



Important Questions

about BCNU's raid on LPNs

THE BC NURSES' UNION WANTS A LARGER MEMBERSHIP. Their plan is to represent all health care workers, starting with LPNs.

Why shouldn't I take BCNU's free associate membership?

"Associate membership" is a means for the BCNU to make it easier for them to raid. In a raid, you could lose your union, your bargaining unit seniority, and other important benefits.

BCNU now very clearly wants to replace BCGEU as your union. They are using associate membership and your personal information to build a list for further organizing and to convince the provincial government to rewrite labour laws that stand in the way of their expansion plans.

But what about the services I get with associate membership?

BCGEU already provides you with the services that BCNU is offering. With BCGEU, LPNs get first-rate education, professional practice advocacy, advice and representation in disciplinary proceedings and labour relations representation. LPNs have a direct voice in bargaining and in the union's lobbying efforts on their behalf.

Shouldn't all nurses be in the same union?

The interests of RNs and LPNs are different. These distinct bargaining interests have been recognized in laws and regulations in most provinces. And in most provinces, LPNs and RNs are in different unions.

In B.C., LPNs have benefited greatly from the strong independent advocacy provided by health care unions like BCGEU— separate from RN interests.

With BCGEU and other unions, LPNs have seen their numbers increase dramatically – up 69 per cent since 2001. BCGEU has achieved direct and independent access to government and health authority decision-makers for LPNs.

BCNU, on the other hand, has resisted expanded roles for LPNs at every turn. There are around 7,000 LPNs in B.C. and the BCNU represents 26,000 RNs.

Could you imagine LPNs preserving these gains and making further progress for their profession under an RN-dominated union like BCNU?

BCNU says that issues around LPNs' professional practice are up to government and the College of LPNs. But the fact is unions make representations to those bodies on behalf of their members. And BCGEU representations are based on the interests of its LPN members – not those of RNs.

BCGEU has been a very strong advocate for new leadership and practice roles for LPNs over the years.

Why is BCNU going after LPNs now?

BCNU's timing is interesting. Over the next six months to a year, government will review the regulations that govern LPN practice including a determination of what restricted activities an LPN can perform with or without an order. BCNU has adamantly opposed more independence for LPNs. It all comes down to control. The BCNU knows that changes to the skills mix are bringing more LPNs into nursing. Having failed to limit LPNs in the workplace, BCNU wants to take control of LPN issues at the bargaining table and speak for LPNs in nursing policy discussions with government.

If I join BCNU won't I get a wage increase?

The BCNU is in no position to promise you more money. They've already negotiated an extension to their collective agreement for two more years. Their "labour market adjustment" – in 2010 – does not include LPNs.

But before then, BCGEU will be negotiating for LPNs. And government says there is more money available for future labour market adjustments in health care, if required.



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BCNU: on the record

“...there’s no room in the health care system for LPNs anymore. Existing LPNs should be retrained as RNs.”

BCNU VANCOUVER SOUTH REGIONAL CHAIR AND FUTURE BCNU PRESIDENT DEBRA MCPHERSON, BCNU UPDATE, JULY/AUGUST 1996

BCNU takes the position that the “LPN scope be changed to make it clear that they implement supportive interventions: that they do not have the skills to independently implement medical or nursing interventions.”

BCNU BULLETIN ON SCOPE OF PRACTICE REVIEW FOR RNS, RPNS AND LPNS, MAY 8, 2000

“...our next challenge will be exposing the danger to residents that will result with the displacements of RNs and their replacement with LPNs at Cottonwoods and at other extended care facilities throughout the province”

BCNU BULLETIN, NOVEMBER 15, 2002

A plan to change the nursing team skill mix at Mission Hospital that would have increased the number of LPNs received this reaction from a local BCNU activist: “They (BCNU members) were appalled about the plan to replace them with LPNs. They made this a patient quality care issue, not an issue of jobs.”

BCNU UPDATE APRIL/MAY 2003

Bargaining conferences begin in the fall where LPNs in the BCGEU will bring their issues forward and ensure that those issues are on the bargaining table.

What really matters to LPNs and all BCGEU members is making gains at the bargaining table. BCNU’s raid undermines this objective.

BCNU says they’re not raiding. Is this true?

Raiding – when one union tries to take members away from another union – undermines teamwork and cooperation in the workplace and diverts resources from more important goals like achieving better collective agreements.

The Canadian Labour Congress has found that BCNU is engaged in raiding. BCNU has been isolated from labour and nursing organizations as a result of its actions. BCNU has been suspended from the activities of the CLC, the BC Federation of Labour and local labour councils.

Even the 158,000-member Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions – BCNU’s national union – has told BCNU to stop its “raid” of BCGEU and other unions.

What if I’m being pressured to sign up as an associate member?

You have the right to work in a harassment-free environment. BCGEU has been in contact with health employers and let them know that they must ensure that BCNU’s campaign does not impact this right in the workplace.

If you feel you’ve been bullied or pressured, please contact a BCGEU shop steward or servicing rep for assistance – or email lpn@bcgeu.ca for assistance.

BCNU said at a meeting that they’ll represent LPNs by this fall. How can they say that?

BCNU reps are making a number of commitments that they can’t guarantee.

But what is completely clear is that many LPNs are working within BCGEU to improve their collective agreements, secure safer workplaces, and implement consistent professional practice standards.

LPNs can also send a clear message to BCNU by telling them to stop their attack on your union. You can do that by refusing to sign up as a BCNU full or associate member and urging your colleagues to refuse as well.

I’ve signed an associate member card, but I’ve changed my mind. What can I do?

Email us at lpn@bcgeu.ca or call Brandee Hannah at 604-612-7387 and we will sort it out for you.

