



BC Nurses' Union puts workers and patients at risk, Labour Board rules

April 30, 2015

The BC Labour Relations Board has ruled that workers and patients were put at risk by dangerous tactics used by BC Nurses' Union (BCNU) organizers in December. The BCNU organizers were attempting to convince registered psychiatric nurses to leave their union, Health Sciences Association of BC.

"The BCNU has demonstrated once again that they are more interested in increasing their revenue than representing the interests of psychiatric nurses and their patients," charged Val Avery, president of the Health Sciences Association of BC, a union that has represented registered psychiatric nurses since the 1980s.

In a decision delivered April 17, the Labour Relations Board found that paid professional BCNU organizers spoke to patients in locked psychiatric wards and would not stop interfering with registered psychiatric nurses while on shift.

"The organizing activity in this case was conducted by BCNU during work time on psychiatric units, some of which are locked during certain periods of the day, and more generally have heightened security and limited access because of the nature of the patients being treated...

"The professional organizers involved must be taken to know their actions were contrary to the Code. They must also be taken to know that organizing on psychiatric wards while RPNs are on work time is a danger to the vulnerable patients RPNs serve and to RPNs themselves," the Labour Board decision says.

HSA has been working to address issues of violence prevention for all health care workers. Just last week another RPN was assaulted on Vancouver Island in a psychiatric unit, even after staff had documented and brought the risk factors to the attention of hospital management.

"When HSA worked with the Ministry of Health to bring together health care unions and employers earlier this month, it was with a view to preventing risks of violence to health care workers and their patients. It is frankly hard to understand how another union is now responsible for increasing the potential for harm, rather than working cooperatively with the rest of us to address the issues," Avery said.

The BCNU was sanctioned by the BC Federation of Labour several years ago for persistent hostile raiding activity of licensed practical nurses in the Hospital Employees' Union, and has been actively raiding already unionized registered psychiatric nurses represented by Health Sciences Association for three years. The raiding activity has been largely unsuccessful and a majority of RPNs have chosen to stay with HSA. However, the dangerous and aggressive organizing behavior continues - even outside the legal raiding period.

"It is particularly offensive to HSA and RPNs because of the difficult nature of the work in psychiatric units, where there is an already increased risk of violence to health care workers and their patients," said Avery.

- [See the BC Labour Relations Board decision here.](#)

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