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Scheduling, hours of work in the spotlight at community health talks

The crucial issues of scheduling and hours of work for home support workers dominated negotiations with health employers as talks for a new contract for 13,000 community health employees resumed February 14 in Vancouver.

“It’s been tough slogging, and we haven’t yet made much headway getting the employer to agree to solutions,” says Colleen Fitzpatrick, spokesperson for the union bargaining association and BCGEU’s coordinator of negotiations.

“At the heart of the problem is the need to change the outdated individual client funding model that makes it next to impossible for home support workers to actually work enough paid hours to make a decent living.”

While talks continued into the evening Tuesday, Fitzpatrick says employer negotiators have made some moves.

“It’s still not enough though to get us any closer to a resolution on this top priority issue.”

Meanwhile, bargaining committee members say it’s crucial to make headway on the hours of work issue if health authorities want to expand home support services to provide more preventative, cost-effective care.

The current system means that far too many home support workers are literally on the job for 50 hours or more a week trying to cobble together 20 or 30 hours of paid time.

Discussions with health employer representatives resumed this morning in Vancouver, and will continue through the week.

HSA represents 600 members in the community health sector. Other member unions are BCGEU, UFCW Local 1518, HEU, CUPE and PEA.

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