

# Bill 1 Update

From **Lana Payne**,  
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## Dear Unifor Health Care Members in Acute Care:

Like all of you, Unifor is extremely concerned about the impact restructuring will have on NS health care services. As you are aware, on October 3, the NS government passed Bill 1. It represents a massive restructuring of health care in the province and a blatant attack on worker and union rights.

For days, Unifor activists protested against Bill 1 outside the NS Legislature. During this time, our local leaders and activists held their heads high and with a huge amount of pride and dignity showed that there is a better way.

That better way is a solution worked out by the four health care unions in NS — Unifor, CUPE, NSNU and NSGEU. Instead of damaging and harmful run-off votes or carving up members into different unions, all four unions agreed and proposed that every union continue to represent their own members. Under our bargaining association proposal, the unions would bargain together and would work hard to reduce the number of collective agreements in the acute care sector from 49 to 4 while protecting hard-fought collective agreement gains.

Even *The Chronicle Herald* has agreed with us that the bargaining association model is the best way forward. In a recent editorial<sup>1</sup>, the province's largest newspaper called on the government to use mediated talks with the unions "to find a representation model that has the consent of the unions and their members...In good faith, and in keeping with Mr. Glavine's word, the government should carefully reconsider how some variant of the association model can be made to work here."

Throughout the discussion about health care restructuring, Unifor has stood firm in

our commitment to working for a solution that is in the best interests of our members and in the best interest of health care.

We believe that solidarity is the best path forward.

Recently, the NSGEU has been not only fighting with the Government regarding Bill 1 and its negative effect on workers and the unions workers have chosen to represent them, it has also been communicating with their members regarding Unifor's collective agreements.

Unifor has no desire to engage in an inter-union dispute at a time when it is most important for the labour movement to stick together. However, we must respond.

Our members are protected by strong collective agreements.

Our provisions relating to contracting out, vacation and retirement allowances are comparable to what other Nova Scotia healthcare workers are entitled to. This is the last that Unifor wants to say in response to comments by anyone, employer or otherwise, regarding Unifor and its ability to protect the interests of our members and fight for the rights of all workers.

In the meantime, for your information, Unifor has obtained a legal opinion regarding the constitutionality of Bill 1 and we will continue to review our options with respect to legal action.

Unifor will fight to continue to represent our members through a bargaining association. This will be our goal at mediation — all unions keep their members and eventually bargain a single collective agreement applicable to all members in each of the unions — but stay with the union you have chosen.

To do this the unions have to work together — in solidarity — and without that, we are easy targets for the government and they will win.

You need to be aware that if

mediation fails and with the restrictions the government has placed on any decision the arbitrator can make, the bargaining association will no longer be an option and the arbitrator must then decide which unions will represent which group of employees. Clearly the best choice for our collective members, one that protects their rights, is a bargaining association model. This is also the best choice for the labour movement and we believe that is also in the best interests of the employer and the province of Nova Scotia.

Sisters and brothers, throughout this process, Unifor local leaders, activists and members have stood firm. I am so proud of our healthcare members and activists. You not only stood up for the rights of every health care worker in this province, you stood for the rights of all workers. Unifor is stronger today because of your many acts of solidarity. Thank you for your persistence, for your commitment and for your strength. Together we are indeed stronger.

**In solidarity,**

**Lana Payne**  
Atlantic Regional Director

### Contact us:

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**You can also find Lana online at:**

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And follow the hashtag  
**#UniforHealth** for more updates.

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<sup>1</sup> *Chronicle Herald* editorial, October 2, 2014 "Fine health bill fiasco"