

BULLETIN

Contract talks covering BCs modern health care professionals set to resume in August; work continues on classifications grievance

June 15, 2012

Bargaining discussions between the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) and Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) for a new collective agreement for BCs health science professionals will resume at the end of August.

HSPBA Chief Negotiator Jeanne Meyers said the delay in bargaining is disappointing. The collective agreement, like many public sector collective agreements, expired on March 31, 2011.

-Health science professionals are motivated to continue negotiating in order to achieve a fair and reasonable collective agreement for the 17,000 members of the modern health care team we represent. I am extremely disappointed that the employer has ruled out any bargaining dates before the end of the summer," she said.

However, she said, the union association continues to work on behalf of members on a number of fronts. Since bargaining opened on March 6, bargaining committee members have been working to develop detailed proposals on issues important to members, including ensuring sufficient hours off between on-call and regularly schedule shifts, detailed proposals to address workload and other workplace safety issues, including improvements to the existing harassment language. As well, the union has been working on education initiatives to promote recruitment and retention, as well as a fair competitive wage proposal.

"The employer has to understand and take responsibility for the effect that understaffing, financial uncertainty, and workload pressures have on our members. If they wonder why our members need protection during periods of illness and disability they should look to their own budget and planning process. We understand that resources have been made scarce by this government. Our members should not be asked to fund health authority deficits by accepting wages and benefits that put them behind their colleagues in other provinces. That will not lead to the quality of health care that British Columbia want and need," Meyers said.

Next week, HSPBA will also be involved in a preliminary hearing on a grievance related to a Joint Classification Committee established in 2010 bargaining. HSPBA strongly asserts that HEABC must not advance any bargaining proposals that are inconsistent with the parties 2010 classification-related memoranda. HSPBA says that HEABC has contravened that MOU by taking the benefit of the Interim Modifications and bringing nothing to the table but proposals which it knew the union would find unacceptable, recycled as they were from much earlier rounds of bargaining at which they had been consistently and clearly rejected.

-In fact, HEABC has instead actively sanctioned the reclassification of some HSPBA members to its own advantage, rather than attempt to address those features of the system which no longer reflect current health care delivery," Meyers said.

In November 2012, an arbitrator will hear the HSPBA's policy grievance which alleges that HEABC and its member organizations, while implementing interim classification modifications that saw members lose income,

have failed to abide by their obligations under the memoranda. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for next week, where the HSPBA will be seeking an interim order that will include restoring the workplace to those conditions that would exist had employers not implemented the interim classification modifications.

HSPBA represents 17,000 health science professionals working in hospitals and communities throughout BC.

Meyers said the unions are committed to achieving contract improvements that help retain and recruit health science professionals who are critical to the success of the modern health care team.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

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