

BULLETIN

Members win with new paramedical contract

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by RICK LAMPSHIRE

Congratulations to all of you! We can be proud of ourselves. Ninemonths of negotiations and over ten days of mediation have resulted in a collective agreement acceptable to 94 per cent of our paramedical professional membership. The 0-0-2wage mandate was pre-determined by the time we arrived at mediation. But we fought hard on the other issues and won, making significant gains. We won through strong, visionary leadership, a solid negotiating committee, a strong and active membership, and hardworking, committed staff. And we did it on our own.

- No employer concessions to our classifications system.
- Language improvements in hours of work, assignment of casual work and on-call opportunities.
- Breakthrough in the portability of seniority and promotional opportunities outside of individual facilities.
- New money for on-call, Long Term Disability and improvements in the Extended Health Care coverage.
- Full and complete application of all the provisions of our agreement by April 1, 1999 for our community members.

We told the employer we didnt want to take a strike vote. We believed we could negotiate a fair agreement without one. The employer refused, and you gave us a 78 per cent strike vote. We told the employer we didnt want to go on strike. We wanted to negotiate a fair agreement through the mediation process. The employer refused, and you gave us the strike and the confidence to get to where we needed to go. As your negotiator, I want to thank you for your strong support.

Negotiations are not so much about good arguments as they are about power. Part of the power we have at the bargaining table is you and your willingness to stand up for what you believe is fair and right. The other part is strong union leaders who are in tune with the membership and are willing to step in front of the crowd and into the glaring lights of public opinion. You did just that when you went on strike.

Your negotiating team was there through the whole process. They represented your interest impeccably, never straying from your critical issues. They were professional and passionate when confronting the employer on your behalf. When it was time to step up the pressure they moved there without hesitation. The same is true of your president. Cindy became directly involved in the bargaining process at the eleventh hour and pushed the contract in our favour. No one spoke more passionately or convincingly on your behalf as she did. The proof came with a 94 per cent acceptance of the Foley Report.

We can and should be proud of ourselves.

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