



CANADIAN FEDERATION  
OF NURSES UNIONS

LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE  
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES  
ET INFIRMIERS

December 2013

## Fundamental Changes

The second session of Canada's 41st Parliament opened with a Speech from the Throne on October 16 and closed on December 10, marking a very short session due to prorogation. Nevertheless Parliament managed to gain unprecedented attention due to the Senate/Prime Minister's Office Scandal, a story that dominated the media and political debates like nothing else for many years. Despite the media attention on the Senate, the Harper Government continued to push its agenda forward introducing fundamental changes to our laws that will have major implications for our future.

## CFNU Takes the Fight to Parliament Hill and Keeps the Pressure On!

As this session of Parliament was winding down and politicians prepared to go back to their ridings, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) worked with our allies across the country taking the fight for the future of health care and preserving labour rights directly to Parliament.

### Health Care and Labour Lobby Day - Taking the Message to the Hill

December 3, 2013, was a massive progressive lobby day in Ottawa. Over 30 nurses from across the country joined hundreds of health and labour activists as we

blanketed Parliament Hill with a strong message for all political parties. Presidents from provincial nurses unions came to Ottawa to join frontline nurses, provincial health coalitions and labour activists to highlight the urgent situation facing both health and labour movements in Canada.

CFNU members participated in the close to 100 meetings held on December 3 with Members of Parliament and Senators.

The key recommendations on health care were:

1. The federal government should provide financial support to the provinces and territories in the form of a targeted fund for a pan-Canadian continuing care program.
2. The federal government should provide leadership and funding toward a universal public drug plan to ensure appropriate and affordable access to prescription drugs outside of hospitals.
3. This new targeted fund will not be time-limited and will continue alongside the Canada Health Transfer to the provinces and territories, with the 6% annual escalator laid out in the 2004 Health Accord. This targeted fund should be legislated at the federal level and agreed to by all provinces and territories, using the approach in the 2004 Health Accord.

Twitter photos of #Stand4Medicare taken during Medicare Week December 3 and 4, 2013



Top row, left to right: **MPs Peggy Nash, Olivia Chow, Rathika Sitsabaiesan**

Middle row, left to right: **Canadian Health Coalition group photo, MP Elizabeth May with public health care activists**

Bottom row, left to right: **MP Hon. Thomas Mulcair, MP Hon. Dr. Hedy Fry, MP Marc Garneau, MP David Christopherson**

Movement on these critical issues is necessary to support a sustainable and high-quality health care system for all Canadians.

For more on the health care lobby and the seniors care conference which preceded it, see the links below.

[healthcoalition.ca](http://healthcoalition.ca)

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23stand4medicare&src=hash&mode=photos>

## Labour Rights and the Campaign to Expand the Canada Pension Plan, Now for the Future!

Labour unions gathered on December 3 to engage with MPs and Senators in the days before the winter break. There was a clear call for an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan and an end to the attacks contained in Bill C-377, C-4 and C-525 – bills which together represent the Harper Conservatives direct attack on collective bargaining, arbitration, the right to strike and fundamentally harm the rights of workers to organize.

These attacks should not be taken lightly by Canadians. The fundamental balance of our economy and long-term prosperity is built on the ability of unions to advocate for improvements on benefits, pay, safety and even social programs which affect our communities and country positively and set the standards for all workers, unionized or not. Removing these rights of workers will ultimately harm much more than the rights of the individual unionized worker as there is a clear link between collective bargaining, the work of unions and the rise of the middle class in Canada. The attacks on labour mean we should all be concerned for future generations and the erosion of quality of life and standard of living into the future.

### Bill C-4

While Bill C-4, the latest Conservative Omnibus budget bill, has just passed, the fallout will be with us for many years to come. This is because buried in the hundreds of pages of dense text are some provisions which dramatically change the Canadian Labour Code.

There are many things to be concerned about in the bill. For more information read here: <http://www.pressprogress.ca/en/post/all-you-need-know-about-bloated-omnibus-budget-bill>

The direct attacks contained within the bill affect the rules governing the safety of almost one million Canadian workers with the federal public service as the Conservative government limits the right to refuse dangerous work, ends the role of federal Health and Safety Officers in the investigation process and give employers the power to discipline workers when they

invoke the right to refuse dangerous work. The bill also allows the government to designate vast numbers of workers “essential” limiting those who can strike and fundamentally stacks the arbitration process which, to no one’s surprise, tilts away from fairness to workers.

### Canada Pension Plan Expansion

Pressure is growing on the federal government to secure retirement with dignity for seniors in Canada. Currently, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security are well-run and well-funded systems but they still leave many seniors without adequate income. Provincial governments have noticed that the problem will get worse in the coming years unless we act now and have been pressuring the federal government to take action, supported by a strong campaign by the labour movement. P.E.I. has taken the lead in this fight, along with Ontario, and with broad support from all, excluding the most right-wing provinces. Unfortunately, the federal government is the only level of government which can implement the needed changes to this federal program. Without federal leadership, provinces can only keep applying pressure to highlight the need for action to fight against impoverished seniors continuing to be left vulnerable.

The Harper Conservatives have rejected even modest attempts to expand the Canada Pension Plan. This position is indefensible given what we know about the lack of adequate pensions and savings and the doubling of the number of seniors over the next 20 years. The provinces know they will need to care for impoverished seniors through provincial social programs, if there is not federal leadership to expand supports for seniors. Expanding the CPP allows for workers to save for their own retirements and will keep many from slipping into poverty upon retirement.

<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/national/news/now-time-expand-cpp-new-clc-research-shows-enhancements-affordable>

<http://pensionfairness.ca>

## Increasing Awareness for Medicare Constitutional Court Challenge

The CFNU continues to support those intervening in the BC private clinics legal challenge, a case which will be heard next year in British Columbia and which could rock the foundation of our cherished medicare system. This is the case where a private surgical clinic has brought forward the most significant constitutional challenge to medicare in Canadian history.

Dr. Brian Day, the most aggressive champion of private, for-profit health care in Canada, is directly attacking the most important aspect of medicare: that health care should be provided according to the patient's need, not

"This is... the most significant constitutional challenge to medicare in Canadian history."

the ability to pay. What is at stake is no less than the survival of public universal health care in Canada. The CFNU will be working with all provincial nurses unions and our allies in the coming months.

The implications of this case go well beyond British Columbia. A verdict in favour of Dr. Day could strike down provincial health care acts across the country and lead to massive privatization of health care services in every province. We would then be faced with years of appeals at various court levels, ultimately coming before the Supreme Court of Canada. In that time irreparable damage could be done to public, universal health care in Canada!

This is why it is important to act now! On "Giving Tuesday", which was December 3, 2013, the CFNU partnered with the Council of Canadians, Canadian Doctors for Medicare and the BC Health Coalition to raise funds to cover legal costs associated with protecting our health care system during this court challenge. Much more needs to be done, but it is important to raise the profile of this case and ensure Canadians know what is at stake.

Hot on the Hill

4

<http://www.canadians.org/giving-tuesday-medicare>

## Donating to Victims of Typhoon Haiyan

Canadians will have seen the devastating affects Typhoon Haiyan when it hit the Philippines on November 8. Nurses and nurses unions donated generously, and \$51,000 was pledged by the CFNU and directly by our provincial nurses unions to help people trying to rebuild their lives. Individual nurses gave even more and continue to give.

<http://www.oxfam.ca/news/canadian-unions-donate-generously-to-typhoon-haiyan-relief>

## Other News on the Hill and off

With Parliament's return, the Health Committee and government bills and private members bills have all been moving forward.

The exceptions are Bills C-525 and C-377 which are both in holding patterns as other items are dealt with and the ongoing Senate/Prime Minister's Office scandal continues.

Bill C-377, *An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Requirements for Labour Organizations)*, and Bill C-525, *An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code*, embody the Harper government's anti-labour, anti-worker agenda. These are just the beginning of this government's intent to irreparably alter labour relations in Canada and undermine working men and women's ability to organize.

Bill C-525 would reduce the funds unions have to operate by attacking automatic dues payments, making it easy to decertify unions and very difficult to organize new workplaces.

Bill C-377 burdens unions administratively by claiming need for more transparency, but five provinces have advised the Minister of Labour and the Senate that the bill is outside of Parliament's jurisdiction and intrudes on provincial jurisdiction. These provinces are Ontario,

Quebec, Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The CFNU continues to urge MPs and Senators from all parties to reject this anti-worker agenda.

<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/issues/bill-c-377>

<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/news-room/editorials/why-we-must-say-no-anti-union-bills>

## At the House of Commons Health Committee

The House of Commons Health Committee (HESA) is where key health bills are reviewed by members of parliament before they pass into law. The committees are also able to take on other studies as they see fit.

Currently, the Health Committee is studying prescription drug abuse in Canada and is scheduled to also study the scope of professional practice and skills training of healthcare professionals.

The original resolution from the committee reads as follows:

It was agreed, — That the Committee undertake a ten (10) meetings study of best practices and federal barriers related to the scope of practice and skills training of healthcare professionals. This study will focus on three (3) areas: (a) the federal role in the scope of practice of Canadian healthcare professionals; (b) highlight best practices on the use of scope of practice, both in Canada and internationally; and (c) federal role and support for skills training and curriculum development.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/CommitteeBusiness/CommitteeHome.aspx?Cmte=HESA&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=41&Ses=2>

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=6112241&Language=E&Mode=1>

Federal bills of interest that are making their way through the House of Commons:

Bill C-2 – *Respect for Communities Act* - legislates safe injection sites. This introduces legislation to essentially bar any new safe injection sites similar to Vancouver's InSite. This legislation dramatically sets back harm reduction strategies in Canada and has been criticized by all who seek to treat, not criminalize, drug abuse.

<http://www.lawlibrary.ab.ca/staycurrent/2013/10/bill-c-2-respect-communities-act-introduced-october-17-2013/>

Bill C-17, *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act (Vanessa's Law)*. Known as Vanessa's Law after the daughter of MP Terrence Young whose daughter Vanessa Young died at age 15 from an adverse drug reaction, and who has been working on this legislation for the past 13 years. This bill compels hospitals to report adverse drug reactions to Health Canada, an important first step. Critics have called for doctors to also be included.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=6375723>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/vanessa-s-law-would-let-ottawa-pull-dangerous-drugs-1.2453785>

## Dementia Strategy Missing

Calls are increasing for a National Dementia Strategy, following a G8 conference on dementia where Canada was the only country not to have such a plan. The costs and looming challenges families face as the population increases needs federal leadership. Unfortunately, the focus in Canada seems to be on supporting more research, important but not sufficient.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/dementia-epidemic-looms-by-2050-1.2452315>

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/health/Editorial+Canada+needs+national+dementia+strategy/9274459/story.html>

Finally, the Family Physicians of Canada have rated the federal government's performance in five key areas of health and only gave good

grades in one out of 23 key areas, on a national homelessness plan.

Here is the full report: [http://www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Health\\_Policy/\\_PDFs/CFPC\\_FederalReportCard2013\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cfpc.ca/uploadedFiles/Health_Policy/_PDFs/CFPC_FederalReportCard2013_EN.pdf)

**Happy Holidays and a special thank you for all your advocacy work over the past year!**

**2014 is looking to be a busy year and an important moment to stand up for both our cherished health care system and our hard-won labour rights.**



CFNU President Linda Silas at A Seniors Health Care Plan for Canada Conference, December 2013, with NBNU members RNs Sherry Gionet, Carole Clavette and Nancy Arseneau



CANADIAN  
FEDERATION  
OF NURSES UNIONS

**WHERE KNOWLEDGE  
MEETS KNOW-HOW**

[www.nursesunions.ca](http://www.nursesunions.ca)



/CFNU



/nursesunions

2841 Riverside Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1V 8X7  
Telephone: 613-526-4661  
Fax: 613-526-1023  
Toll Free: 1-800-321-9821