



# Newsletter

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## **LPNs say professional practice would suffer if moved to RN-dominated bargaining association**

**L**ICENSED PRACTICAL NURSES told reporters in Vancouver Thursday that their professional practice would be undermined by a plan to move them into the bargaining association dominated by registered nurses.

The BC Nurses' Union announced July 14 that they had met with the deputy minister of labour in the Campbell government to make the proposal – a move opposed by the Hospital Employees' Union and the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union which represent LPNs in hospitals, long-term care and community health services.

LPN Mary Nicholls, who has worked in four hospitals over the past 29 years, said that LPNs currently work in critical care and specialty units such as emergency, operating rooms and intensive care step-down units despite resistance from registered nurses.

“Because of RN opposition, I am not confident that the BCNU, a union of one category of workers – registered nurses – will look out for the best interests of LPNs,” said Nicholls.

Verna-Lee Dennis, an LPN working to full scope of practice in long-term care, echoed the concern that the RN union won't look after the goals and needs of licensed practical nurses.

“When I became an LPN, I felt that the attitude of some registered nurses changed toward me,” said Dennis. “Once I began practicing to full scope, the atmosphere at work worsened. It is my opinion that the RNs look down on us and see us as a threat to their jobs.”

Elaine Cox, who became an LPN in 1965 and practices at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital, recounted how HEU's pay equity fight has resulted in significant gains for licensed practical nurses and the union's efforts to achieve full-scope utilization for LPNs has been opposed by registered nurses.

“If we come under BCNU control, they will be able to dictate where we work and what we'll be allowed to practise. I believe they'll stifle us and our scope of practice,” said Cox. “No one asked me if I want this to happen.”

Roger Travale works as an LPN in two different settings in Prince George and holds union memberships in HEU and BCNU. He's against the plan that will put LPN interests in the hands of a BCNU-dominated bargaining association.

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“The response to a move that would force 4,000 LPNs to join 26,000 registered nurses should be ‘no’,” said Travale.

The Union of Psychiatric Nurses represent some of B.C.’s registered psychiatric nurses and are members of the Nurses’ Bargaining Association. But past-president Stew Johnson says the closed-door government talks on LPNs were initiated by the BCNU without consultation with the UPN.

“It’s unfortunate that this comes at a time when unions should be sticking together to fight the health care agenda of the Campbell Liberal government,” said Johnson. “It’s a sad day in BC.”

HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt called on the BCNU to put a stop to its attempts to make an arrangement with the Campbell government to transfer LPNs into their bargaining association.

“It’s not good for health care and its totally inappropriate at this time when we should be concentrating on countering the attacks of the Campbell Liberal government on all members of the nursing team – RNs, RPNs, LPNs or care aides,” said Allnutt.

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