



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWS RELEASE

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► **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JUNE 21, 2007**

## Public backs moratorium on health care layoffs

*In the wake of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on Bill 29, most British Columbians don't believe that the controversial law improved patient care, according to new poll*

Nearly four out of every five British Columbians reject Premier Gordon Campbell's position that health care layoffs should continue even though the sections of the law that enabled such actions have been struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

In a Viewpoints Research/HEU poll conducted last week, 80 per cent disagreed with the premier's position that layoffs continue during the year his government has to implement the high court's June 8 decision. Only 11 per cent support the premier's position.

Nearly 700 care staff at six nursing homes have been handed pink slips in the last six weeks and health employers have said they'll hand out layoff notices for the equivalent of 500 full-time positions in the coming year.

More than 300 current cleaning and maintenance jobs are also at risk as the result of a plan for a private operator to maintain expanded hospital facilities in the Okanagan.

And despite the premier's claim that *Bill 29* allowed government to focus resources on patients, the poll indicates only five per cent believe the legislation improved patient care.

On the other hand, 56 per cent of those polled say the controversial law – which stripped contracting-out protections from health care workers' collective agreements – caused patient care to worsen. Another 23 per cent said it made no difference at all.

"*Bill 29* is bad public policy that has caused untold damage to our health care system and the public knows it," says HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic.

"This disruption and damage should stop now – not one year from now. That's why the public wants a moratorium on further layoffs."

The poll also found that 91 per cent said the B.C. government should disclose the details and costs of lucrative contracts signed with foreign corporations as a result of *Bill 29*.

Viewpoints Research conducted the telephone poll survey of 350 adult British Columbians on June 13 and 14. It is accurate to within 5.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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*Backgrounder (1) attached*





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# BACKGROUND

## Government should respond to Supreme Court decision on *Bill 29* with a change of attitude – poll

### Highlights:

- 80 per cent favour moratorium on health care layoffs post-*Bill 29* decision.
- 79 per cent say *Bill 29* worsened patient care or made no difference at all.
- 91 per cent say government should disclose the details and costs of contracts signed with foreign corporations as a result of *Bill 29*.

The Viewpoints Research/HEU poll surveyed 350 adult British Columbians on June 13 and 14. It is considered accurate to within 5.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

### Detailed Questions:

The law struck down by the Supreme Court resulted in 8,000 health care workers losing their jobs over the past five years. Now there are plans to lay off 1,100 more workers.

Health care unions say that these additional workers should not be laid off because the law allowing the layoffs has been struck down by the Supreme Court. The provincial government says that they have a year to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling and therefore the additional layoffs will go ahead as planned.

### Do you agree or disagree that health care workers should continue to be laid off over the next year?

*Strongly agree* – 4.6%      *Strongly disagree* – 60.6%      *Don't Know/Refused* – 9.1%  
*Somewhat agree* – 6.6%      *Somewhat disagree* – 19.1%  
**Total agree** – 11.2%      **Total Disagree** – 79.7%

The government says it originally laid off these health care workers so more money could be spent on patient care. **Do you believe that patient care has improved, stayed about the same or worsened as a result of the layoff of these health care workers?**

*Improved a lot* – 1.4%      *Worsened a lot* – 36.0%      *Stayed about the same* – 22.9%  
*Improved somewhat* – 4.0%      *Worsened somewhat* – 19.7%      *Don't Know/Refused* – 16.0%  
**Total worsened or no change** – 78.6%

When the government laid off thousands of health care workers, they contracted-out these jobs to large, foreign corporations. **In light of the Supreme Court decision the government should make the details and costs of these contracts public.**

*Strongly agree* – 54.0%      *Strongly disagree* – 0.3%      *Don't Know/Refused* – 4.3%  
*Agree* – 36.6%      *Disagree* – 4.9%  
**Total agree** – 90.6%      **Total Disagree** – 5.2%

June 21, 2007

