



Psychiatric nurses: bargaining continues for key priorities

September 10, 2012

Negotiators for the Nurses Bargaining Association (BC Nurses Union, Health Sciences Association, Union of Psychiatric Nurses) have been working hard to achieve a new provincial contract that addresses members top priorities - improving patient care and patient safety through safe staffing and job security.

The current bargaining session, which began on August 17, was scheduled to end August 31. Instead, bargaining carried on through the Labour Day weekend, and continues this week.

Bargaining has been extremely challenging, with health employers insisting that the cost of any contract gains can only come from savings and efficiencies within the collective agreement. However, in recent days, responses from the employers side on some key issues have been more positive, enabling progress to be made on some issues.

Last weekend, the two sides agreed on comprehensive measures to improve orientation and workplace safety and address violence experienced by nurses working in mental health. The measures include mandatory in-service orientation and critical incident stress defusing and de-briefing.

On workload, the NBA has tabled comprehensive proposals to address members top bargaining priority to improve staffing to enhance patient care. The bargaining committee has held some constructive discussions with the employer on the issue.

The NBA has also tabled comprehensive proposals on job security that would recognize the value of nurses to patients and the health care system.

Nurses negotiators are also working to strengthen the Professional Responsibility Form (PRF) process and to streamline the system of job descriptions and classifications.

Earlier in negotiations, agreements were reached on a variety of issues such as:

- â€¢ Health authority-wide seniority
- â€¢ Alternative dispute resolution in the grievance/arbitration process
- â€¢ Union leave
- â€¢ Responsive shift scheduling
- â€¢ Work requirements for casual employees
- â€¢ Filling vacancies
- â€¢ Voluntary shift exchanges

Nurses negotiators will continue to work hard to achieve an acceptable collective agreement that can be brought to members for ratification. If this is not possible, we will be reporting back with suggestions for possible actions members might choose to take.

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