



## Initial progress made on benchmark series review

*More work ahead on "Page 209" talks in the new year*

December talks between HEU and HEABC resulted in an agreement-in-principle on revised benchmark language for two of several classification groups under review. However, new pay rates for the revised benchmarks remain outstanding.

Although this first agreement – which applies to Accountant 1, Accountant 2, Accounting Supervisor and one Orthopaedic Technologist benchmark – signals some initial progress on the "Page 209" negotiations, HEABC did not respond to the union's pay grid proposals for wage increases to match the revised benchmarks.

It is the union's position that there will be no final agreement on the benchmark series review, which is targeted for completion by July 30, unless HEABC agrees to adequate rate increases for the benchmark changes.

In the 2006 round of bargaining, HEU and its union bargaining partners in the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) negotiated \$2 million from health employers for rate adjustments resulting from the review of benchmarks listed on page 209 of the collective agreement.

"We knew going into these talks that the \$2 million allocated would not be enough," says HEU secretary-business manager Judy Darcy. "As we talk with members and explore their work in detail, it is clear that significantly more funds will be needed to adequately compensate those members who are covered by this benchmark series review for their skills, knowledge, and expanded level of duties."

Accountants and accounting supervisors play a key role in ensuring the financial integrity of large multi-site health authorities. And it's a job area in health care that is experiencing increased recruitment and retention challenges.

Those challenges are also impacting orthopaedic technologists who are guided by physicians' orders, but work primarily on their own in cast clinics, emergency departments, and on hospital wards.

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“There is absolutely no question of the need to retain and develop ortho techs’ expertise in B.C. health facilities,” says Darcy. “They are key to making sure patients are able to access quality treatment – that is both safe and accurate – for fractures and orthopaedic disabilities.

HEU is also seeking employer support for a recognized skill development path in orthopaedic technology and have proposed two new benchmarks for orthopaedic technologists – a senior/trainer benchmark and an LPN/orthopaedic technologist benchmark.

HEABC has told the union they need more time to explore the ortho tech issues.

The two parties will meet again later in January, when they will also be discussing revised benchmarks for rehabilitation assistants and activity workers 3 and 4.

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