Government announcement on health worker safety falls short, says HSA

January 25, 2005

Subject: HSA Reacts to Government Announcement on Health Workers

The Health Sciences Association says today's government announcement that it will expand a program to track health and safety incidents is not enough to ensure health care workers are safe in their workplaces.

"Today's announcement to complete a system to track health and safety incidents by computer is a fine project, but it does nothing to immediately reduce the incidence of injury and occupational disease for health care workers," HSA President Cindy Stewart said.

"A million-dollar announcement on the heels of a tragic incident is not going to address the very real concerns of health care workers. The people who work in our health care system will find little comfort in hearing that a computer tracking system will be accelerated," she added.

Stewart said that while documentation is important to assess the causes of occupational health and safety risks, prevention is the key.

"If today's announcement is designed to comfort health care workers, it's not working. It is the height of hypocrisy to be making this announcement at the same time the government is gutting the very occupational health and safety regulations that protect workers. Instead of enforcing regulations that insure a safe workplace, the government has eliminated enforceable regulations and replaced them with 'guidelines' that employers can choose to follow," she said.

"Health care workers suffer injuries and occupational diseases that are preventable. If the government wants to protect health care workers, a firm commitment to prevention, including enforceable regulations, should be the priority," Stewart said.

The Health Sciences Associtaion represents 12,000 health science professionals providing clinical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services in BC's health care system.

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