

May 26, 2003

OPEN LETTER

Honourable Clint Dunford
Minister of Human Resources and Employment
324 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Dear Minister,

I am a licensed practical nurse employed by the Aspen Regional Health Authority. Over the last number of years I have witnessed first hand the effects in our facilities as your government has taken a wrecking ball to our public healthcare system. Cuts to health authority budgets, pressure to contract-out services, Bill 11 and then last year the announcement that your government intends to pursue the recommendations of the Mazankowski Report on health care reform have all combined to demoralize and overwork health care employees in this province to say nothing of the threat to an accountable, accessible and effective health care system that we all cherish so much. Bill 27 is the latest blow in a long round of punches taken by health care workers in this province.

Today we learned that our union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) will not be on the ballot when we are forced to vote for the union of our choice for the auxiliary nursing staff in this health region. Minister, you are not a unionized employee and therefore, perhaps you do not understand the importance the choice of union is to me and to my co-workers. We chose the Canadian Union of Public Employees to represent us a number of years ago. There are many reasons we made that choice, democracy, a voice in determining how our dues dollars are spent and our proud record in CUPE for standing up for public health care. Our union, CUPE, provides us with excellent representation on the job and that is both our protection and our right. As we work tirelessly to provide decent health care, it is our union that protects us from arbitrary management decisions and ensures our working environment is fair to those who deliver the services. But regardless of the reasons, the most important principle that we are losing today is in fact our ability to choose.

Bill 27 is a fundamentally anti-democratic piece of legislation. First there is the fact that the legislation contained no substance other than to give you the power to enact regulations.

Regulations, I hasten to add are not subject to democratic debate in the Alberta Legislature. Secondly, you are stripping the collective bargaining rights of thousands of health care workers

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by handing untold powers over to the Chair of the Alberta Labour Relations Board. And, finally your regulations allow you to determine by your own methodology, which unions are on the ballot when it comes to casting our vote for our representation.

I have already cast my vote. It was solidly for the Canadian Union of Public Employees. I realize that by allowing my union to be on the ballot for the auxiliary nursing staff in this health region does not guarantee its victory in the upcoming vote. But, by restricting our choices you are denying us a fair and democratic process.

Sincerely,

Sandra Miller

SM/lmac
opeiu #491