



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## This year's International Day Against Homophobia focuses on health care

HEU's Lesbian and Gay Standing Committee will join other organizations around the world on May 17 to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia. This year's theme "health care: homosexuality is not an illness" is also prominently featured in the current issue of *Pride Pages*, available on the union's website.

"As a socially conscious trade union, HEU has taken the lead – not just in B.C., but also in Canada – in our commitment to raise the profile of our lesbian and gay members, and to protect the hard-fought human rights they've achieved," says HEU president Fred Muzin. "And since 1996, when our four equity standing committees were established at convention – including the Lesbian and Gay Standing Committee – we have continued that work through outreach and advocacy."

Earlier this week, as part of International Day Against Homophobia activities, HEU's Lesbian and Gay Standing Committee was a supporter of a sold-out Awareness Breakfast at Vancouver's Coast Plaza Hotel, and purchased a full-page ad in the community publication *Xtra West*.

"Events, like the Awareness Breakfast, provide opportunities for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered communities and allies to connect with one another, raise awareness about homophobia, and discuss their health care needs," says Muzin. "We can only successfully deal with these issues if we also address the social determinants of health – poverty, homelessness and inadequate education."

Although Canada has been a pioneer in promoting and establishing legal protections for gays and lesbians, many still live in shame and fear of disclosing their sexual orientation; some risk losing their jobs; some are ostracized from families, friends, colleagues, and communities; and in 77 countries around the world, homosexuality is still a punishable crime.

May 17 is designated the International Day Against Homophobia because on that date in 1990, the World Health Organization removed homosexuality as a mental illness from its *International Classification of Diseases* manual.

May 16, 2008

