



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

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Bill 29 compensation to be paid to more than 7,000 health care workers

B.C. health employers will pay out \$68 million to workers whose Charter rights were violated by the 2002 legislation

More than 7,000 health care workers who lost their jobs as a result of the B.C. Liberal government's Bill 29 will receive compensation cheques before Christmas.

The payments result from 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.

Claimants will receive gross payments of between \$788 and \$17,730 depending on individual circumstances such as length of service, loss of earnings, employment status (full-time or part-time) and other factors. The average payout is about \$9,500 per claimant.

Claims are based on a point system that was established by labour arbitrator Vince Ready in August. Late last week, Ready ruled that each point would have a value of \$394.

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.

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 for Bill 29."

In addition to negotiating \$68 million in financial compensation last January, the unions negotiated a further \$7 million in retraining monies for workers affected by privatization. The unions also won back the right to negotiate on issues like privatization and contracting out.

This settlement applies to members of the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association representing more than 270 job categories in hospitals and long-term care facilities. Additional settlements for other workers in the health care system (registered nurses, health science professionals and community health care workers) amounted to another \$10 million.

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