

Yesterday, the Pallister government proclaimed The Health Care Bargaining Unit Review Act (Bill 29), which will amalgamate and establish a fixed number of health care bargaining units for each of the provincial health authorities as well as province-wide employers (e.g. Cancer Care Manitoba).

Although Bill 29 was passed by the Legislative Assembly last year, it was not proclaimed until yesterday (May 9), meaning the act had not yet not officially come into force. Now that it has been made law, a series of regulations and policies must be developed for its implementation and to guide run-off votes. This process will be overseen by Commissioner Robert Pruden.

Run-off votes are required when a newly amalgamated bargaining unit consists of employees from more than one union. In turn, health care workers must vote to choose one union to represent them. Please note that rules and timelines for these votes have not yet been made public.

“We’ve been outspoken about this bill since the beginning. We believe this legislation is simply unnecessary and will waste resources at a time of widespread uncertainty in Manitoba’s health care system,” said MNU President Sandi Mowat. “For over 40 years, nurses have placed their trust in MNU to represent them and as a result we already represent 97% of all unionized nurses in the province. Forcing nurses and health care workers to compete for representation would be a waste for taxpayers and members alike.”

MNU has been actively lobbying the provincial government to honour the 80-20 rule for bypassing the requirement for run-off votes. Where a union represents more than 80 percent of the workers in a proposed bargaining unit, the rule allows voting to be forgone and the union representing more than 80 percent is awarded representation rights for the entire unit. If the legislation is applied as written, even a single nurse represented by another union would trigger a vote for all nurses across an entire health region.

MNU will continue to closely monitor developments related to Bill 29 and will provide regular updates as additional information is made available. In the near future, MNU will meet with Commissioner Pruden to express our concerns.