



## **Message from the President**

Greetings, fellow Nurse Practitioners -

I am writing today to update you on our progress towards unionization. It is the NPAAU's goal to be as open, accurate, and transparent as possible in our communications with you, and to keep you as informed as possible about the union's activities as we continue forward.

Union members and other members of the Nurse Practitioner community have brought a number of questions and concerns to our attention in connection with the recent ALRB hearings and we would like to take this opportunity to address those questions and concerns.

### **NPAAU has shown, and continues to gain, the support of more than 40% of NPs working at AHS and at Covenant Health.**

As you are likely aware, on April 26, 2021, NPAAU applied to the Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB) to be recognized as the certified bargaining agent for all eligible Nurse Practitioners working at AHS and at Covenant Health.

In order for a certification application to be successful, the application must include proof that the applying union has the support of at least 40% of the eligible employees in that bargaining unit. It is standard practice for the ALRB to investigate every application and to verify whether or not it actually shows the required support of at least 40% of the eligible employees.

NPAAU's application for AHS included a complete list of our active members working at AHS, and NPAAU's application for Covenant Health included a complete list of our active members working at Covenant Health. The ALRB investigated each of NPAAU's applications and, for both AHS and Covenant Health, the ALRB officer's report confirmed that NPAAU had successfully shown the support of more than 40% of the eligible Nurse Practitioners at each employer.

### **NPAAU defended our certification applications.**

There were objections to both of NPAAU's certification applications. NPAAU's certification applications could not proceed until those objections were addressed in hearings.

AHS objected to the exact wording of the bargaining unit that NPAAU applied for; AHS wanted to add wording clearly excluding Nurse Practitioners who perform managerial duties more than 50% of the time. Along those same lines, AHS objected to four NPAAU members being included in the application because, in their opinion, those employees performed managerial duties more than 50% of the time. Although NPAAU prepared arguments to defend those employees and the wording of the bargaining unit, these two objections from AHS were relatively minor, and together were set to take up only a day (likely less) of hearings.

The main objections came from UNA (or for the AHS application, UNA acting as agent for Kevin Huntley). UNA raised the same three objections to both the AHS and Covenant Health applications:

1. UNA alleged that NPAAU did not show the support of 40% of the eligible employees in each bargaining unit. In their filed objections, UNA claimed that Nurse Practitioners were confused and that NPAAU members didn't understand that you were showing support for the NPAAU when you made your NPAAU membership payments.
2. UNA alleged that NPAAU used coercion, intimidation, threats, promises and undue influence, and that NPAAU deceptively pulled a "bait and switch" that tricked Nurse Practitioners into thinking that you were joining NPAA when in fact you were joining NPAAU.
3. UNA alleged that several NPAAU members didn't make their own membership payments and that NPAAU allowed them to join anyways. UNA withdrew this objection on the first day of hearings after NPAAU gave evidence to UNA, AHS, and the ALRB which established that UNA's objection was unfounded.

At the scheduled hearings, NPAAU vigorously defended both certification applications. Our position was not that our application process had been perfect. To the contrary: we are admittedly a new union, and we continue to learn as we go. We recognize and acknowledge that our communications, branding, and processes often could and should have been clearer and



more precise to better inform Nurse Practitioners. Although we do not agree with UNA that these shortcomings effectively fooled or misled Nurse Practitioners, they have nevertheless highlighted opportunities for improvement going forward.

**NPAAU's decision to withdraw and re-apply will save time, save money, and benefit both the union and our applications.**

Hearing and arguing the issues raised in UNA's objections resulted in significant delays. Multiple written briefs were filed, and multiple witnesses were called upon during the initial hearings to provide testimony and to be examined on their evidence.

What began as a two-day hearing set to end in early July soon expanded to a five-day hearing scheduled to end in late September, with a decision expected in mid-October at the earliest. And that was only for the AHS hearing; the Covenant Health hearing was largely adjourned until after the AHS matter had been decided. A decision on the Covenant Health hearing was not expected until late October or early November.

As we noted in our news release of July 21, 2021, when faced with these extreme delays, the NPAAU Board canvassed its options and determined that it would be less expensive, more timely, and ultimately more effective to withdraw the existing certification applications and to re-submit new ones after the required 90-day wait period. In the meantime, NPAAU is able to refine our approach, continue to build our organization and membership, and remove any doubt of the growing support that Nurse Practitioners have shown for a union for NPs by NPs.

NPAAU will become eligible to re-apply for certification on Wednesday, October 20, 2021. With the support of our members, that's what we aim to do, and we continue to be on track towards this goal.

**NPAAU welcomes your input and participation!**

The NPAAU as an organization, and we as your elected Board members, are already taking steps to improve our communications, branding, and processes to better serve you, our valued members and colleagues.

Our next step is to choose a new name for the union that the union that will be more clearly distinct and separate from the NPAA. We've presented a number of options to you, our members, and we're very happy with the results of the poll and with your positive feedback!

Accordingly, we have called a special meeting of the Board on **Thursday, September 9, 2021** to amend our existing Constitution to reflect the new name of the union and to make other proposed changes designed to bolster the organization and to engage our members. Although the Board will have the final vote at this special meeting, we will first hear and consider feedback from our members: attendees will be given the opportunity to voice your comments and we strongly encourage you to attend. All members should have received notice of the special meeting, including the proposed changes to our existing Constitution, by email on August 6, 2021. If you did not receive that notice, please contact either me or our Vice-President, Anne Summach, at the email addresses below.

In the meantime, we encourage you to read the existing Constitution, to make notes, and to attend our upcoming townhall meeting on **Tuesday, August 24, 2021**. We will do our best to address your questions there.

Should you or any member have any questions or concerns about this or any other communication, kindly direct your correspondence to me or to your Vice-President, Anne Summach, so that we can connect with you directly, address your questions and concerns thoroughly, and provide you and other Nurse Practitioners with accurate and up-to-date information.

Thank you for your ongoing support and participation as we continue to lay groundwork for this new union of Nurse Practitioners across Alberta!

Respectfully,

Mary-Elizabeth Cooper NP

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