



Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Record-breaking turnout as HEU members vote 90 per cent for strike action

Defying massive job losses, result sends a strong message to HEABC, says Allnutt

DESPITE massive job losses and looming cuts on the horizon, HEU members showed up in record numbers to vote overwhelmingly in favour of a strike, with a 90-per-cent result that strengthens the union's position as it returns to the bargaining table, says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

While votes from other members of the bargaining association brought the overall total down slightly to 89 per cent, Allnutt says the result is a "tremendous achievement" that makes a clear statement to health care employers and the B.C. Liberal government.

"This lets them know, in no uncertain terms, that our members won't be bullied or intimidated into a contract that contains massive wage and benefit rollbacks and with no employment security," he says.

"We'll see if health employers have understood that message when we return to the bargaining table later this week."

Both sides have agreed to meet on Wednesday – the same day the current contract expires.

The province-wide strike vote was called after the Health Employers Association of B.C. refused to remove a 100-page package of concession demands from the table and would not put a hold on layoffs during negotiations.

More than 2,500 pink slips have been issued since bargaining began January 9. But despite the fact that health employers continued to issue layoff notices during the March 15-26 strike vote period, turnout was heavy across the province.

Allnutt is urging health employers to rethink their bargaining strategy.

"The fact that HEU members voted so overwhelmingly in favour of strike action – despite having already lost thousands of their brothers and sisters to Bill 29, and despite facing the possible loss of their own jobs – should give HEABC pause for thought," he says. "Coming to the table with a sledgehammer is no way to bargain."

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NUMBER

21

