

BULLETIN

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DATE: October 4, 2011

BC throne speech sends mixed signals in lead-up to public sector bargaining

HSA President Reid Johnson is not optimistic about media reports for a “new government mandate” for collective bargaining in 2012 after yesterday’s Throne Speech from the BC government.

“The government clearly signaled yesterday that it’s prepared to pay lip service to the women and men who deliver the public services, like health care, that British Columbians depend on. But there is nothing in the Throne Speech that indicates the government has any understanding of the continuing crisis in recruitment and retention of highly sought after health science professionals in British Columbia,” Johnson said.

In delivering the Throne Speech, which sets out the government’s agenda in broad terms for the coming session of the Legislature, Lieutenant Governor Steven Point referred to the challenging economic climate, and the government’s agenda to limit spending.

“By suggesting that any kind of wage increase in the public sector will put undue pressure on the government coffers, the Premier has made it clear that the public services British Columbians depend on may continue to suffer in this tight economic climate,” Johnson said.

“Nevertheless, we will take at face value the government’s stated commitment for meaningful collective bargaining discussions, and approach the coming months with HSA members’ priorities front and centre. Collective agreements must incorporate strategies that promote a modern team delivering top quality service to patients and clients in hospitals and communities around the province,” Johnson said.

HSA members covered by the health science professionals, community health, and community social services collective agreements are preparing for bargaining proposal conferences in the coming months in the lead-up to their contracts expiring in March 2012. HSA’s RPNs provided input to the Nurses’ Bargaining Association bargaining conference earlier this year.