



## Bill 29 talks resume in January

### *Plans for shared services organization casts shadow over discussions*

Health unions will resume meetings with government and health employers on the implementation of last summer's Supreme Court decision on *Bill 29*, on January 10.

And with just six months to go before the unconstitutional sections of *Bill 29* are struck down, there will be renewed pressure to conclude these discussions so that the B.C. Liberal government can introduce legislation to bring themselves into compliance with the Court's ruling.

But those talks became more difficult last week with the revelation that B.C.'s health authorities are setting up a new province-wide shared services organization that will consider further contracting out of so-called "non-clinical" services in health care.

"This eleventh hour confession that health authorities are looking at future privatization – and have been for many months – is astonishing given that we have repeatedly asked for this information during the course of the *Bill 29* talks," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy.

"It also reinforces our impression that government and health employers are dead set on maintaining their sweeping *Bill 29* powers to contract out health services.

"This development also underscores the importance of obtaining improved protection for members' jobs as part of this process," adds Darcy, who also speaks for the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) in the *Bill 29* talks.

HEU and its union partners in the FBA have held 18 days of talks with representatives of government and the Health Employers Association of B.C. since October 4.

During these sessions, the unions have focused on achieving a solution that improves health care by addressing skills shortages, secures workers' constitutional rights, and provides redress for union members whose rights were impacted by the sections of *Bill 29* struck down by the Supreme Court.

*...more*



The unions have made a series of presentations on how the government's policy of health service privatization has affected patients, seniors and workers. The union has also demanded public disclosure of a number of documents related to the privatization of health services over the last five years.

Although government had targeted the end of December as a deadline for talks, health unions insisted that the discussions would continue in the new year.

In addition to the FBA, three other bargaining associations – the Nurses Bargaining Association, the Community Bargaining Association and the Health Sciences Professionals Bargaining Association – have also begun discussions with government and health employers on issues specific to their bargaining unit members.

On December 14, two of those associations, the Health Sciences Professionals and the Community Bargaining associations, joined the FBA in a meeting with government representatives to discuss broader issues including future legislation.

December 21, 2007