

April 3, 2018

Reference Number: 2018-G-051

Colin Craig  


Dear Mr. Craig:

Re: *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*  
**Final Response to Request for Information**

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I am writing in response to your request for access to information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*.

Specifically, your request reads as follows:

“Please provide documentation on the number of staff (by year) who are expected to receive a step increase during the new contract with the United Nurses of Alberta. Please indicate any estimates as to the cost of the step increases by year. A summary is preferred”.

The time period for the records requested is from January 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018.

We are pleased to provide access to the records you requested; copies of 2 pages of records are enclosed.

Please note the program area explained that they have no records pertaining to any specific study about “any estimates as to the cost of the step increases by year” given the time period requested. The record that we are disclosing contains a summary of relevant information specifically created by the program area in response to this FOIP request.

Also note that under section 65 of the *FOIP Act*, you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta to review any decision made on your request. To request a review, you must complete and deliver a *Request for Review* form within 60 days from the date of this notice to:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
#410, 9925 – 109 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB  
T5K 2J8

The form is available on the Commissioner's website [www.oipc.ab.ca](http://www.oipc.ab.ca) or you can call 1-888-878-4044 (in Edmonton, call 780-422-6860) to request a copy of the form.

If you wish to request a review, please provide the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (OIPC) with the following information:

1. A copy of this letter.
2. A copy of your original request form that you sent to Alberta Health Services.
3. A completed OIPC Request for Review Form.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the processing of your request, please contact me at 780-735-1252 to discuss.

Yours truly,  
**Alberta Health Services**

*K Zielinski*

Katherine Zielinski  
Coordinator, Information Access Services

Enclosures: Record package – 2 pages



**FOIP Request: 2018-G-051**

Date: March 12, 2018

### Information:

- As of December 31, 2017, Alberta Health Services (AHS) had 28,157 direct nursing employees who were members of the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) collective agreement. These employees include registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses who provide care in Alberta's communities, hospitals and healthcare facilities.
- The 28,157 individuals work in full-time, part-time and casual positions, in a total of 17,320.6 full-time equivalents (FTEs). As of December 31, 2017, AHS had 9,420 full-time nurses, 11,940 part-time nurses and 6,844 casual nurses (note: some nurses have dual appointments - e.g., part-time and casual - and show up in more than one category).
- In February 2018, AHS and UNA ratified a three-year collective agreement that expires March 31, 2020. The agreement makes no changes to salary ranges for two years (2017/18 and 2018/19) with a requirement to negotiate wages in the third year.
- Salary ranges in the UNA agreement have 9 salary steps. Our nurses move through the salary steps based on service until they reach Step 9. This recognizes the skills our nurses bring to patients as they gain experience.
- A full-time nurse moves from step to step on their anniversary date with AHS. A part-time or casual nurse moves from step to step based on their working 1,920.75 hours (equivalent to full-time hours). This means it can take a nurse who works half-time (0.5 FTE) two years to move a step. A nurse who works one quarter the annual hours of a full-time nurse takes four years to move a step.
- Based on 2016-17 figures, every 1% salary adjustment to employees covered by the UNA agreement has the potential to cost AHS \$24 million. According to the Alberta government's [Bargaining Update \(February 2018\)](#), the average 2017 negotiated salary range increase for public and private sectors was 1.04%. The 2018 average is 1.27%. This means that the AHS and UNA collective agreement has potentially avoided a cost increase of \$56 million.
- Preventing a nurse from moving step to step was not part of the collective agreement settlement.
- AHS' payroll system does not identify or itemize the cost of salary increases due to step increases.

### Key Observations:

- 51% of direct nursing employees are at the top of their salary range (Step 9) and are not eligible to receive step increases. 49% (13,841 employees) are not at the top of their salary



range (Step 9) and, therefore, are eligible for step increases. These percentages have been consistent for the last 4 years. AHS expects these percentages to remain constant going forward for each year of the current United Nurses of Alberta collective agreement.

- As there is no standard report in AHS' payroll system that directly identifies the salary cost due to step increases, there are no records indicating the cost of step increases from January 1, 2017 to February 28, 2018.
- Although the cost is not captured in AHS' payroll system's standard reports, an estimated salary cost of step increments for 2017-18 is approximately \$17 million. This estimate is calculated by multiplying the number of nurses eligible for step increases (on steps 1-8) by the hours they worked (to account for part-time and casual nurses) and the average hourly dollar value between steps (\$1.46 per hour). \$17 million accounts for 0.7% of the total compensation for employees covered by the UNA collective agreement. AHS expects this cost to remain constant going forward for each year of the current UNA collective agreement.