



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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BCNU actions undermine nursing team

The BCNU today announced in newspaper ads across B.C. that they would be offering memberships to all Licensed Practical Nurses. The Hospital Employees' Union currently represents about 5,000 LPNs. Nearly all of BCNU's 26,000 members are Registered Nurses.

HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy says the BCNU has a long history of opposing the expanded utilization of LPNs within health care and questions why the RN-dominated union wants to represent them now.

"LPNs have stepped up to the plate to help solve the nursing shortage by taking on expanded roles, specialized positions and more responsibility," says Darcy.

"BCNU has repeatedly attempted to block the increased utilization of LPNs in the workplace and has failed to do so. Given their record, why would anyone believe that the BCNU would safeguard the interests of 5,000 LPNs over the interests of its 26,000 RN members?"

LPNs have unique interests as professional nurses. And HEU has worked with its LPN members to win increased recognition and support for LPNs' professional practice from health ministry officials and senior nursing leaders within B.C.'s health authorities.

With HEU, LPNs have gained access to millions of dollars in training and professional development funds, support for taking on new practice and leadership roles, and flexible shift scheduling.

Darcy says that more needs to be done to support LPNs and ensure that they are compensated properly for their increased roles and responsibilities. And she notes that LPN wages in B.C. have fallen behind other provinces including Alberta – a result of the 2004 rollback of wages for HEU members in the facilities subsector.

"I urge BCNU not to interfere with our efforts to ensure that LPNs are treated fairly and compensated properly – and not to exploit this situation for their own benefit," says Darcy.

"BCNU and HEU members need to work together to protect and improve public health care across B.C. The leadership of the BCNU should focus on this challenge rather than on a divisive power-play that will cause division and uncertainty on the front lines of health care.

"At a time when we need to be building a stronger health care team, BCNU's actions are disruptive to the delivery of care."

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