



HSA urges nurses to vote -NO" to nurses tentative agreement

October 4, 2012

Provisions to address workload issues come at the expense of BCs future nurses, and thats too high a price to pay, says HSA president Reid Johnson.

The unions board of directors is recommending HSA members, registered psychiatric nurses covered by the Nurses Bargaining Association (NBA) collective agreement, vote -NO" to the tentative collective agreement reached last week between the NBA and Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC).

-While the tentative agreement achieves many objectives set by nurses, HSA is fundamentally opposed to the clause that allows a foothold into two-tiered benefits for nurses," Johnson said.

Under the terms of the tentative agreement, effective January 1, 2013, new employees will not be entitled to cash in their sick leave credits upon retirement. A 40 per cent pay-out of accumulated sick banks will continue for all current employees.

-BC Nurses Union president Debra McPherson has said that to get to an agreement, there was a price to pay ... and that price was the extension of the work week to 37.5 hours from 36 hours. HSA believes that price is high enough, without also taking away benefits from any new nurse hired after January 1, 2013," Johnson said.

-Recruitment is a huge challenge in the health care sector, and singling out new hires for reduced benefits is not a pattern that HSA believes can be helpful in attracting new health care professionals to work in BC," he said.

-While the BCNU justifies this step into two-tiered benefits by saying they will work in future rounds of bargaining to improve severance provisions for all members, HSAs board of directors could not support the double standard that results in new nurses getting reduced benefits," he said.

The contract provides an hourly wage increase of three per cent effective April 1, 2013.

Other provisions of the tentative agreement covering more than 32,000 registered psychiatric nurses and registered nurses feature clear, enforceable provisions to reduce nurses workload issues and improve patient care and patient safety.

Under the terms of the tentative agreement, health employers will be required to replace nurses who are off on leave from a scheduled shift ... unless there are extenuating circumstances determined by the front-line nurse in charge and the manager. The criteria will be the needs of patients, not budget concerns.

To help achieve the staffing improvements through the cooperative gains approach, the tentative agreement includes an increase in nurses full-time hours of work from 36 to 37.5 hours a week effective April 1, 2013.

In addition, when patients overflow into hallways and RPNs encounter other overcapacity problems, employers will be required to call in more nurses to meet patient needs ... as determined jointly by the manager and the charge RPN/RN.

To ensure that health employers increase the number of RPNs/RNs to provide safer care for patients, the agreement includes:

â€¢ A base level for the number of straight time paid RPN/RN hours worked by Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Registered Nurses, never to fall below the figure for December 31, 2012

• An increase above that base level of at least 4,159,687.5 straight time paid RPN/RN hours, equal to approximately 2,125 more full time positions by March 31, 2016

• An agreement to regularize nursing work, by establishing relief float pools and converting nursing hours currently covered through casual work and overtime into regular full-time and part-time nursing positions

• Improvements in job security for all RPNs/RNs

The contract also enhances education/training for displaced RPNs/RNs and provides mandatory orientation on safety and prevention of violence.

BCNU is the largest union in the Nurses Bargaining Association, which also includes the Health Sciences Association and the Union of Psychiatric Nurses.

HSA members will cast votes in a ratification ballot. RPNs at larger health facilities will vote in person; RPNs at small sites will receive a mail ballot and information kit. Further information on the terms of the tentative agreement, as well as details on how to vote on the tentative agreement will be available on the HSA website at www.hsabc.org in the coming days.

All HSA registered psychiatric nurses are invited to take part in a telephone town hall meeting with the unions bargaining representatives on Wednesday, October 10. The town hall calls will be offered at 12 noon, and at 7 p.m.

Please ensure HSA has your personal / home phone number by emailing your full name and contact info to memberlist@hsabc.org ... or you can sign in at www.hsabc.org and update your information by logging in.

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