

BULLETIN

## Health workers suspend job action

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A range of health-care services will continue as normal in Nanaimo this week, as health science workers suspend strike activity.

After nine months of contract negotiations, the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association, made up of health-care workers in hospitals and community health facilities such as lab imaging technicians, pharmacists, dietitians, radiation therapists and physiotherapists, launched a two-day strike action last week that meant a delay in services for some residents.

On Thursday, hospital pharmacists reduced work to essential services only and Friday, medical and diagnostic imaging services, such as MRI, mammography, sonography and CT scans, were down to essential levels. Public health inspectors also reduced services.

Val Wilson, a spokeswoman for the Vancouver Island Health Authority, said the action meant 192 procedures, including CT scans, MRIs, X-Rays and ultrasounds, were postponed in the central Island region, which includes Nanaimo Regional General Hospital and hospitals in Port Alberni, Tofino and Duncan.

After Friday's job action, the bargaining association decided to plan another week of discipline-specific strikes, but then the Health Employers Association of B.C. made an offer last weekend that the bargaining association wants to take back to members.

Reid Johnson, president of the Health Sciences Association, the largest union within the HSPBA, said Saturday's offer included what amounts to a 1.4- per cent wage increase over two years when decreases to benefits are included and he believes some workers could face wage rollbacks.

"They've been offered less than other public sector tables that have already settled," he said. "We want to get a sense from our members what they think of this proposal and see how our members want to be engaged on this in the future."

A press release from the employers' association states that it is anxious to get back to the table and reach an agreement that is good for patients, employees and employers.

"The offer we made is fair and consistent with other settlements reached under cooperative gains in the health care sector," said Michael Marchbank, employers' association president. "We have reached three of five agreements in the health sector and we remain optimistic that we can achieve the same with the HSPBA."

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