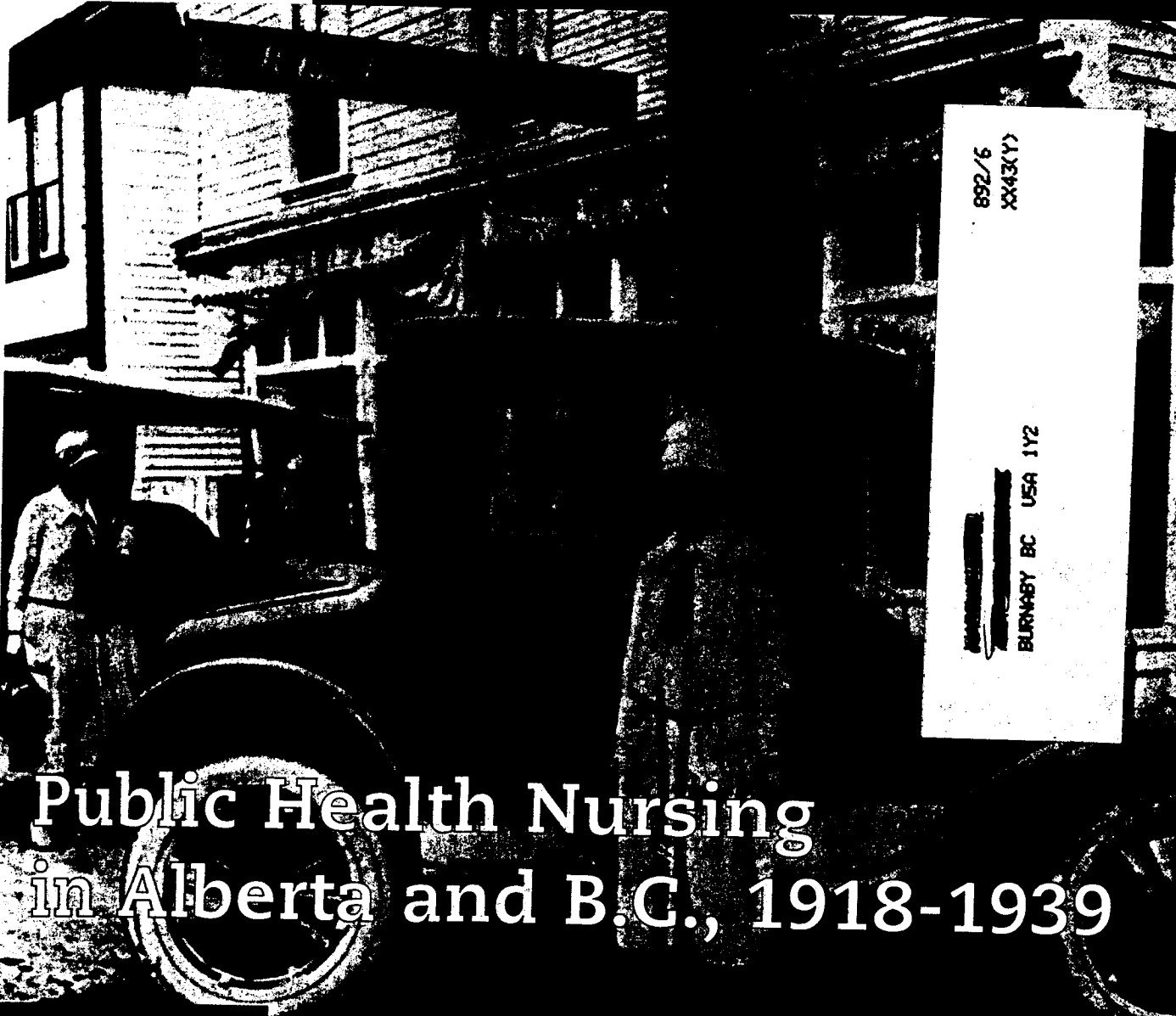


CANADIAN

# nurse

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## Public Health Nursing in Alberta and B.C., 1918-1939

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NURSE TO KNOW

Agreement Number 40062599

## TORONTO NURSES CHARGED

## Criminal charges laid three years after girl's hospital death

Nurses are watching closely the case of two Hospital for Sick Children nurses who were charged with criminal negligence causing death last October in connection with the 1998 death of Lisa Shore of Toronto. Many nurses consider what happened a systems failure — and a matter that should be dealt with by the nurses' regulatory body, the College of Nurses of Ontario, instead of the courts.

However, the College decided in December to adjourn its hearing pending the trial outcome. "Our decision was based on fairness to the nurses and to the public and everyone else involved," said communications coordinator Bill Clarke.

Dr. Janet Rush, chief nursing officer at the hospital, told reporters when the two nurses first appeared in court Nov. 22: "It's very unfortunate. As nurses say, it could be any one of us.... I have seen a huge groundswell of support for the nurses."

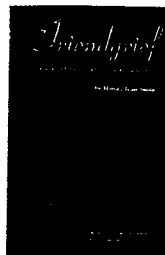
Charged are Ruth Doerksen, 41, and Anagaile Soriano, 25, the nurses who cared for 10-year-old Lisa on Oct. 22, 1998, when she was admitted to hospital suffering complications from a broken leg. A coroner's inquest into the case ruled it a homicide in 2000, after the girl died of a complex drug interaction leading to cardiac and respiratory arrest.

Comments appearing on a private ethics listserv that circulates electronically have expressed sympathy for the nurses charged. Contributors say strained working conditions increase the margin for error daily and that anyone could be held liable for negligence despite having little or no control over the care environment. In addition, they note the two women's reputations will be affected regardless of the trial's outcome.

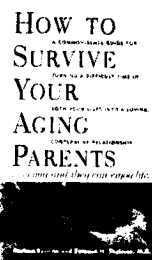
The Ontario Nurses Association, the union representing many Ontario nurses, has argued that a nurse's ability to perform well depends on the environment, support systems and level of communications with other health care providers that exist where he or she works.

Liz McIntyre, the lawyer representing the nurses, told *Canadian Nurse* she encounters "tremendous support for these nurses... everywhere I go," along with criticism of the decision to pursue the issue through the courts. "The College of Nurses (of Ontario) is the body that has been set up to deal with breaches of standards of care by nurses and that's who should be hearing this," McIntyre states. She says the trial isn't likely to begin before late summer or early fall.

If convicted, the nurses could be imprisoned for life under the maximum penalty. They remain on paid leave from the hospital, awaiting the outcome of the criminal proceedings.



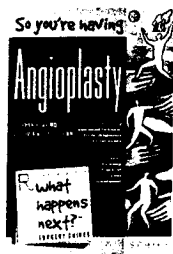
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