



BULLETIN

## **After eight months of talks, HEABC tables concession package for health science professionals**

November 12, 2010

After eight months of bargaining for a new collective agreement, the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) last week finished tabling proposals amounting to significant concessions for the provinces health science professionals collective agreement.

Chief Negotiator for the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) Maureen Headley said the package tabled is an insult to HSA and other union members covered by the contract.

-For the past several months, we have been working on developing and presenting proposals that address some of the most difficult issues in our health care system: waiting lists for patients, retention, and recruitment to address shortages of the highly skilled professionals the system relies on for quick and accurate diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation," Headley said.

-From the outset, we have been clear that the mandate that drives our bargaining committee is to negotiate a contract that that protects quality health care and values the work of health science professionals," she said.

-We have tabled proposals that focus on these problems, and reflect a real commitment to have an in-depth and detailed discussion about the challenges in recruitment and retention. Our ultimate goal is to have a creative discussion and develop strategies that address these continuing issues and ensure better health care for British Columbians," Headley said.

Rather than agree to work collaboratively with the union, HEABC has proposed deleting provisions relating to chief paramedicals, additional procedures, sole charge, and definitions related to general supervision, as well as regional supervisory responsibilities. The employers proposals would expand the Grade I level to include the vast majority of positions presently attracting Grade II salaries.

-This response from the employer ... to gut a classifications system that needs to be modernized to reflect the contribution of a complex group in health care ... shows that HEABC is not committed to supporting the health science professionals who bring necessary and critical contributions to the modern health care team."

In addition to maintaining a "net-zero mandate" on wages, HEABC has proposed the benefit funding formula on extended health and dental benefits be changed from 100 per cent employer-paid to 70 per cent employer-paid, with the employee paying 30 per cent of the premium. Further, HEABC has proposed that part-time employees benefits be cut from 100 per cent to a pro-rata benefit coverage based on regular FTE status. For example, a .5 part-time employee presently receiving 100 per cent benefits, would only have 35 per cent of their benefit coverage paid by the employer.

-Clearly this is completely unacceptable, and we have delivered that message consistently to the employer at the bargaining table," Headley said.

-After eight months of expressing a clear interest in working collaboratively in a tight economic climate to achieve improvements for the health care system by ensuring health science professionals are demonstrably appreciated as critical members of the health care team, the proposals tabled by the employer last week are cause for great concern about the outcome of this protracted round of negotiations," she said.

The unions proposals to address shortages and the need for a recruitment and retention strategy call for working groups to focus on the issues and develop practices and solutions to improve the system.

HEABCs proposal ignores the value that health science professionals bring to the system, and demonstrates a lack of understanding about the complexities of the modern health care team.

-Our members bring a wealth of education, experience and understanding to the team. Without us, the health care team cannot function. Its time that HEABC and the government understood that health science professionals are equal and critical partners in delivering the health care British Columbians deserve," Headley said.

She said the objectives outlined in the unions opening proposal several months ago set the tone for a positive and productive bargaining agenda aimed at delivering improvements to the health care system to benefit patients and their families, the members of the modern health care team responsible for their health, and employers working towards a mandate of improved quality of care and smooth delivery of services.

Those objectives are:

- **Delivering Quality Healthcare**  
Ongoing joint initiatives that recognize the value of health science professionals in health care delivery and that involve and include health science professionals in health care changes.
- **Fair Wage Increases**  
Wage increases that recognize the value of health science professionals and are consistent with increases for members of the modern health care team in BC and across the country.
- **Modernizing the Classification System**  
Development of a unified, transparent, rationalized wage schedule that is responsive to the current industry structure while protecting integral features.
- **Recruitment and Retention**  
Initiatives that attract people to health science professional disciplines; that attract trained health science professionals to work in the BC public health sector.
- **Enhanced Quality of Work life**  
Initiatives related to workload, scheduling, education, leaves of absence, violence prevention, occupational health and safety, and other healthy workplace improvements.
- **Improved Benefit Package**  
Maximizing the value of the benefit package to meet the differing needs of the membership.
- **Sick Leave and Disability Management**  
Development of a seamless integrated sick leave and disability management scheme that supports early and productive return to work.
- **Job Security and Seniority**  
Initiatives to protect and enhance members entitlements particularly in response to consolidation/integration of service.
- **Improve Administration of the Collective Agreement**  
Clarification of existing provisions to ensure collective agreement language reflects existing entitlements, improved grievance processing, housekeeping changes to streamline the collective agreement, and other initiatives that make the collective agreement more efficient or allow better harmonization/coordination of existing benefits.

HSPBA represents 17,000 health science professionals who deliver public health care services in hospitals and communities across the province. Members are represented by HSA, CUPE, BCGEU, PEA, and HEU. The current HSPBA collective agreement expired March 31, 2010.

Bargaining resumes next week.

HSAs representatives on the bargaining committee are Maureen Headley, Chief Negotiator; Val Avery (HSA Vice President and Region 2 Director) - Bargaining Committee Chair, Physiotherapist at Victoria General Hospital; Joan Magee (Region 8 Director), Medical Laboratory Technologist, Cariboo Memorial Hospital; Aaron Wilson, Community Coordinator, Centre for Ability; Darwin Wren, Social Worker, Tumbler Ridge Health Centre; and alternate committee members Kimball Finigan (Region 5 Director), Radiation Therapist, Vancouver Cancer Centre; John Christopherson, Counsellor, Vancouver Cancer Centre, and Cheryl Greenhalgh, Medical Radiation Technologist, Royal Columbian Hospital.

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