Placing Student Nurses On the Job

A plan proposed by several provincial governments to hire internationally educated nurses to fix the staffing crisis in hospitals and elsewhere isn't as easy or straightforward as it sounds. While many argue the process is too slow and too rigorous, current plans to expedite hiring IENs might not be well thought out.

Many provinces are struggling, with nursing shortages counting in the thousands – a condition that predates the pandemic. In some jurisdictions, student nurses are being asked to temporarily

leave school to work alongside hospital staff, offering some relief. In other areas, non-medical staff, like kitchen employees, are portering patients and doing other tasks to combat nursing shortages. Ontario plans to hire IENs to provide personal support without counting this work towards their requirements for registration.

In Canada it is estimated there are thousands of IENs who meet basic eligibility. But regulators and unions dispute claims that internationally educated nurses could be put to work almost immediately. They worry rash decisions made in the heat of a crisis could result in both short and long term problems.

Some IENs are in the process of getting licensed and could start working relatively soon. Many more IEN applicants are at different stages of registration making it hard to predict when relief will come.

In response to a CBC media inquiry, the president of the Manitoba Nurses Union (MNU) says that province shouldn't be touting this as a solution to the current pressure on the health-care system, because it will take years to get these nurses on the job.

"It's not a short-term solution, it is a long-term solution. We do not get those nurses into the system in two weeks," said Darlene Jackson, president of MNU.

Jackson says Manitoba should have started working on the issue of staffing shortages years ago and right now, should be focused on retaining the nurses it has.

NSNU president Janet Hazelton has been asked similar questions by media. She's expressed the same sentiment. She says, nurses' unions have been talking about staffing shortages for decades, with little action taken to alleviate the enormous pressure on the system. The pandemic was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

"Is putting nurses who are not ready to take on full nursing responsibilities, including student nurses, a gamble we're willing to take? We need to act quickly to provide support and backup for our nurses, but actions and solutions must be thoughtful and appropriate," says Hazelton.



Not All Glamour Behind the Camera

Over the course of the last two years, Janet Hazelton has accepted more media requests than she can shake a stick at. Typically, she is accepting upwards of five or more, weekly. That's more media interviews than the average celebrity, sports figure, member of the Royal Family, or politician.

The advantage to fulfilling most media requests is that the nursing story is told and shared with those who have influence; the public and decision makers. If the subject matter is about nurses and nurses' rights, health care delivery, OH&S, and other issues that impact our members, Janet will speak to it.



Media have been instrumental, particularly during COVID-19, in relaying messages and keeping the public informed about ongoing developments and difficult situations, and by keeping people and organizations accountable. Like nursing, journalists are a valued resource and journalism, a time-honoured profession.

Some might think that TV is fast-paced and glamorous, and now days it's half true. It does evolve quickly as reporters eagerly conduct interviews, gather background materials like video footage, and file their stories.

The now popular Zoom two-way (a media term) is not the studio setting most would expect. Gone are the days, for now, when Janet would venture to CTV, Global or CBC studios for an in-person interview. In its place are the makeshift, at home Zoom segments – not too glamorous. In fact, slippers, comfy pants, and a last-minute dusting of make-up is more the style.

Janet generously shared a behind-the-scenes look at one of her TV interviews, many of which take place well before 8:00 am some days. Still impactful, without the trappings of television magic of years ago.



O Canada Production Postponed

Like so many gatherings, Omicron has put a stop to our in-person plans – at least until further notice.

The NSNU had planned to bring together some of our best and most enthusiastic members for a new rendition of our national anthem on January 22. Not to be defeated, that plan is only on hold, not cancelled.

Our communications staff will be reaching out to those who signed up to participate once it's safe to meet.

So, to all our choir members, keep practicing your scales, memorize the new lyrics and await new production dates.

Thanks to all who are still keen to proudly take part.



Are You Paying Double 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 (B.L. Moran at 902-468-6748 or bl.moran@nsnu.ca).

WINNER!

ESCAPE FALL PHOTO CONTEST

Chantal Hamilton (and Remi!)

Fall Escape Contest Winner



In fall of 2021, the NSNU launched the Fall Escape Photo Contest asking members to share pictures and commentary of their favourite fall pastimes, and ways they nurtured selfcare.

We received beautiful photos and thoughtful messages, all depicting the hobbies and activities members enjoyed during the most colourful season.

The winner – Chantal Hamilton – was selected by random draw. Chantal, an LPN who works at Colchester Regional Hospital, shared a lovely image of herself and her pup Remi surrounded by the fall foliage.

Thank you to all who entered the draw. We loved hearing from you and seeing your inspiring submissions. See the remaining photos on the next few pages or navigate to nsnu.ca/escape to view all of the contest entries.

NSNU Member Purchases at The Brick Give Back

When a nurse identifies as an NSNU member before shopping at The Brick, a portion of their purchase goes to charity. As part of the Select Rewards Program, the NSNU directs those proceeds to the IWK.

After the holidays, NSNU was notified that our account had reached \$538.54 for the period ending 2021. That contribution has been donated to Children's Miracle Network, staying locally within the IWK.

One purchase made by the IWK with proceeds from this fund was artwork for the NICU Family Quiet Room.

To ensure that your purchase is directed to the NSNU account we encourage members who shop The Brick to make an appointment with Kristen Conrod beforehand. To reach Kristen, call 902-536-0606 or email kconrod@thebrick.com.



The **BRICK**

Escape

Winter Escape

There is less light in the winter months, less opportunity to get outdoors to shed the cobwebs from our brains. The weather and the burden some of us experience at this time of the year make it even more important to practice selfcare. The pandemic has added another layer of heaviness to their weight nurses bear.

It is now more vital than ever to decompress and feel the support of those around you, while using tools and resources to escape – even if only for an hour. The Escape webpage on nsnu.ca is dedicated to giving nurses a break from the rigors of the job during this time of heightened stress, workload and anxiety.

If you haven't already, take a minute away from Wordle to check it out.

Please enjoy these videos, quotes and activities. If you have suggestions for items that could be added to this page to improve user experience, please email them to nsnu.office@nsnu.ca.

NSNU Foster Children

For several decades, the NSNU has sponsored children from around the world who are in need.

We are pleased to introduce two of the young girls who are currently receiving support from NSNU through Plan International.

Safiya is a 12-year old who enjoys and excels at math. She lives in Uganda.

Salome lives in Ecuador. She is three years old and has a passion for pink.

NSNU contributions help with school supplies and education, the protection of children from abuse, exploitation and neglect, safe drinking water and sanitation systems, as well as healthcare and COVID-19 response programs.



Thank-You Contest



Johnson Insurance “Thank You” Draw Winners

Johnson Insurance is a long-time supporter of the Nova Scotia Nurses’ Union and our members. To show their appreciation for your unwavering dedication, Johnson held draws for a chance to win cash prizes in their “Thank You” contest.

On November 30, representatives from Johnson Insurance made the draws. Thank you, Johnson Insurance, for the gratitude you extend to our members.

Congratulations to the winners:

Grand Prize (\$1000) - **Cheryl Barker**, Cobequid Community Health Centre

Secondary Prize (\$500 each): **Allana Ivany**, IWK and **Tara Langley**, HSAH Fishermen’s/South Shore

NSNU Retirement, and a New Hire



After nearly fourteen years as NSNU's Director of Finance and Operations, Cindy Herbert is retiring.

Cindy has been at the helm of our accounting and operations since 2008. In her easy-going style, Cindy managed the finances of the Union with a discerning and cautious hand.

Her last day with NSNU is February 28th. We wish Cindy a long and happy retirement filled with trips to the cottage, weekends with the girls, poetry writing and countless Wednesday nights at the bowling alley.

Tom Daniels will join the NSNU on February 9th as the new Director of Finance and Operations, accountable to the Executive Director and President. The role is an intrinsic and integral part of the leadership team at the Nurses' Union.

The Director of Finance and Operations is responsible for managing, directing and controlling the finances and operations of the NSNU while promoting NSNU's short-term objectives, long term goals, policies and interests.

All the best Cindy. Welcome aboard, Tom.

NSNU Bids Farewell to Comms Assistant

After over seven years as the NSNU Communications Assistant, Christie Blotnicky has moved on. She recently started a contract with public health in Nova Scotia - an exciting and career-changing opportunity for her.

Christie supported the communications department with her many skills, resourcefulness, and her quiet, but much appreciated sense of humour.

We thank her for her dedication, years of service and contributions to the NSNU. We wish her much success in all her future endeavours.

NSNU is seeking to hire a new Communications Assistant. We recently posted the position and hope to have someone in place in February.



Connecting with Members One Zoom Meeting at a Time

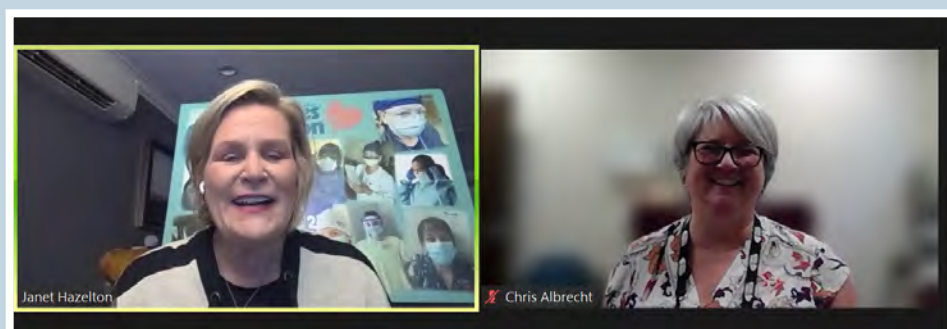
On January 20th, the NSNU held two Zoom sessions with members to reconnect after a hectic couple of months.

The sessions were open to all members and well attended for a busy Thursday. Close to 100 NSNU members participated, many of whom had submitted questions in advance for the Union to address.

NSNU president, Janet Hazelton hosted the vent with support from staff, including Chris Albrecht, Executive Director and Justin Hiltz, Researcher, Government Relations and OH&S Specialist. Both Chris and Justin were able to add input as Janet fielded members' concerns, comments and questions.

As the pandemic rages on, most nurses are exceedingly troubled by safe staffing and workload issues, high stress, and their patients, residents and clients' wellbeing. It was evident on the Zoom session that nurses are feeling the brunt of this wave of the disease as employers struggle to staff shifts, deploy workers to different areas of work where the demand is high, and deal with increased hospital admissions due to COVID-19.

We thank those who took part and hope that you will join us again. The NSNU plans to schedule more Zoom meetings throughout the year to allow members to vent, get the advice and information they seek, and receive an update from the NSNU on our COVID response and other business.



VON Members Give Generously

The NSNU local of the Cape Breton Metro VON gave \$600.00 to the “Be a Santa to a Senior” Home Instead fund in December of 2021. Local president, Kim Williams and treasurer, Susan George presented the cheque to the Community Engagement Coordinator, Ian McNeil.

The funds were intended to buy gift cards for CBRM seniors in need and to help pay for food, clothing, heating oil and other gifts. A wonderful way to celebrate the season of giving.



NSNU Staff Spread Holiday Cheer

On December 10th, NSNU staff elves, Patti Humphries and Nancy MacDonal stopped by the Dartmouth SPCA with a few Santa sacks filled with goodies. Everything from peanut butter to dog treats made the nice list

for our furry friends. Thank you to Brianna from the SPCA for the warm welcome.

Their second sleigh stop was Feed Nova Scotia. NSNU staff raised \$430 through a Casual Friday Fund

this year. The Board of Directors of the NSNU matched the donation, allowing Patti and Nancy to gift Feed NS with a cheque for \$860. Anne and Mallory from Feed NS were there to accept the donation.



Nurses Do What They Have To Do Even Snowshoe

As if times weren't tough enough, it's been one of the harshest winters we've experienced in years, with blustery and blinding snow, high winds and freezing colds temps across our nation.

As the saying goes - neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night – shall keep a worker from their duty. The phrase is the unofficial motto for postal service workers across North America. However, there are many other first responders and frontline workers who can make the same claim. Like a couple of enterprising and energetic nurses from PEI.



Jennifer Shea and Hannah Graham were featured on CBC National and their story shared on numerous social media platforms and by various news outlets after they took matters into their own hands, and feet!

It's likely that all nurses could share stories about how they "barely made it to work" due to stormy conditions. It's a common occurrence when you live in the Great white North. We applaud Jennifer and Hannah, members of PEINU for their efforts.

Nurses continue to make sacrifices at their peril

Nurses cars always have the best snow tires. That's what technicians at Canadian Tire say. How else would they get to work on storm days? Nurses know the value of a quality travel mug to keep their coffee from going cold, and they invest in good boots and a warm coat in case they must shovel their car out of a snowdrift at the end of a shift.

For nurses, and other health care workers, getting to work, even in inclement weather, is part of the deal. Nurses signed-up for long shifts, difficult and sometimes emotional work, knowing that some days will be harder than others. That is the life of a nurse. Be prepared for the unexpected.

These days, the work comes with even more unpredictability. There's a good chance that an eight-hour shift could turn into twelve or more. There's a very good chance that a day off will turn into an extra shift. The nursing shortage has wreaked havoc on personal plans and time to rejuvenate.

Exposures and COVID injections have separated family members, particularly healthcare families, as they attempt to keep loved ones safe. Thousands of nurses are doing their best to stay healthy, stay afloat and be present. These days, that is asking a lot.

Nurses continue to make sacrifices to stay on the job. As professionals, nurses must not 'normalize' the hardships the pandemic has placed in their path. If feeling 'overwhelmed' is your new normal, think again. This can be destructive thinking.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out. NSNU labour relations representatives can offer advice and resources to help.



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