



Newsletter

HEU presses employers on key issues post Bill 37

HEU is pressing health employers on the key issues of pay equity, workforce retention and an extended work week – all arising out of government legislation that imposed a wage-slashing contract on health care workers.

The union is working in a joint committee with the Health Employers Association of B.C. to determine the distribution of the April 1 pay equity adjustment – worth one per cent of payroll – over the next few days.

“It’s critical that we resolve both the 2004 and 2005 pay equity adjustments so that we can cushion the impact of wage cuts on those workers who have not yet reached pay equity targets previously agreed to by health employers,” says HEU secretary-business manager Chris Allnutt.

“But while Bill 37 did not eliminate ongoing pay equity adjustments, they can make no claim that they’ve preserved pay equity,” adds Allnutt. “The Campbell Liberals’ wage cuts have wiped out more than a decade of pay equity gains – a shameful attack on women’s work.”

The union is also putting pressure on health employers to address serious retention issues that have been compounded by government-imposed wage cuts.

“Before these cuts, one out of three HEU members was looking for work outside health care,” says Allnutt. “The government’s wage cuts will make it even harder to keep skilled, experienced workers in our hospitals and care facilities.

“We’ve raised this issue with health employers in the aftermath of Bill 37 and we will continue to press them to address retention and recruitment in high demand occupations,” adds Allnutt.

“The legislation clearly allows for amendments to the imposed contract where there’s agreement by both parties and where government is willing to fund those changes. That’ll take a concerted effort by the union and its members but it’s a campaign we can win.”

The union has asked for wage adjustments for technical and professional occupations in the bargaining unit as well as premiums for trades and maintenance workers. Also at issue is the implementation of the 37.5-hour work week imposed by Bill 37.

The legislation is unclear and inconsistent as to the implementation date of the longer working week. The union is challenging health employers’ position that implementation of the longer week takes place on July 29.

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