



# Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

## Community health unions outline alternatives to benefit concessions

### *Workplace safety comes to the forefront at week's end*

**U**NIONS in the community health subsector outlined counter proposals to benefit concessions tabled by the Health Employers Association of BC as negotiations resumed January 31.

The unions proposed a number of concrete solutions that included cost savings through preventative measures and an early intervention program for illness.

Reclassification issues for licensed practical nurses and other job classifications were discussed on February 2. The unions explained that increased responsibilities, qualification requirements, and recruitment and retention issues need to be addressed.

Licensed practical nurses in community health make almost 10 per cent less than their counterparts in the facilities subsector.

On Thursday, as a way to highlight bargaining proposals to improve health and safety protections for front-line workers, the union bargaining association tabled a comprehensive report prepared by the joint Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare.

The OHSAH study highlighted the dangers faced by workers and backstopped a number of solutions advanced by the unions to make work sites safer, including risk assessments performed at clients' homes.

In other bargaining news arising from this week's negotiations, union proposals to reclassify a number of jobs were tabled and will be discussed further. And the two sides agreed that municipal pension plan language will now be formally enshrined in the contract. The first-ever pension plan for community caregivers kicks in starting April 1.

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“This week’s negotiations have been productive,” says HEU bargaining spokesperson Chris Dorais, “and even though the pace is slow, our bargaining committee believes we are making progress.”

Bargaining continues on February 7, with hours of work -- a priority issue for workers -- expected to dominate discussions.

Other key union priorities include wages, job security and making up for ground lost because of government rollbacks and cuts.

HEU’s community health bargaining committee members are: Lou Black, Marci Fisk, and Graham O’Neill.

HEU represents 1,500 members working in the community health subsector.

Our bargaining partners include the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1518, the Health Sciences Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Professional Employees Association and the sector’s biggest union, the BC Government and Service Employees’ Union. Other smaller unions are represented at the table by the Canadian Auto Workers.

February 3, 2006