



Tentative agreement reached for health science professionals

After almost a year of bargaining for a new contract, the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) has reached a tentative agreement for nearly 17,000 health science professionals working in hospitals and communities across British Columbia.

HEU represents about 20 counsellors covered by the agreement.

The tentative agreement includes wage increases totaling three per cent, and makes permanent a market adjustment of between nine and 14 per cent over and above the basic wage rates for pharmacists. It also achieves fairness for all members of the modern health care team by finally recognizing the work and commitment of the team of health science professionals who are there – day or night – to perform the life-saving services that keep British Columbians alive in medical emergencies. The provisions that protect the health and safety of health science professionals in short supply who often work on call, and fairly compensate those who work extraordinary shifts to deliver critical services, are a long-fought for recognition of contribution of these members of the modern health care team.

The agreement brings a return to a 37.5 hour work week for health science professionals, who have for the past several years worked a 36-hour week introduced more than 15 years ago as a cost-saving measure.

The tentative agreement was achieved after two weeks of intensive discussions facilitated by mediator Vince Ready, and as HSA was surveying its members about a provocative “last offer” the government tabled in December. After that offer was tabled, HSPBA stepped away from bargaining to consult members about next steps.

The tentative agreement reached today includes a commitment to a Pharmacare tie-in which is comparable to pharmaceutical coverage offered by BC Pharmacare, and a joint process to realize savings in extended benefit coverage. In exchange, union members will benefit from the return of a pay-direct card instead of the current system of reimbursement of payment for prescribed drugs.

The tentative agreement covers more than 17,000 health science professionals who deliver health care services in B.C. hospitals and communities.

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A majority of health science professionals are represented by the Health Sciences Association of BC. Besides HEU, other unions in the Association are the BC Government and Service Employees Union, Professional Employees Association and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

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