



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

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Public backs moratorium on health care layoffs

In the wake of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling on Bill 29, most British Columbians don't believe that the controversial law improved patient care, according to new poll

Nearly four out of every five British Columbians reject Premier Gordon Campbell's position that health care layoffs should continue even though the sections of the law that enabled such actions have been struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

In a Viewpoints Research/HEU poll conducted last week, 80 per cent disagreed with the premier's position that layoffs continue during the year his government has to implement the high court's June 8 decision. Only 11 per cent support the premier's position.

Nearly 700 care staff at six nursing homes have been handed pink slips in the last six weeks and health employers have said they'll hand out layoff notices for the equivalent of 500 full-time positions in the coming year.

More than 300 current cleaning and maintenance jobs are also at risk as the result of a plan for a private operator to maintain expanded hospital facilities in the Okanagan.

And despite the premier's claim that *Bill 29* allowed government to focus resources on patients, the poll indicates only five per cent believe the legislation improved patient care.

On the other hand, 56 per cent of those polled say the controversial law – which stripped contracting-out protections from health care workers' collective agreements – caused patient care to worsen. Another 23 per cent said it made no difference at all.

"*Bill 29* is bad public policy that has caused untold damage to our health care system and the public knows it," says HEU assistant secretary-business manager Zorica Bosancic.

"This disruption and damage should stop now – not one year from now. That's why the public wants a moratorium on further layoffs."

The poll also found that 91 per cent said the B.C. government should disclose the details and costs of lucrative contracts signed with foreign corporations as a result of *Bill 29*.

Viewpoints Research conducted the telephone poll survey of 350 adult British Columbians on June 13 and 14. It is accurate to within 5.4 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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Backgrounder (1) attached

