

# NEWS RELEASE



November 24, 2006

## Preventing sharps injuries – nurses call for quicker implementation of new regulations

The president of the BC Nurses' Union wants quicker implementation of new WorksafeBC rules that will require all BC health employers to use the safest sharp devices available by 2008.

Speaking at WorksafeBC hearings in Vancouver yesterday, Debra McPherson said she welcomes the proposed new protections for nurses and other health care workers. But she said the implementation delay will leave thousands of health care workers at unnecessary risk. The regulation on “hollow-bore devices” (needles) comes into effect January 1 2008, while an additional regulation for all other sharp devices such as scalpels only takes effect October 1, 2008.

“This time-frame is unnecessarily long and at the cost of workers' health,” McPherson said.

“All of the health authorities report they are in the process of implementing these systems...It is our view that they could complete this process in a shorter time period. In addition, in other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the regulation was implemented within six months. In our view this is a reasonably achievable time frame.”

McPherson suggested both regulations should come into effect July 1, 2007. She also questioned why the regulation does not require the involvement of health care workers in choosing devices, does not require health employers to track all sharps injuries, and does not address the need to place sharps devices in “neutral spaces” in surgical areas, instead of requiring workers to pass them from hand to hand.

Nevertheless, McPherson told WorkSafeBC officials the new regulations are a significant step forward in preventing many of the approximately 6,800 sharp device injuries to BC health care workers each year. “The union is encouraged by the proposed regulation because it covers all medical sharps and in our view will make a significant difference reducing sharps-related injuries.”

“In addition it will reduce the associated trauma and stress for workers who must undergo anti-retroviral treatments as a result of a sharps injury.”

For the complete brief go to the BCNU website at [www.bcnu.org](http://www.bcnu.org).

### For further information contact:

**Debra McPherson: 604-209-4253**

**Pam Piddocke: 604-209-4257**

**British Columbia Nurses' Union**

4060 REGENT STREET, BURNABY, B.C. V5C 6P5 TELEPHONE (604) 433-2268 FAX (604) 433-7945 TOLL FREE 1-800-663-9991