

BULLETIN

HSA extends warm welcome to clinical perfusionists

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On February 17 the Labour Relations Board ruled that HSA is the appropriate union to represent clinical perfusionists in the health sector, and have been so since the spring of 1997 when they applied to be paramedical professionals. In February of 1997, clinical perfusionists sought paramedical professional designation on the basis that a paramedical professional bargaining unit more appropriately represents their community of interest. They also felt they met the other criteria necessary to be placed in a paramedical bargaining unit. These criteria have existed since 1978 and were recently updated in 1995 to reflect a less institutional delivery of health.

In November of 1997, the Labour Board ruled that clinical perfusionists did indeed meet the criteria. In previous rulings where workers were placed in the paramedical professional unit and HSA held the certification, the board ruled that HSA was the appropriate bargaining agent. However, in the November 1997 decision the LRB was silent on the issue of which union would represent them.

HSA has held the certifications at the facilities in question for over 25 years and joined with the Perfusionists in seeking a definitive ruling from the LRB. Other parties felt that the new legislation, Bill 28, overturned 25 years of jurisprudence in the sector ... that a "transfer" referenced in the legislation referred to a "transfer" between bargaining units. The Board has ruled that "transfer" refers to changes resulting from health reform, not changes resulting from meeting specific and long-standing criteria of certain bargaining units.

Some would take the position that this is a bad decision that opens the door to numerous applications. But, let's take an honest look at the history in this sector. In 25 years there has been a net movement of a few hundred workers: some moving into the paramedical professional unit and some moving out of the unit. In the context of 50,000 health workers, that is minimal movement indeed. The action is not done lightly; it is a rigorous test and one that most workers recognized they would not meet, nor want to meet.

HSA has an exemplary record of representing the needs of paramedical professionals. Our union was founded upon a community of interest that is not always understood, appreciated or supported in other bargaining units. This does not make HSA members "elite" or "better," ... rather, it makes us different with respect to our bargaining objectives and representational needs. We can appreciate that other unions may not agree with that position and we can respect that, just as we ask that they respect the aspirations of paramedical professionals to be represented by a bargaining agent that understands and respects their desires.

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