Unity is Key
Solidarity among nurses is critical to the profession

There are consistent themes that I am hearing each day from nurses.

The more experienced or seasoned nurses, whom our friend Linda Silas, president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, terms “spicy” (finely seasoned!), believe that some of the less-experienced nurses coming up do not have the history or awareness to appreciate the blood, sweat, and tears that went into building the organization and standards we have today.

Standards that are common today in our contracts: controls on unsafe working conditions, family health coverage, pensions, vacations, paid sick leave, the ability to take weekends off and have some say in your work schedule, and improvements in pay.

Standards that our spicy nurses won through collective action, by building strong nurses’ unions, courageously standing up to their employers and a very powerful, commercially motivated healthcare industry, and fighting when necessary.

But what I hear from a number of younger nurses is that many of the older nurses don’t want to fight.

Then there is the technology...

The “spicy nurses” know fundamentally that employers have tried every trick in the book to displace skills and analytical thinking with other classifications.

Technology is the latest scheme to displace human intervention and advocacy. In short, machines won’t stand up to administrators who want to short circuit patient care. Machines don’t advocate, RNs advocate.

More recent nurses to the profession who were raised with a quantum increase in the use of technology initially attempt to embrace it. But quickly they discover the fallacy in the inappropriate use of technology, which is time consuming and takes them away from the bedside. Ultimately, through their assessment skills, they learn that nursing the machine is not the same thing as nursing the patient.

In healthcare as well as all other sectors of the economy, the employers have a strategy...