

BULLETIN

## Paramedical professionals to take strike vote

October 22, 1998

The joint union bargaining association says after months of negotiations, HEABC is refusing to address any of the key issues still on the table.

The joint union bargaining association representing over 10,000 paramedical professionals in the health and social services sectors today announced it will conduct a province-wide strike vote. The announcement came after negotiations with the Health Employers' Association of BC broke down October 15.

"This round of negotiations is not about wages, but about fairness and equity for professionals who work in health care and community social services," said chief negotiator Rick Lampshire. "The employer expects our members to accept the government's wage mandate of 0-0-2, but they are not prepared to remove their concession demands or address any of our key issues."

The Health Sciences Association of BC represents the majority of workers in this sector. The sector includes lab technologists, x-ray technologists, physiotherapists, social workers, pharmacists, child development workers, alcohol and drug counsellors, speech and hearing pathologists and public health inspectors. Also represented at this table are workers from BCGEU, CUPE, HEU, UFCW and PEA.

Lampshire says the joint union bargaining association is looking to protect existing benefits and make improvements comparable to other health care professionals. HEABC's last position contained concession demands that would gut the union's classifications system and allow employers to unilaterally reassign employees and alter hours of work. The employer has also refused to budge on the issue of provincial seniority or compensation for on-call.

Two further critical issues in this round of bargaining are levelling of wages of community based paramedical workers and the employer's attempt to take away benefits from former Ministry of Health employees who were transferred to regional health boards.

"Our bargaining association hoped to achieve a collective agreement with HEABC without taking a strike vote," said Lampshire. "But after months of negotiations, it has become clear we have no other choice. The employer has made no attempt to achieve a fair and reasonable contract for our members."

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