

BULLETIN

A mandate to seek fairness

December 1, 2012

The Report: December 2012 vol.33 num.4

IN OUR LONG HISTORY, HSA MEMBERS HAVE RARELY FELT WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO PREPARE FOR A STRIKE.

Our health science professional members have only gone on strike three times before now, and the last time more than 11 years ago. Its not something we take lightly.

That is why it is so extraordinary that 90% of our health science professional members just voted in favour of a strike.

Whether an actual strike takes place remains unknown as this issue goes to press in mid- November. But without a doubt, our members have sent a powerful message in support of our bargaining efforts.

Its no great wonder. The last collective agreement was one we voted to accept only reluctantly. Health science professionals are falling behind when we compare rates across the country. There is a crisis in recruitment and retention, leaving us working harder, short-staffed and falling behind.

Before talks broke down HSA tabled a framework agreement that included wage increase of 2% and 2% for each of 2012 and 2013. That doesnt seem like much to ask, but these are the maximum possible increases that can be realized under current wage controls. This has been the pattern in other public sector contracts outside of health.

But while the mandate the government has set is clear ... 4% over two years and no concessions ... they are changing the rules for health care.

Health employers are not even offering 2 and 2 to health workers now. Instead, the concessions HEABC are asking for are a real threat to the benefits weve achieved and protected over 40 years. Its disrespectful for the employer to try to extract that when our wages are already so far behind comparable provinces like Alberta and Ontario.

Health science professionals work hard every day to diagnose and treat the people we care for. We are highly trained. We subsidize the system by working unpaid hours because we are dedicated to helping the sick and the vulnerable.

With this strike vote, you have sent the message that you support a fair and reasonable contract. That you say no to the governments grab at your hardearned benefits. That you will stand up for a health care system that respects patients and the people who care for them.

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