

British Columbia's Health Care Worker Influenza Control Policy

A collaborative human resources/labour relations solution
to a health care challenge

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May 26, 2015

HEABC coordinates the human resource and labour relations interests of 250 publicly funded health care employers in British Columbia

- Accredited bargaining agent for most publicly funded health employers
- Five major provincial agreements covering more than 115,000 unionized employees

The problem

Influenza can be deadly, especially for seniors and others with weakened immune systems.



The health care challenge



Every day, health professionals work closely with the sick and vulnerable.

Vaccinating against the flu reduces transmission to patients; however, health care workers have had relatively low vaccination rates.

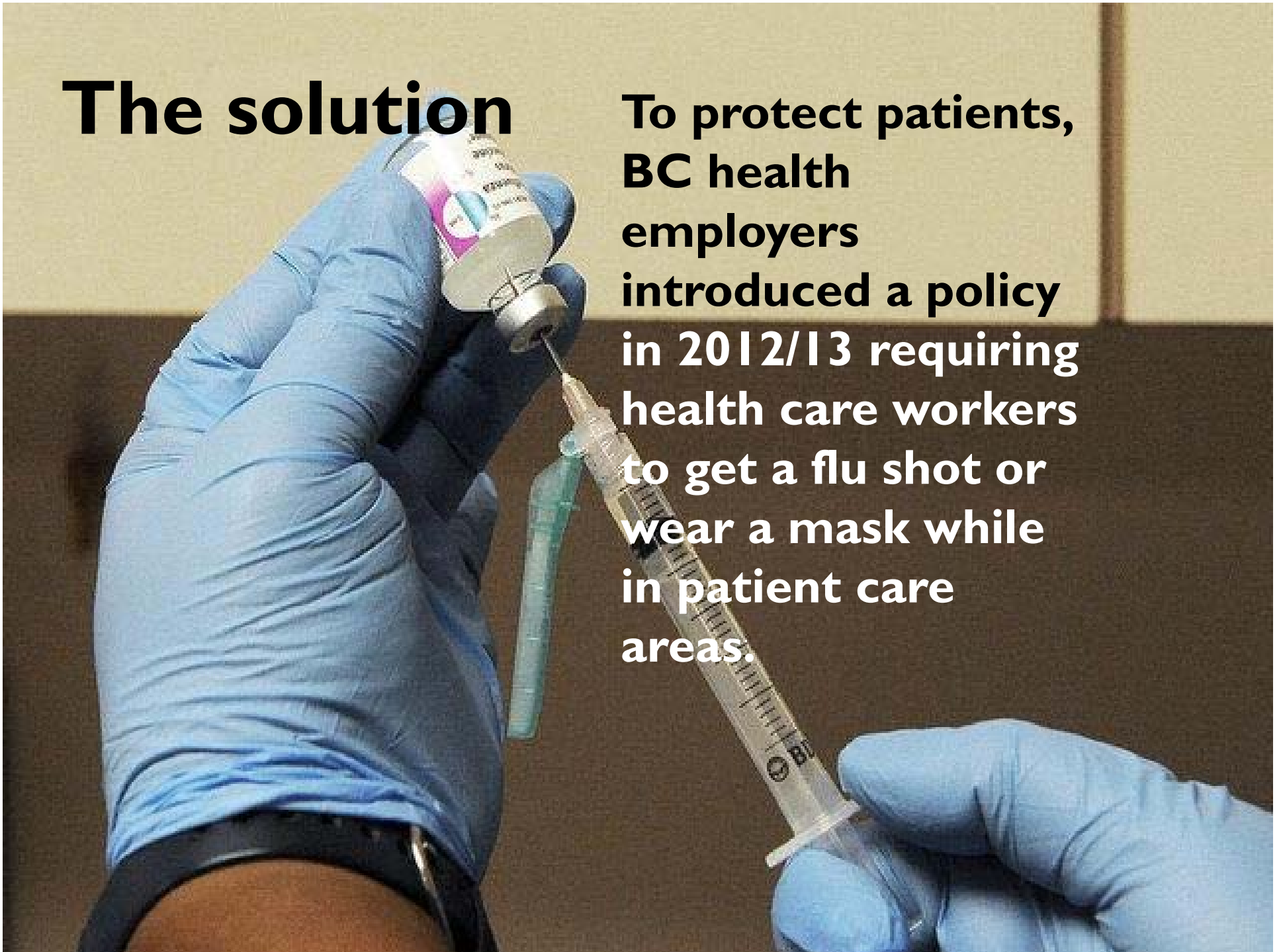
A pair of brass scales of justice is shown against a blue background. The scales are positioned on the left side of the frame, with the pans hanging from a central beam. The lighting creates highlights on the metal surfaces, emphasizing their texture and form. The background is a solid, light blue color.

Legal issues for consideration

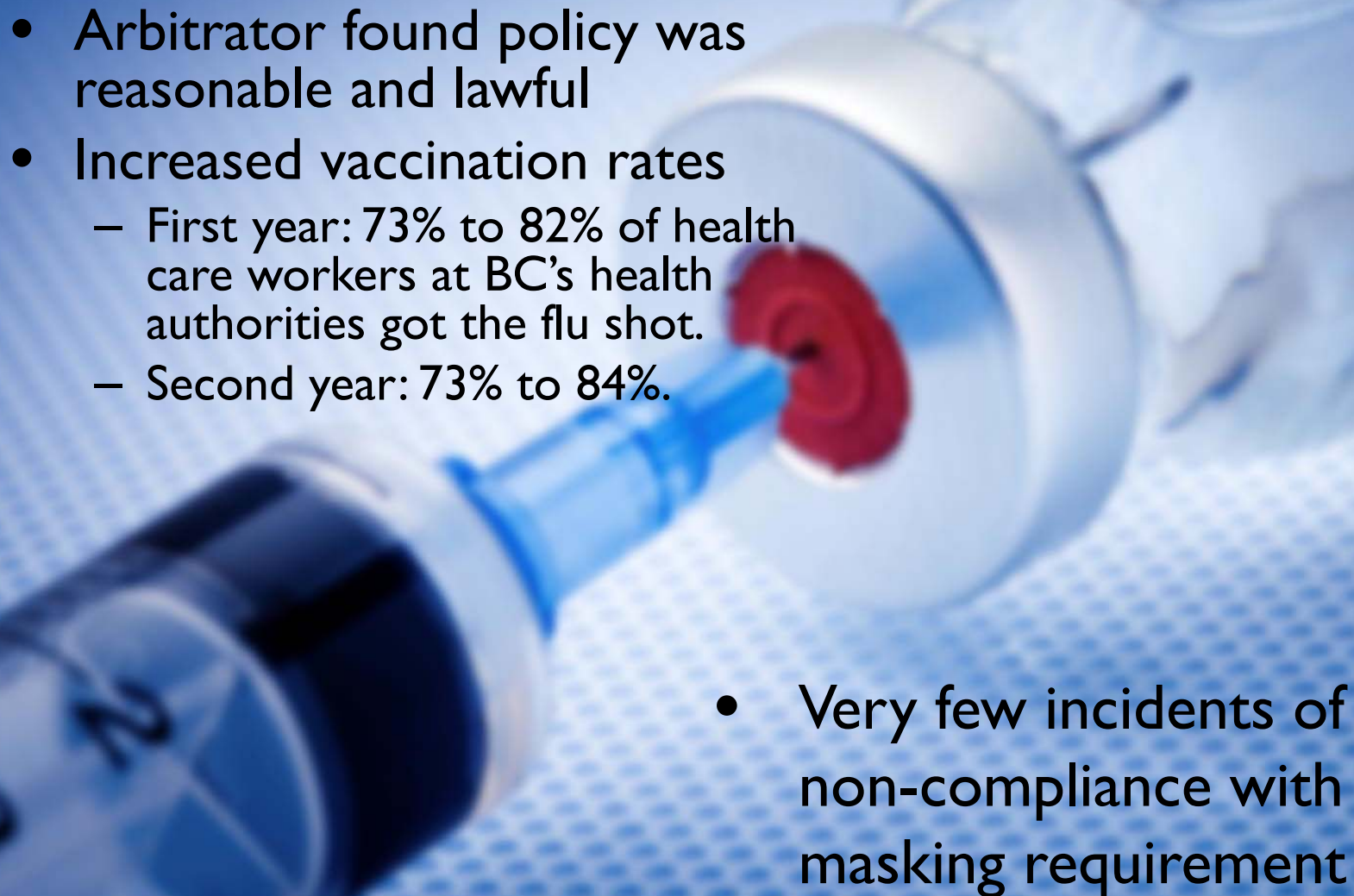
- **Charter rights**
- **Privacy rights**
- **Collective agreements**
- **Human rights legislation**

The solution

To protect patients, BC health employers introduced a policy in 2012/13 requiring health care workers to get a flu shot or wear a mask while in patient care areas.



Results

- Arbitrator found policy was reasonable and lawful
 - Increased vaccination rates
 - First year: 73% to 82% of health care workers at BC's health authorities got the flu shot.
 - Second year: 73% to 84%.
 - Very few incidents of non-compliance with masking requirement
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Lessons learned

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- A blurred background image of a road with a rearview mirror reflection. The mirror shows a road winding through a green, wooded area. The overall scene is out of focus, emphasizing the text in the foreground.
- **Aim for reasonable balance of competing interests/rights**
 - **Consult with all stakeholders**
 - **Harmonize with other patient safety practices**
 - **View implementation as ongoing**

What's next?

BC's mandatory health care worker influenza vaccination program – the first in Canada – is now being adopted in other jurisdictions across Canada.

The policy continues to be refined and improved.