



LPNs in BCGEU - Knowing the facts

BCGEU or BCNU? What you need to know to make an informed choice

BCGEU supports expanded scope of practice for LPNs

As an active participant in the Community and Facilities Bargaining Associations, the BCGEU has advocated that LPNs should work in advanced practice roles. The BCGEU understands LPNs are trained professional nurses who should have every opportunity to practice their full scope of competencies.

By comparison, the nurses' union has repeatedly gone on record opposing LPNs moving into advanced practice roles. The nurses' union objects to LPNs taking on team leader roles and has consistently tried to limit the scope of LPNs in residential and acute care. As recently as September 2009, the nurses union tried to prevent the use of LPNs in an immunization clinic in the Fraser Health Authority. They filed a grievance to try and keep LPNs away from this work.

Labour Board Process

If the majority of employees in a proposed bargaining unit have signed membership cards, the BCNU could apply to the Labour Board for representation rights. If BCNU files an application to represent LPNs, the Labour Relations Board then has to determine if a bargaining unit is "appropriate." If a bargaining unit is found to be appropriate, a vote will be conducted and members of that bargaining unit will choose which union they want to represent them. No matter what the outcome of that vote, the same

collective agreement remains in force. It does not mean that LPNs voting to join BCNU will be covered by the Nurses' Master Agreement.

What this means for LPNs

Joining the Nurses' Union will not change the terms and conditions of your employment. If you're already covered by the Facilities Subsector Agreement or the Health Services & Support Community Agreement (Community Subsector) this will continue to be your collective agreement. In this sector, the nurses' union will simply join BCGEU and other health care unions as members of the existing bargaining association.

LPNs at Oak Bay Lodge and the Lodge at Broadmead are covered by the BC Government Master Agreement and are the highest paid LPNs in the province, earning \$26.08 per hour. These LPNs are covered by the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*. This *Act* defines the "bargaining unit" as all employees in the public service other than registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and licensed professionals as defined by the public service classification structure. This means that LPNs in the public service can only change unions if the government amends this legislation or in the unlikely event that a majority of government employees also want to change unions.

LPNs at worksites with an independent or

More...

“stand-alone” contract who vote to join the nurses’ union will also remain within their existing collective agreement until it expires.

The only way LPNs can be covered by the nurses’ contract – which doesn’t expire until March 2012 – is if the Liberal government makes a legislative change. The *Health Authorities’ Act* defines “nurse” as a registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse. This legislation would have to be amended to include LPNs in the definition of nurse in order for the BCNU Master Agreement to apply to LPNs.

Bargaining in 2010

LPNs across the province are asking whether they will get more money by joining the nurses’ union. The truth is, no one can promise wage increases.

The nurses’ union likes to talk about having achieved “labour market adjustments” for RNs when they negotiated an extension to their collective agreement in March 2009. What they’re not telling you is that this agreement only applies to RNs.

Even if LPNs join the nurses’ union, the nurses’ contract doesn’t apply to LPNs, and can’t apply to LPNs unless the government amends the legislation defining “nurse”.

The BCGEU will be going into bargaining for LPNs covered by agreements that expire in March 2010. We will be urging government to address compensation issues, along with other issues that affect health care workers in this province.

If you want your bargaining concerns addressed, make sure you fill out our bargaining survey. Go to http://www.bcgeu.ca/health_workers_bargaining_survey for more information and a link to the online survey.

Union Democracy and “Employee Choice”

The BCNU claims solidarity is rooted in “employee choice.” Yet, BCNU members from around the province are so unhappy with their union for trying to sign up LPNs that they’re circulating a petition to demand a vote on the issue. Here’s part of what that petition says:

“The LPN signup will change the face of our union. Even more significant are the public statements of future plans that BCNU has made. The BCNU 2009-2011 Strategic Plan states ‘for the next three years the BCNU Strategic Plan establishes four strategic directions... [including] (4) grow and represent all healthcare workers in B.C.’

“These changes are being rammed through without a membership vote. The BCNU 2009 convention made no decisions, as the leadership chose not to introduce any resolution calling for the LPN signup. There has been no resolution. There has been no membership-wide discussion. There has been no membership vote. Only Council has had the privilege of deciding.”

The truth is that they are not even listening to their RN members – so how can you trust them to listen to you? If “employee choice” matters to BCNU, why aren’t they letting their own membership debate and vote on this campaign?

The BCGEU believes collective strength is based on solidarity. Success at the bargaining table requires all healthcare unions and all health care workers to stand together. We believe that the nurses’ union actions are undermining our collective strength at a time when solidarity is crucial to make gains for LPNs and all health care workers.

If you want more information about BCGEU and LPNs, or more information about bargaining, go to our website www.bcgeu.ca and follow the LPN link, or email us at lpn@bcgeu.ca.

More information: www.bcgeu.ca