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Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions  
representing 156,000 nurses and student nurses, advances solutions to improve patient care, working conditions and our public health care system.

## Why Unions

### What do nurses’ unions do?

Eighty percent of nurses in Canada are members of a union. Nurses’ union members take home some of the strongest pay and benefits packages in health care in the country. By belonging to nurses’ unions you are a part of a community of skilled health care providers experienced in advocating for better working conditions and improved patient care. Union representatives work hard to assist members with issues in their workplaces. As a member of a nurses’ union, members get to vote for their top leaders - the president, the vice-president, the secretary-treasurer and local or regional representatives. Members can attend meetings and are welcome to participate. Nurses’ unions also provide extensive education programs that provide members with knowledge and skills to enable them to recognize and resolve workplace issues such as breach of collective agreement rights, professional practice issues, and occupational health and safety. For more information on nurses’ unions, collective agreements, benefits or how to get involved in your local union visit our website at: [www.nursesunions.ca](http://www.nursesunions.ca)

### How do unions benefit me?

Unions also believe in social and economic justice by lobbying governments. Here are a few things unions have achieved over the years:

- Minimum wage laws
- Vacation and overtime pay
- Unemployment insurance and pension benefits
- Human rights legislation
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Health and safety rules

Unions work to improve wages, benefits and provide a voice for you in the workplace. In fact, unionized workers earn on average 30% higher wages and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than non-unionized workers. Unions are leaders in the areas of: publicly funded, publicly delivered health care; employment insurance and pension benefits; protecting the environment; affordable housing, and other economic development.

### What is the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions mandate?

The CFNU mandate is the national voice of unionized nurses. CFNU is there for nurses, we fight to protect our national health system and promote nurses and the nursing profession at every level. Nurses, our patients and our national health system itself are often up against big insurance and pharmaceutical corporations and others. These monied interests want health policy to serve them, and have lobbying “muscle” in the capital. That’s where we come in. Nurses are effective advocates, and we make sure that governments know what is best for nurses, our patients and the public health care system.

### Structure of the CFNU

Our membership is 156,000 strong. We represent nurses’ unions in eight provinces (AB, SK, MB, ON, NB, NS, PEI, NL) and we are proud to have as associate members, the 20,000 student nurses of CNSA. CFNU also enjoys a good working relationship with Quebec nurses. In 1998, the CFNU joined the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). As a member of the CLC, the CFNU works in solidarity with other labour unions to improve the social and economic well-being of workers and defend Canada’s social programs. The CFNU has also been an active member of the Canadian Health Coalition, protesting against extra billing, user fees, health cuts, privatization and the move to a two-tier health care system. It has expanded its ties internationally, with nurses’ unions in other countries, most of whom are facing similar, and sometimes worse, threats to their occupation and their health care systems.

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