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Community health casuals make gains as talks move a small step forward

Negotiators for workers covered by the Community Health Services and Support collective agreement say they've reached agreement with employers on a package of important gains for casuals which represents a small step forward for an overall settlement in the sector.

In bargaining last night, employer representatives agreed to drop the harsh "*three strikes and you're out*" practice whereby home support casuals who weren't available to work on three successive occasions would be dropped from the casual list.

"We succeeded in getting HEABC to agree to more respectful provisions for the sector that recognizes that casuals have the right to set their own availability," says Carla Dempsey spokesperson for the Community Health Bargaining Association (CBA). "We've been able to address employers' needs during peak vacation periods and established much less punitive language."

Headway was also made on entitlements for casuals working in long-term temporary assignments, and who do not work at agen-

cies already covered by superior provisions. Both sides have agreed that casuals filling temporary postings of six months or more shall accrue sick leave and vacation entitlements.

Talks continue today and are set to go through the weekend. Union bargainers are awaiting an employer response on the crucial issue of employment security. In the face of Bill 29, earlier in negotiations the union bargaining association tabled a proposal to extend some security and stability for front line workers in the event of contracting out.

It included voluntary departure/severance provisions modeled on BCGEU's public service agreement with government, and the application of existing labour code successorship provisions in the community health sector.

HSA represents 600 members in the community health sector. Other member unions in the bargaining association are: BCGEU, UFCW 1518, HEU CUPE and PEA. Other smaller unions involved in the sector are represented in the talks by CAW. □

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