



# Newsletter

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## **Cleaning up Bill 37 mess union focus as arbitration begins**

**H**EU AND ITS union bargaining partners will appear in front of an arbitrator today in an effort to resolve some of the serious problems created by government legislation imposing a contract on 43,000 health care workers.

Front and centre at the two-day arbitration hearing are issues that include occupational health and safety programs, retention and recruitment, support for injured and ill workers and the implementation of longer hours of work.

“This arbitration provides an opportunity to begin to deal with the damage caused by government legislation,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. “Our proposals at today’s arbitration are focused and designed to improve health care delivery.”

The unions asked for the arbitration under Article 3.03 of the collective agreement – a provision left untouched in the B.C. Liberals’ Bill 37. The article provides a process through which the unions and health employers can find mutually agreeable alternatives for collective agreement provisions that have been eliminated or changed by legislation.

Issues that cannot be resolved by mutual agreement under Article 3.03 are referred to the normal arbitration procedure under the collective agreement.

The unions will ask arbitrator James Dorsey for his assistance on the following matters:

- Funding for the Occupational Health and Safety Agency which has saved health care \$51 million in reduced WCB premiums over three years;
- Exempting certain trade and technical occupations from the imposed 11 per cent wage rollback to forestall a serious recruitment and retention crisis;
- Continuing the supplemental monthly benefit for long-term disability claimants through the re-opener provision for pre-1998 LTD claimants;
- Establishing the dates and processes for implementation of the longer work week left unclear by Bill 37; and
- Issues arising out of local agreements.

HEABC has taken the position that Article 3.03 does not apply to any of these issues and will make that argument at today’s hearing.

It’s not known when Dorsey will hand down a decision.

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