



Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Health employers seek to strip contract

THE HEALTH EMPLOYERS Association of B.C. has tabled a massive concessions package that includes wage rollbacks, significant attacks on sick leave benefits, WCB and the LTD plan, rollbacks in benefits coverage and a huge cut in vacations.

“If Bill 29 was part one of a fundamental attack on our collective agreement, this is part two,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt. “HEABC is seeking to strip our contract .

“Their demands will cause more chaos in health care and more insecurity for health care workers and will do nothing to improve patient care,” says Allnutt. “It’s totally irresponsible and mean-spirited.”

In all, health employers tabled more than 100 pages of concession demands on Thursday.

You may download HEABC’s three-part package from the electronic version of this bargaining bulletin at <http://www.heu.org>.

In presenting the package, health employer spokesperson Tony Collins had this blunt assessment:

“Virtually all the classifications in this collective agreement are potentially at risk for contracting out,” said Collins. “We don’t think you will be thrilled with what we are going to present to you.”

Some of the those concession demands include:

- wage reductions ranging from 35 cents an hour to as high as eight to 12 per cent for most workers;
- a longer work week resulting in a four per cent pay cut;
- vacations slashed for workers by five to 15 days; and
- workers to pay \$2,000 to \$3,000 for their benefits.

HEABC has also taken aim at benefits for sick and injured members by:

- cutting sick leave accumulation by one-third;

...over

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- cutting sick leave pay by 25 per cent;
- freezing sick leave available for payout; and
- cutting pay and benefits to workers injured on the job.

“I’m frankly appalled at HEABC’s punitive attack on workers who require LTD benefits,” says Allnutt. “Their concession demands in this area will cause huge economic hardship and extreme anxiety for these members.”

HEABC demands on LTD will result in the loss of benefits for many claimants, make it harder to qualify and cause serious financial hardship.

- all existing claimants will be reassessed;
- longer waiting periods (from five to six months);
- employees waiting for LTD will have to pay full costs of MSP and extended health benefits in advance;
- LTD claimants would pay 100 per cent of their MSP and extended health premiums;
- from day one, total disability will mean inability to do any gainful occupation at two-thirds of pre-disability income;
- loss of supplementary benefits; and
- mandatory return to work programs.

Other concessions demanded by employers would result in the casualization of work and fewer benefits for part-timers, including:

- premium coverage slashed in half — part-time workers would pay 50 per cent of MSP, dental and extended health benefits (full-time workers would pay 25 per cent);
- part-time work redefined as casual for less than 15 hours a week; and
- the loss of benefits to workers as a result.

Other concessions include:

- up to 12-hour shifts can be imposed by the employer even if 49 per cent of workers are opposed;
- parking rates can be increased by employers with no controls;
- employer can increase qualifications for jobs with no higher pay;
- delete industrial troubleshooter;
- extends Bill 29 bumping restrictions beyond current expiry;
- seniority less important in selection criteria;
- no more posting for temporary jobs unless longer than six months;
- delete 16.01 (c) opportunities for regular workers;
- employer may cut employee’s hours by 7.5 hours per week, every year, with no bumping or posting;
- notice of schedule changes reduced from 14 days to seven days; and
- no overtime for temporary change in start and stop times of up to two hours.

“Today, we came to the table hoping for a reasonable exchange of proposals and a commitment to problem solving,” says Allnutt. “Instead, health employers and government are looking for their pound of flesh from the women and men who are trying to keep the system going.

“It’s really important for members to study HEABC’s concession demands to understand just how much they want to strip out of the contract.”

HEU and its bargaining partners tabled their bargaining package today. You can download it from the electronic version of this bargaining bulletin at <http://www.heu.org>.

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