



Progress in health science professional talks slow

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HSA's Bargaining Committee: Front: Charlene Chen; 2nd row (from left): Bruce MacDonald, Mandi Ayers, Dawn Adamson, Cindy Stewart; 3rd row (from left) Mark Zarembo, Joan Magee, Ernie Hilland; back row (from left): Ron Ohmart, Val Avery, Allen Peters

After four days of bargaining between the Paramedical Professional Bargaining Association and Health Employers Association of BC, PPBA Chief Negotiator and Health Sciences Associations Executive Director of Labour Relations Ron Ohmart reports that bargaining has got off to a slow start.

-We are concerned about the slow pace that the employers have set. They still haven't presented a comprehensive package of proposals, however we remain cautiously optimistic that we can still conclude an agreement in time for the March 31st deadline," Ohmart said.

While the week started with PPBA presenting its opening proposals, which include wage increases, rectifying the wage split (schedule A and B), LTD and education leave, HEABC has not countered with comprehensive proposals to address important issues facing health science professionals.

-We have delivered the message to HEABC that health science professionals are an essential part of the health care team and that a fair contract must reflect the education, skills and training they bring to the team," Ohmart said.

Some agreement has been reached between the parties on a handful of minor contract administration issues, and Ohmart anticipates talks will step up a notch next week with a more comprehensive discussion of the issues affecting the delivery of the services provided by the 14,000 health science professionals covered by the contract.

Meanwhile, HSA is raising awareness and seeking support for a fair contract for these critical members of the health care team in highly specialized disciplines covered by the contract.

A series of newspaper ads and bus signs across the province promotes the value of health science professionals to patients and their families from diagnosis to recovery.

-People who are dealing with a serious illness, condition or injury will encounter several health science professionals as they work their way through diagnosis, treatment and recovery. We need to ensure these professionals are there when British Columbians need them," Ohmart said.

Bargaining sessions concluded Thursday, and the parties return to face-to-face talks Monday in Vancouver.

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