



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Bill 29 compensation cheques to arrive before Christmas

Vince Ready rules on point value for Bill 29 claimants

Compensation payments ranging from around \$800 to more than \$17,000 will be paid to more than 7,000 health care workers who were displaced as a result of Bill 29. The average compensation payment will be about \$9500.

These payments apply to claimants who were members of the Facilities Bargaining Association.

Those numbers are based on a decision handed down by arbitrator Vince Ready late last week which assigned a dollar value for each point allocated to claimants under the Bill 29 claims process.

The payments are the result of negotiations between health unions and government after the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in June 2007 that parts of Bill 29 violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The ruling also established collective bargaining as a constitutionally-protected right.

The 2002 legislation voided or rewrote provisions of health care collective agreements, clearing the way for the mass firings of thousands of workers, mostly women, and the unprecedented privatization of health care services.

Under the Bill 29 settlement agreement reached by health unions with government and health employers last January, \$68 million was set aside for compensation claims filed by members of the Facilities Bargaining Association.

Mr. Ready worked with health unions and health employers to establish a fair process for the distribution of the compensation payments and to act as an arbitrator on outstanding issues.

Ready established the claims form last March and assigned point values to the criteria in that form last August. He has now determined that each point will be valued at \$394.

All compensation payments are subject to statutory deductions, as required by Canada Revenue Agency, and to union dues.

For those currently employed by the same employer that displaced them, statutory deductions will include income tax, CPP and EI. For former employees, the payment will be considered a retiring allowance and subject to a lump-sum income tax deduction only.

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The vast majority of those affected were members of the Hospital Employees' Union, who represent 92 per cent of the claimants.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says while the compensation payouts will never make up for the damage Bill 29 caused to health care workers, they will provide much-needed financial assistance to families who've suffered badly as a result of the government's actions.

"Bill 29 was devastating to so many families and continues to undermine the wages and working conditions of the thousands of workers employed by private contractors in our public health care facilities," says Darcy.

"Workers and patients are still paying the price for Bill 29."

In addition to negotiating \$68 million in financial compensation last January, the unions negotiated a further \$2 million in retraining monies for workers affected by privatization in the past and a further \$5 million for those affected by contracting out in the future.

Health unions and employers are currently working out guidelines for accessing those training funds.

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