



Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Health unions revise proposals

5-3-3 with a \$4700 signing bonus; fast-tracked wage adjustments for specific job categories; action on workload

Health unions tabled a number of revised contract proposals Tuesday and are getting set for some intense negotiations for a new collective agreement covering 38,000 hospital and long-term care workers, now in their fourth week.

Last week, health employers tabled a proposal for general wage increases of 1.5 per cent in each of four years – a plan that would see workers' wages fall further behind inflation.

And union spokesperson Judy Darcy says employers' response to significant recruitment and retention problems is far too narrow and would further delay solutions to a crisis that's putting health care at risk today.

The Facilities Bargaining Association has countered with a three-year contract proposal including a general wage increase of five per cent on April 1, 2006, three per cent on April 1, 2007 and three per cent on April 1, 2008 – along with a signing bonus of \$4,700 pro-rated for casual and part-time workers and for workers on LTD.

“These general wage increases will keep workers' wages ahead of inflation and recover some of what was lost to govern-

ment imposed wage cuts two years ago,” says Darcy.

“And it's part of the answer to a deepening crisis in staff morale that's driving our members out of health care.”

The unions also tabled a comprehensive proposal on wage adjustments to increase job-specific wage rates that are uncompetitive or out-of-sync with increased training and responsibilities.

This includes fast-tracking wage adjustments for trades, power engineers, IT, LPNs, nursing unit assistants, buyers, pharmacy techs and lab assistants.

Health employers had proposed spreading wage increases for these workers over four years.

The FBA is proposing that they be paid up front in the first year of a new contract and that these adjustments include maintenance workers, social work assistants (I and II), health records technicians and cardiology and related technicians.

Also tabled today are proposals to establish separate funding envelopes to implement

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Hospital Employees' Union – 5000 North Fraser Way, Burnaby, B.C. V5J 5M3 – (604) 438-5000

The BC Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees



benchmark reviews in the following areas:

- clerical;
- orthopedic techs, volunteer coordinators, rehab assistants, activity worker III and IV and accountants;
- stores; and
- patient care technical.

In addition, the FBA continues to press for a clerical policy table.

And while the unions have moved from their opening position of an immediate reversal of the 11 per cent wage cut imposed under Bill 37, the proposal to return to a 36-hour work week remains on the table.

Also on Tuesday, the FBA tabled a number of proposals on improvements to health benefits, LTD, life insurance, overtime pay, shift differentials - and for responsibility pay for LPNs.

There's already broad agreement from both sides on the need for a trades apprenticeship

program and professional responsibility language for LPNs as well as improvements to provisions like shift differentials, and transportation and meal allowances.

Workload remains a key issue. The union is looking for enforceable solutions to workload problems including access to the grievance process.

"I believe there's some momentum developing at the bargaining table on select issues," says Darcy.

"But there's no question that wage adjustments will continue to be a difficult area - and we have yet to make any inroads on the key issue of job security."

On that count, Darcy says the unions will tackle the issue of stability in health care by tabling new proposals on bumping, severance, regional seniority and employment security on Wednesday.

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