



# HSA members urged to attend public hearings to oppose Liberals' attack on workers' health & safety

March 20, 2003

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The provincial Liberals have instructed the BC Workers' Compensation Board to begin dismantling the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OH&S Reg), an essential tool in building and maintaining safe and healthy workplaces. Despite the Regulation's crucial role, the provincial Liberals have instructed the WCB to eliminate one third of the OH&S Reg, as part of the government's ideologically motivated drive to "deregulate". Gutting the OH&S Reg is simply a numbers game to them, played with little regard for the negative impact on workers' health and safety.

In response to the Liberals instructions, the WCB has proposed a first round of cuts to eliminate hundreds of sections of the Regulation, including drastic changes to the sections governing chemical exposure. These cuts will have a devastating effect on workplace health and safety in every worksite in the province.

Health care already has the highest rate of workplace injury and illness among all sectors in B.C. Dismantling the regulatory scheme that promotes OH&S will significantly increase workplace risks for all health care workers. Eliminating OH&S safeguards will also result in more workers suffering work-related injury and illness in all B.C. workplaces. As health care workers, our members will experience firsthand the additional stresses as the health care system tries to care for the increasing number of workers from all walks of life, who will be injured on the job.

**The WCB is legally required to hold public hearings before they make any changes to the OH&S Regulation. Despite the huge impact their current proposals will have on worker health and safety, the WCB is holding hearings for only 2 days, and in only 2 communities. It is essential that as many people as possible attend these hearings to demonstrate opposition to the proposed cuts. HSA urges all members in the Prince George and Richmond areas to attend the hearings, which are scheduled as follows:**

<b>Tuesday, March 25, 2003</b> Prince George Civic Centre 855 Dominion Street Prince George, BC	<b>Thursday, March 27, 2003</b> Workers' Compensation Board Rooms 201-203 Auditorium, Rehab. Centre 6951 Westminister Highway Richmond, BC (near Richmond Hospital)
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Hearing times at each location will be from 9:00 am. to 12:00 noon, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. **HSA will make a submission at the Richmond public hearing from 2:40 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

In addition to pushing for drastic cuts to the OH&S Regulation, the Liberals have also forced the WCB to eliminate hundreds of staff positions, cut services and close regional offices. There will now be far fewer trained staff, especially outside of urban areas, to help identify or deal with workplace hazards, as well as fewer Prevention Officers to enforce the Regulation.

The Compensation Employees Union, which represents WCB's unionized staff, is holding a rally to protest these cuts. HSA members are encouraged to attend the CEU rally, which is being held in conjunction with the Public Hearing in Richmond, March 27th, from noon - 1:00 p.m. at the WCB's main building, 6951 Westminister Highway.

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