



# Despite concerns about process, HSA advises "yes" vote on tentative nurses agreement

April 20, 2016

A summary of the tentative agreement 2014 - 2019 for the Nurses Bargaining Association, and instructions on how to vote on the agreement, will be mailed to all NBA members shortly.

**Mail ballots must be returned to HSA by the end of the day on Friday, May 6.**

- [Read the full ratification vote information package being mailed to members](#)
- [Read the full proposed terms of settlement](#)
- [Information on the Blue RX plan](#)

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

HSA's priority at the bargaining table was to be a strong voice for RPNs. In spite of a process by the lead union, the BC Nurses (BCN), that resulted in few opportunities for HSA bargaining representatives - or any bargaining committee members from any union - to advocate for our members, your representatives - Chief Negotiator Dani Demetlika and member representative Larry Bryan, an RPN at Haro Park Lodge - took those opportunities to ensure that RPNs had a dedicated voice at the table.

Your bargaining team identified some concerns in the agreement, including the loss of Qualification Differential for new nurses entering employment with a Bachelors degree, the failure of the violence prevention program to include evaluation of violence prevention plans for high/medium risk affiliates sites with Alzheimer units, and the increase in hours required under casual availability.

In spite of those shortcomings, it features wage increases for all nurses, some changes to benefits coverage, and a number of contract changes that address staffing issues, education, and violence in the workplace.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The tentative agreement achieves eight of the 11 priorities HSA's RPNs set for bargaining, including:

- addressing the shortcomings of the Pharmacare tie-in which reduced drug coverage for nurses
- wage increases
- maintaining benefits
- recognizing the full scope of practice for RPNs
- expanding the definition of "family"
- addressing violence prevention
- addressing workload through on-call language
- addressing LTD coverage

The Board of Directors of the Health Sciences Association recommends that HSA's RPNs vote yes to support the tentative agreement. It addresses many of the issues you asked your bargaining committee representatives to pursue, and ends the uncertainty for many members who expressed frustration about working in a collective agreement that had been expired for more than two years.

## CONCERNS

While the tentative agreement provides contract improvements for nurses and attempts to consolidate the nursing team by offering a dollar an hour enticement to Licensed Practical Nurses five years later than promised, elements of the collective agreement are troubling for the health care system as a whole, as they

serve to create divisions between nurses and the rest of the modern health care team - particularly in the area of violence prevention.

In addition, while the NBA has committed to paying up to \$5 million from its member-funded retiree benefits fund to cover any shortfalls in benefits coverage for the duration of the contract, there remains uncertainty about the level of benefits coverage into the future. A change to a Blue Rx formulary is an improvement from the current Pharmacare tie-in, but control over coverage continues to remain with the employer, with no input from the union.

HSA's Board of Directors is also concerned about aspects of the tentative agreement that potentially limit access for RPNs to education funds and policy development discussions.

Notwithstanding these flaws and without prejudice, the HSA Board of Directors recommends ratification of the agreement, as it meets a majority of the priorities members identified in the lead-up to bargaining.

The Board of Directors thanks your HSA bargaining team for their commitment to all HSA RPNs and the many hours they spent consulting with members, advocating for you on the issues important to RPNs, and ensuring RPN issues were well represented.

Val Avery  
President, HSA

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