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Community health talks at loggerheads over key scheduling, hours of work issues

Let's bargain through the weekend, unions urge

Unions representing some 13,000 community health workers want health employers to stay at the table and negotiate through the weekend to spur some momentum after the two sides failed to reach an agreement to resolve key issues for home support workers. Despite bargaining late for two evenings this week, talks are at loggerheads over scheduling and hours of work in the home support sector.

Those issues are now being put on the shelf for the time being to be addressed later in the process.

The unions want to focus today's talks on language issues in an effort to create some measurable progress. And chief negotiator Colleen Fitzpatrick said the circumstances warrant health employers staying at the table through the weekend to deal with other prior issues.

"March 31 is getting very close," she said. "Health employers are going to have to pick up the pace so that we can stay on track to achieve a fair settlement within the timelines set by the Campbell government—and before our current contract expires."

In addition to scheduling and hours of work, other key issues for community health workers include a fair wage increase, job security, and making up for previous rollbacks and cuts implemented by the provincial government. □

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