



NEWS RELEASE

Repeal of legislation will end 16-year attack on delivery of health care and community social services in BC

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Immediate Release

HSA welcomes today's news that BC Minister of Health Adrian Dix has introduced legislation repealing 16-year-old legislation that targeted health care and community social services workers British Columbians count on to care for them during their most vulnerable times.

"This legislation introduced today brings an end to almost two decades of attacks on health care and community social service workers," said HSA President Val Avery.

Bills 29 and 94, introduced by the BC Liberal government in 2002 and 2003 respectively, resulted in reduction in wages, working conditions, and job security for workers in the health and community social services sectors. The effect of the legislation was to erode the conditions of care for vulnerable patients and clients and to create industrial instability.

In 2008, the Supreme Court of Canada threw out many elements of the legislation that eliminated collective agreement protections against contracting out, cancelled layoff notice provisions, took away bumping rights, and gave employers the unilateral right to transfer employees from one workplace to another without their consent.

Despite the Supreme Court's ruling, the then-BC Liberal government continued to pursue its agenda of contracting out and privatizing critical services.

Seniors care was widely contracted out to private providers, and the effect of short-term contracts resulted in a loss of continuity of care and over-worked staff, for which patients and their families suffered the consequences. BC's seniors' advocate, Isobel McKenzie, released a report earlier this year that found, compared to public care homes, seniors living in private facilities are 32 per cent more likely to be sent to the emergency department; 34 per cent more likely to be hospitalized; likely to stay in hospital 32 per cent longer; and 54 per cent more likely to die in hospital.

"With the complete repeal of the legislation that allowed this erosion in services, our members working in health care and community social services will be able to focus on what they do best – taking care of British Columbians in hospitals and in their communities," Avery said.