



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU meets with government on Bill 29 decision Thursday

HEU will meet with provincial government representatives on Thursday to begin discussions on the implementation of last June's court ruling that struck down key sections of *Bill 29*.

The Supreme Court of Canada suspended its ruling for a period of one year so that government can deal with the repercussions of their decision.

At Thursday's meeting, HEU will lead a delegation representing the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA).

Representatives of the other major health care bargaining associations will also be present at these initial discussions. They are: the Community Health Bargaining Association, the Nurses Bargaining Association, and the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association.

HEU and the other unions that backed the five-year court challenge asked for the meeting in June. Last month, B.C. Health Minister George Abbott agreed to the request.

"We are approaching these discussions with an open mind," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. "In the interests of reaching a resolution to this matter and avoiding further court action, we have encouraged government to do the same.

"Our goals are to obtain redress for members affected by *Bill 29* and to make sure that the court's ruling is implemented in a fair manner that respects our members' bargaining rights, stabilizes labour relations in the health sector and ultimately leads to improved health care services for the public.

"The Supreme Court has directed government to clean up its act. We will be vigilant to make sure that justice in the courts translates into justice on the ground for patients and our members."

Bill 29, the *Health and Social Services Delivery Improvement Act*, eliminated or curtailed provisions in legally-negotiated contracts that resulted in job losses for thousands of HEU members.

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The legislation paved the way for the most extensive privatization of health care services in the country and the closure of dozens of health care facilities across the province. This disruption continues today as hundreds of care staff face layoff at long-term care homes around the province.

The June 8 court ruling established for the first time that collective bargaining is protected under the freedom of association provisions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The court declared that three key sections of *Bill 29*, which eliminated or limited contracting out, bumping and lay-off protections in collective agreements, violated this right.

It is expected that the initial discussions with government – scheduled for Thursday and Friday – will focus on establishing a process for future consultations and negotiations related to the court's ruling on *Bill 29*.

Given that the implementation of the court's decision will be complex, it is expected that the process may take several months.

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