

BULLETIN

## **B.C. healthcare professionals' job action disrupts medical services (version 4)**

December 7, 2012

### **vancouver.sun.com**

Thousands of medical imaging procedures and some surgeries were cancelled around the province today as a consequence of Health Science Association-led rotating strikes by health workers.

On Monday, laboratory personnel plan to reduce to essential service levels, only providing urgently needed tests. On Thursday, hospital pharmacists reduced their services.

In the Vancouver Coastal Health region, about 710 patients were notified their scheduled elective imaging procedure was not going through Friday because of the strike and would be rescheduled.

Another 500 imaging procedures were cancelled in the Vancouver Island Health region, as well as in other health regions in the province.

"We apologize because people are psyched up to get their procedure and to have this happen is very disappointing," said Coastal Health spokeswoman Anna Marie D'Angelo.

Northern Health spokesman Steve Raper said there are distance challenges in the northern B.C., as people may sometimes have to travel several hours for imaging or other tests. It's why they have been making every effort to ensure patients know their procedures are being cancelled, he said.

The diagnostic imaging services affected include X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds.

The association represents about 17,000 health science professionals in B.C.

"Essentially, we're looking for the same deal that everybody else in the public sector has been getting, like the provincial government employees," responded Justin Schmid, a national representative for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), which represents about 500 B.C. health professionals.

CUPE is one of five unions comprising the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA), currently undergoing the job action.

Schmid said health professionals are seeking a four-per cent wage increase over two years with no concessions, and used health inspectors as an example why.

"There's a huge wage disparity between public health inspectors in B.C. versus Alberta and other parts of the country. It poses a big problem for keeping them here. A lot of them look at those higher wages and want to move away to those higher paying jobs elsewhere, where the job is more properly recognized," Schmid said.

The HSPBA has been in mediated negotiations with the Health Employers Association of B.C. (HEABC) since Tuesday to hammer out a new collective bargaining agreement.

Michael Marchbank, President and CEO of the HEABC - which represents more than 260 publicly funded health care employers in the province - said the job action went against negotiating conventions.

"The established practice in labour relations is for bargaining associations to hold off on job action during mediation," Marchbank said in a statement. "Employers do not understand why the (HSPBA) would be proceeding with job action when there is an opportunity for dialogue with a recognized and respected mediator.

"We're disappointed that the HSPBA went ahead with job action," he said later in an interview. "Obviously patients will be inconvenienced."

Essential services like emergency care continue to run during job actions.

The HEABC has already reached three of five collective agreements in the health sector with bargaining

associations representing nurses, resident physicians and other health services employees.  
with files from the Victoria Times Colonist

Type:

[HSA in the news](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia  
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website  
[www.hsabc.org](http://www.hsabc.org)

Telephone 604-517-0994  
1-800-663-2017