



Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Mediator books himself out: HEABC won't remove major obstacles

A LABOUR RELATIONS Board mediator appointed at the request of health employers has booked himself out of talks after it became clear that HEABC has no intention of putting a hold on layoffs during negotiations or revising their massive concessions package.

Stephen Rinfret was appointed by the LRB last Thursday on the request of the Health Employers Association of B.C.

But at his initial meeting with the parties on Friday it became apparent that health employers had no intention of putting layoffs and contracting out on hold. HEABC also refused to revise their massive three-year, \$900-million concessions package unless the unions agreed to concession bargaining in advance.

"I'm puzzled – and disappointed – that health employers would seek the services of a mediator when they had no intention of removing the major obstacles to productive bargaining," says Hospital Employees' Union secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

"Instead of making a serious attempt at mediation, it looks as if HEABC was just watching the clock while the final shift for hundreds of our members looms ever closer," adds Allnutt, who speaks for the multi-union bargaining association currently negotiating for a new contract covering 43,000 hospital and long-term care workers.

"Unless HEABC makes a significant move, the possibility of job action to reach a fair contract grows more likely."

Rinfret booked himself out on Tuesday afternoon.

Meanwhile, health unions continue to press for the finalization of essential services levels and have applied to the LRB for a deadline of April 21 at midnight.

On Monday, HEU released the results of an opinion poll that indicate that by a margin of 69 per cent the public believes that contract rollbacks will result in an erosion of the quality of care. Just 20 per cent believe health workers should take contract rollbacks to help the government meet its fiscal objectives.

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