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# BC TODAY

## Nurses lobby government in Q1

The Association of Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of B.C. lobbied the province 66 times in the first quarter of 2024, while the BC Nurses' Union (BCNU) has reached out to the province four times amid concerns about a rise of violence against nurses, open drug use in hospitals and short-staffed emergency rooms.

"I know there's certainly been a lot of attention around exposure to illicit substance use, but that's really [just] one hazard or risk that nurses are exposed to," BCNU president **Adriane Gear** told *BC Today*.

"They are tired of keeping the system together, lifting it up on their backs, and they're looking for relief."

Gear said nurses continue to deal with an uptick in violent incidents and that many are burned out after years of extended shifts due to staffing shortages.

According to B.C.'s lobbying registry, the BCNU reached out to Health Minister **Adrian Dix** and parliamentary secretary for rural health **Jennifer Rice** twice in March, but no meetings were scheduled.

On March 1, Dix announced nurse-to-patient ratios for several areas of hospital care, including one nurse for every three patients in high acuity care and one nurse for every patient in intensive care.

The health minister has said that patients and nurses should start to see progress on those ratios this fall, but Gear said that is ambitious given the number of nurses who need to be hired.

Despite the province's commitment to hire 320 new security officers, many hospitals are still without any security whatsoever, according to Gear. The actual result of the government's effort, she said, was health authorities replacing contracted private security with direct employees.

**Bernice Budz**, executive director of the Association of Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of B.C., has had at least one in-person meeting with assistant deputy health minister **Ted Patterson** and has reached out to others high-level public servants, including those specializing in Indigenous health.

She told *BC Today* her biggest ask is for the province to create more leadership positions for nurses and new mental health and peer support initiatives for them.

"Nurses make up the biggest part of the health-care system, so they should be involved in leadership," she said. "Patients will look to nurses and ask for advice and want to see change, and it's important that nurses be able to influence and lead that change."