



# Newsletter

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## **Faulty HEABC reading cited in failed bid to deny severance to displaced workers**

*Interior plan shot down, but members urged to be wary of similar attempts provincewide*

**A**N ATTEMPT by the Interior Health Authority to deny displaced workers in the Thompson Service Delivery Area the option of taking severance pay was shot down by a troubleshooter in a hearing on Tuesday.

### **IMPORTANT SHOP STEWARD ALERT**

The case, in which health employers in Williams Lake had argued that bumping rights removed the right to collect severance, was based on an HEABC interpretation that no one who could achieve a bump, no matter where in the Health Service Delivery area, or the FTE or classification of the position, could claim severance pay.

In one case, a 37-year-old single mother and full-time, long-term care aide with 16 years of seniority would have been forced to sell her house in Williams Lake, move to Merritt and accept a .55 FTE without having the option of simply receiving her severance instead.

“HEABC’s interpretation would have rendered the severance part of the collective agreement inoperable.” says HEU Northern director Kathy Jessome, who was the union’s counsel at Tuesday’s hearing. The case involved three locals in the Thompson Service Delivery Area.

Troubleshooter Chris Sullivan said that HEABC’s interpretation was based on a 1997 decision by Stephen Kelleher regarding severance in Port Alice and concluded that there is no basis on which to deny severance choices to displaced workers.

While grateful that the HEABC interpretation was tossed out, HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt says he’s concerned that HEU members may not be aware of how the spirit of the collective agreement is being distorted by employers.

“We need to stop employers from denying our members their right to the limited range of options Bill 29 left them with,” says Allnutt.

“We also have to get this information out there for members, because otherwise they will make their decisions based only on the information the employer provides them.”

**All shop stewards throughout the province are advised to be on the lookout for similar interpretations by health employers.**

June 3, 2004

