

The Fallacy of Resident Care Worker (RCW) Appreciation Week!

As we celebrate and recognize the great work and contributions of Resident Care Workers (RCW), Patient Care Workers (PCW), and Home Support Workers (HSW), it is apparent from recent actions, that Health PEI has demonstrated little respect and appreciation for UPSE members.

UPSE, on numerous occasions, has advocated for the Employer to respect the Model of Care (MOC) approach to person-centred care for our long-term care facilities, and to stop moving our members from their assigned work units or LTC neighbourhoods.

In 2010 the employer consulted with unions to alter the approach of care which involved workers being assigned to specific work units (or neighbourhoods) with the intent to improve the continuity of care, and the workers' familiarity with the needs of the residents, to ensure the person-centred care plan was followed. The employer informed a UPSE Labour Relations Officer last week that Health PEI is no longer following the model of care and is moving members from their previously assigned work units. This is concerning on numerous fronts for the union:

- 1) The impact on the residents regarding receiving person-centred care
- 2) No consultation with the Union about any change of practice and ramifications
- 3) Disrespect for our collective agreements, processes, and our members
- 4) Continued deterioration of labour relations

UPSE has been arguing against the employer's practice of "reassigning members" for the past two years with no resolution and so proceeded into arbitration on April 4 & 5, 2024. The Arbitrator decided to issue an Order which outlines a process to be followed, where due to bona fide need, a member is required to be reassigned.

As President, I have received many calls from members about the reassignment issue, including RCWs, PCWs and LPNs. The Union office has been notified that because of reassignment, three of our members have recently resigned. This is not helping the staffing shortage. The employer is not adhering to the collective agreement, nor the most recent Order from Arbitrator Demont.

I have been informed that many UPSE members in long-term care are burnt out, overwhelmed, working short-staffed, being moved to different areas with no orientation or training on the new residents they are assigned to care for, and some are even breaking down and crying at work. This is a result of poor leadership at Health PEI. Many of my members are thinking about leaving their jobs in long-term care, retiring and/or resigning because of the working conditions and lack of respect.

It's time for the persons in leadership positions to demonstrate leadership and address these ongoing issues (reassignment, model of care, respect and adherence to collective

agreements, respect for processes and arbitration decisions, and respect for UPSE members) in long-term care because failure to do so immediately will result in further staffing challenges and the collapse of the public long-term care service.

So, when Health PEI sends a message regarding “Happy RCW Week,” be sure to remind them that actions speak louder than words. As it stands, many of UPSE’s RCWs, PCWs and HSWs are not having the happy week they so well deserve.

**Karen Jackson,
UPSE President**