

In this Issue - Sale of EMS, Whistleblowing Bill, Local News, President's Message, You Asked, YEU Calendar

Job security threatened, Minister waffles

Jenkins' plan a confusing mess

Controversy continues to swirl around the Yukon Party government's plan to sell Emergency Medical Services to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Ignoring years of neglect and repeated attempts by EMS staff to bring about service and infrastructure improvements, Minister Peter Jenkins appears intent imposing some type of transfer to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Yukoners continue to give voice to unanswered questions about public safety, the availability of long-term funding and the possibility that user fees may be imposed. All the while, EMS professionals are expressing a variety of employment related concerns.

The threat to job security is disguised in the detail-devil of semantics. Does the government intend to "sell" the service, "transfer" the service, or merely change responsibility for its management?

The answer depends on who you ask, or the whim of the Minister.

Jenkins initially described the plan as a *transfer*, under which EMS workers would become employees of the hospital corporation, yet somehow retain their negotiated rights. The move, he said, "can be characterized as a successorship and as such, the employees can be transferred with their existing bargaining unit."

However, on April 7th in the legislature Jenkins said there will be "no transfer of ownership", and that "the Whitehorse Hospital, will be *managing* the emergency medical service". Presumably the employees would then remain Yukon government employees.

Finally, Public Service Commissioner Pat Daws has, at least in discussions with the Union, referred to the proposed transaction as a *sale*. This scenario triggers another set of issues.

At risk under the transfer and sale

scenarios is Collective Agreement Article 7.01 Job Security. Will employees be terminated to facilitate the transfer? If so, who will be rehired and under what terms? What of the grievances still outstanding, or the unresolved questions about standards-of-care? There is also the fundamental issue of inadequate staffing.

Another set of problems arise if Jenkins' new position leads to YHC management of the services and staff. How will a non-government agency administer Yukon government employees, when confidentiality laws prevent that agency from even gaining access to those worker's employment records.

The minister's obvious uncertainty and his ever-changing rationale further underline the folly of unilateral decision-making, without the measured advice of those most knowledgeable about emergency care and the requirements of essential human services.

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YEU across the nation

Whistleblowing bill watered down

The Liberal government tabled their long-awaited whistleblowing bill in Parliament on March 22nd. Unfortunately, in the wake of recent government scandals, the final legislative product lacks bite. In fact, it may actually discourage public service employees from coming forward to report wrongdoing in their workplaces.

In response, the Public Service Alliance of Canada is calling for whistleblowing protection to be negotiated into the collective agreements of about 100,000 of its members.

PSAC outlined the following weaknesses in the bill:

- The proposed Public Sector Integrity Commissioner must report through a minister's office, rather than directly to Parliament. This weakens the agency's independence and credibility among public service employees.
- Potential whistleblower's right to approach the agency is limited, because they must first bring the matter to their supervisors. Before an investigation can commence, the employee must satisfy the commission that all other avenues have been exhausted.
- Finally, penalties have been established for any public service employee whose reports are deemed "frivolous", in "bad

faith", or did not follow established procedures.

The possibility of vindictive retaliation by the government will throw cold water on many potential whistleblowers. PSAC National Executive Vice-President John Gordon summarized the problem in a recent press release.

"With all these weaknesses in the bill, any public service employee will be forced to think twice before reporting any wrongdoing. The present situation cries out for a more immediate and effective solution to protect whistleblowers and ensure the trust of the Canadian public. The only proper course for government to take now is to include this protection in our collective agreements."



YEU you asked

"Here are some answers to questions that might affect you or your co-workers."

Q. I am an RN working for the Yukon government. Why am I required to pay my annual RN registration fees upfront, only to be reimbursed later by my employer? Doesn't Article 51 of our Collective Agreement require the employer to pay these fees when they become due?

A. This matter was recently brought forward

during the Joint Union-Management Consultation process. The employer agreed that the language of Article 51 is clear: "The Employer shall pay the annual registration fee, when it becomes due and payable, with the Yukon Territory Registered Nurses' Association or other applicable entity in the Yukon for a regular employee who is

appointed to a position requiring a registered nurse."

It was agreed that it can be inferred from this clause that annual fee should be paid *directly* by the Employer to YRNA - the registering body.

The Employer has agreed to work out a process for direct payment prior to March, 2005, when the annual RN fees again become due.

YEU from the President



The plan to sell or transfer EMS to the Yukon Hospital

Corporation typifies this government's approach to decision making. Hatch an idea without consultation or reasoned consideration, spring an announcement on the employees and general public, then scramble to find a rationale to fill the holes in the concept.

Pressed by the opposition in the legislature, Minister Peter Jenkins has offered three utterly different and contradictory explanations of his "plan". The government will *sell* the service; the government will *transfer* the service; and, the hospital corporation will assume *management* of the service. Regrettably, no scenario appears to be the product of considered thought.

Deputy Minister Rob McWilliam and Public Service Commissioner Pat Daws have clearly indicated that if the "successorship" Minister Jenkins spoke of in his first press release is to be plausible, then there *must* be a *sale* of emergency medical services to the hospital corporation.

While this concept is fraught with unresolved issues and challenges, it is the only way to protect current employees, the collective agree-

ment, the bargaining unit, and to live up to all parties public commitments. The management and transfer concepts have no practical future whatsoever.

Hopefully, in the coming weeks the government will begin to present a coherent picture of their intentions, so a useful analysis can be delivered. But until the Minister, his Deputy and the Public Service Commissioner start reading from the same script, the latest mess Mr. Jenkins has stepped in will continue to stick to his shoes.

The professionals at EMS and the public they service are entitled to more enlightened treatment by this government.

NAIM Network Think Tank

From March 19th through 21st, I was in Yellowknife, NWT, to attend the PSAC Think Tank to discuss and make recommendations about a National Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis Network. The birth of the NAIM Network was the result of a resolution adopted at the 2003 PSAC Convention.

We see the NAIM as a way for the Union to be more welcoming to, and inclusive of, all our Aboriginal, Metis and Inuit members. It will help us defend their rights, fight discrimination and racism in the workplace, and increase the presence of the Union in Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis communities. I am delighted to be able to play a small role in this initiative.

Briefly in Local News

City Employees Ride for Half Price

The City of Whitehorse has expanded its bus pass policy for its workers. All City employees can now purchase monthly transit passes at 50% of the cost of a pass for themselves and their dependents.

This change is an expansion of a benefit originally negotiated by Y023. Hats off to the local for your leadership.

EP Week Begins May 2nd

The week of May 2nd is Canada's National Emergency Preparedness Week. Our members at EMO encourage everyone to participate in the week's activities and to discover how to become better prepared on an individual basis, and as part of the community.

Employees should always be prepared in the workplace, especially about evacuation processes. But are you prepared at home, or in extreme climate conditions while operating your automobile?

These are just two of the messages that members at the Emergency Measures Organization want to get out to fellow government employees and the general public. Come see the kits that have been prepared for the EMO booth at the Lion's Trade Show, and get prepared.

Fish out your recipies

The PSAC Yukon Regional Women's Committee is publishing a cookbook to raise money to support women's issues and education. PSAC members are encouraged to submit either your own originals, or family favourites handed down through generations.

The wider the variety the better - from jams and appetizers to main meals and desserts; varying from European cuisine to unique northern dishes.

Please send your favourite recipes and/or household tips by May 31st to the PSAC office at 100-2285-2nd Avenue, Whitehorse, Y1A 1C9, or email Nancy Debrecini at DebrecN@yeupsac.com.

Submissions will also be accepted through the YEU website.

There is no limit on the number of recipes you can send, but if you submit more than one, please vary the type. Your name will be published along with your recipe. Photographs of your dish are welcome, but please send copies because they will not be returned.

The committee is also sponsoring a "Name the Cookbook" contest. The prize will be the first edition hot off the press. There will be other prizes randomly drawn throughout the summer for members who made submissions.

The planned publication date for the cookbook is Labour Day, September 1, 2004.

April 28th - May 1st

Advanced Representation Training
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Yukon Inn, Whitehorse

May 4th

YEU Pride Committee Meeting
For gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
6:30 p.m. YEU Hall boardroom.

May 5th

Y023 Annual General Meeting
5:35 p.m. YEU Hall.

May 15th - 16th

Facing Management Course
9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. YEU Hall.

2nd Thursday

Monthly YEU Executive Meeting
6:30 p.m. YEU Hall. Members welcome.

2nd Wednesday

Y010 Monthly Meeting
5:00 p.m. YEU Hall, Whitehorse.

Workshops:

Advanced Representation Training

April 28th - May 1st, 2004

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Yukon Inn, Whitehorse, Yukon

Facing Management Course

May 15-16th, 2004

9:00 a.m. - 5 p.m.

YEU Hall.



2004 PSAC National Access Conference:

Our Rights - Moving On Up

September 30 - October 3rd

Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Quebec.

Additional information and registration forms for these workshops, conferences and other Union educational opportunities can be found on the YEU website at www.yeu.ca.

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Members are reminded to notify the YEU office of any change of address or name changes. Call Linda Bidrman - Membership Services, email lbidrman@yeu.ca or fax the number above.