

# MEMBER UPDATE

## KENNEY'S EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

UCP's attack on workers is marching Alberta towards disaster and more labour unrest

Jason Kenney and the UCP government are at it again.

They have completely mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases are skyrocketing, front-line heroes are overworked and burnt-out, and Alberta Health Services has all but given up on accurate, timely contact tracing. Dr. Deena Hinshaw says the situation is deeply concerning, but our premier has reneged his responsibility to Albertans and has failed to act.

But Jason Kenney and his team haven't been slacking all this time. On the contrary, they've neglected the pandemic so they can spend time scheming new ways to attack Alberta's front line workers and the services we all depend on.

Here are the three big ways Kenney's UCP attacked Albertans last week.

### **Demanding Government of Alberta workers take a 4% pay cut**

The UCP is proposing a 4% wage cut for Government of Alberta (GOA) employees.

After showing their contempt for GOA AUPE members by proposing a 1% cut and three years of zeroes before the pandemic, now they want an across-the-board cut of 4%.

The government wants even more cuts—an extra 3%—for some members, including members they assigned emergency police powers in rural areas as part of the Rural Alberta Provincial Integrated Defence (RAPID) Force.

This "offer" is a tone-deaf attack on AUPE members, workers who the province has relied on more than ever during the pandemic. Your GOA bargaining team will not agree to these demands. AUPE members across Alberta will fight back against this injustice and we will stop this callous attack on our livelihoods.

### **Attacking workers rights with Bill 47, the *Ensuring Safety and Cutting Red Tape Act***

Bill 47 is the UCP's latest attack on working people in Alberta. It would roll back recent improvements to Workers Compensation Board and Occupational Health and Safety standards.

Here's the scariest thing about Bill 47: it would let bosses fire injured workers instead of re-employing them after recovery, an outrageous proposal which would impact not only AUPE members, but especially our fellow workers in the building trades and oil & gas industry.

Bill 47 would also eliminate the independent Fair Practices Office and Medical Panels Office, which help injured workers make their way through the WCB system. The last thing injured workers need is to navigate WCB's confusing, stormy waters without support.

### **Rigging our Health Care System with Bill 46, the *Health Statutes Amendment Act***

Bill 46 would regulate Health Care Aides (HCAs) and bring them under the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta (CLPNA). It would make regulatory colleges and workers' associations work separately from each other and would not allow any union representation on those regulatory colleges.

This change could make life more difficult for Health Care Aides. The fees workers must pay to regulatory colleges are often high, and HCAs are paid less than their nursing care counterparts. Many must work more than one job to afford the basic necessities. It is hard to see how the UCP thinks workers would benefit from this!

Furthermore, this change could make it harder for Health Care Aides to fight for a higher quality health care system, not just for themselves, but also for their patients.

In October 2020, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta proposed new rules that would limit what nurses can say on social media. Not only are these rules an obvious attack on free speech, our fellow workers in the United Nurses of Alberta are worried this could mean nurses would be stopped from advocating for better health care policy.

Would the CLPNA propose similar anti-freedom policies for HCAs, who are just as outspoken and passionate about quality health care as their co-workers?

Regulating HCAs under the CLPNA is also just a difficult and bizarre thing to do. So many employers—especially private and non-profit seniors care businesses—use countless different names and classification details for Health Care Aides, so counting them is nearly impossible.

### **Prepare to fight back**

AUPE members have already shown they will not take the UCP government's abuse without fighting back. We have been preparing to stop Kenney's cuts for over a year, and we must continue to do so.

The solidarity you share with your fellow AUPE members and co-workers is the strongest defense you have. We must all stand together, support each other, listen and learn from each other, and unite in our opposition to Jason Kenney's war against Alberta.

History will remember the rebels as the heroes of this story.