



NEWS RELEASE

September 7, 2006

BCNU members score big in campaign for safe needles

WorkSafe BC (WCB) agrees to strengthen proposed new rules to prevent injuries from needles and other sharp devices

Thanks to the hard work of nurses and other health care workers who delivered forceful presentations at public hearings last spring, the board of WorkSafe BC (formerly the Workers' Compensation Board) has agreed to strengthen proposed new rules to prevent injuries from needles and other sharp devices.

Under the change advocated by BCNU, WorkSafe BC will now require employers to use the **safest** available needle to prevent exposure to bloodborne pathogens or other hazardous material "when a hollow-bore needle is used in a workplace to access a vein or artery".

The WorkSafe BC Board has also responded to BCNU's demand that the regulation must go further. The Board has approved an additional public hearing this fall "to consider expanding the scope of the (needlestick regulation) to include safety-engineered devices for all hollow-bore needles and other medical sharps.

"This is a major victory for our union and for all health care workers," says BCNU president Debra McPherson. "Thanks to our members' presentations at the public hearings, their communications with MLAs and members of the government, and the petition we presented to the Legislature with 3,700 signatures, the WCB heard our concerns that they must provide the strongest possible rules to protect against needless injuries from needlesticks and other sharp devices. Now it's important to keep up the pressure so the board approves the additional changes that would protect all health care workers from these dangerous injuries."

The changes define safety-engineered needles to include "a self-sheathing needle device and a retractable needle system."

The new regulation says "*on and after January 1, 2008, when a hollow-bore needle is used in a workplace to access a vein or artery for the purpose of collecting blood or caring for or treating a person, the employer must ensure that a) if it is clinically appropriate, a safety-engineered needle that provides the highest level of protection from a needlestick injury is used, or a needleless device is used in place of a hollow-bore needle, and b) safe work procedures and practice relating to the use of those safety-engineered needles or needleless devices are implemented.*"

About 6,800 BC health care workers suffer needlestick injuries each year, putting them at risk of contracting HIV, Hepatitis C and other blood borne diseases.

For more information please contact:

Debra McPherson, President, BC Nurses' Union 604-209-4253
Art Moses, Communications Coordinator cell 604-868-4259

British Columbia Nurses' Union

4060 REGENT STREET, BURNABY, B.C. V5C 6P5
TELEPHONE (604) 433-2268 toll free 1-800-663-9991 FAX (604) 433-7945 toll free 1-888-284-2222