

# NEWS RELEASE



April 2, 2009

## Gag law: Nurses are dismayed the Attorney-General is trying to suspend the court ruling against Bill 42

*It's time for the government to admit it was wrong to muzzle free speech since February, while the Legislature was in session and the budget was introduced and debated*

Nurses are dismayed BC's Attorney General is launching a last ditch court action to re-impose sections of the pre-election gag order that a Supreme Court justice has declared unconstitutional.

"Now that a judge has struck down key sections of Bill 42, it's time for the government to recognize it was unacceptable to try to muzzle British Columbians since February 13, during the time the Legislature was in session and the government had introduced a new budget and spending estimates for debate," says BC Nurses' Union president Debra McPherson.

"Instead of going to court to try to get the ruling suspended, the government should admit it was wrong, and encourage British Columbians to speak out and discuss the issues through whatever means until the election writ is issued in two weeks time."

Bill 42 imposed strict limits on so-called third party election advertising for three months before a provincial vote. The government had amended its original bill where the ban would have lasted five months. The Supreme Court ruled the limits should apply only during the 28-day election period, not for any of the time that precedes it.

"Because the court only brought down its ruling last week, the government has already succeeded in limiting the free speech rights of British Columbians in an unconstitutional manner for more than six weeks. To try to shut the door on the very limited window that remains between now and April 14 is outrageous," McPherson says.

While BCNU has no plans for large-scale television advertising in the two-week period, a stay of the court ruling would limit significantly the union's efforts to help nurses engage the public on healthcare issues through the publication of leaflets, posters and newspaper ads.

### 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