

BULLETIN

Health unions hold first meeting with government on Bill 29 court ruling

September 6, 2007

*Facilities Bargaining Association
Nurses Bargaining Association
Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association
Community Bargaining Association*

Health care unions met today with representatives of the provincial government to deal with the repercussions of last June's landmark Supreme Court decision that declared parts of a 2002 contract-stripping law unconstitutional.

Bill 29, the Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act, eliminated or curtailed provisions in legally-negotiated contracts that resulted in job losses for thousands of workers, mostly women. For many others, the legislation resulted in limited career options, lower pay and arbitrary transfers.

The June 8 court ruling established for the first time that collective bargaining is protected under the freedom of association provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The court declared key sections of Bill 29 unconstitutional.

The court suspended its declaration for a period of one year so that government can deal with the repercussions of the decision.

Today's initial meeting with government included representatives from the four union bargaining associations that negotiate on behalf of nearly 100,000 health care workers.

The parties exchanged perspectives on the meaning of the court ruling and agreed to engage in a series of negotiations.

On broader issues, all four bargaining associations will meet jointly with government. Issues specific to individual bargaining associations will be negotiated separately with government and health employers.

The unions are optimistic that in addition to restoring workers rights, the talks will provide an opportunity to find solutions that improve health care delivery to the public.

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Information:

Mike Old, communications director, Hospital Employees Union, 604-828-6771 (c)

Art Moses, communications coordinator, BC Nurses Union, 604-868-4259 (c)

Miriam Sobrino, communications officer, Health Sciences Association, 604-439-0994 (o)

Brian Gardiner, communications officer, BC Government and Service Employees Union, 604-291-9611 (o)

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017