



Bargaining Bulletin

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

THE HEART OF HEALTH CARE

Unions table job security proposals

UNIONS NEGOTIATING FOR 38,000 hospital and long-term care workers today tabled contract proposals that would strengthen health care through improved security and stability within the workforce.

The Facilities Bargaining Association's proposed measures would provide more options for workers to continue to provide services when their work has been contracted out or transferred to a public-private partnership -- or the facility has been closed.

As many as 8,000 workers have been fired as a result of facility closures, service cuts and privatization that followed in the wake of Bill 29, the law that eliminated contracting out protections in collective agreements.

A cap on Bill 29-related layoffs established in May, 2004 will expire next month.

The FBA proposes that where services are transferred to a private contractor or to a public-private partnership, employers must stipulate in commercial contracts that workers and their union follow the work -- and that workers' wage rates are maintained.

"It's a measure that would ensure the continuity and stability of service delivery," says FBA spokesperson Judy Darcy. "Similar arrangements have been made in the BC public service so it's not without precedent."

"Given the limitations put on bargaining by Bill 29, we have been very creative about how we bargain to maintain quality services and decent jobs," adds Darcy.

The unions also tabled other measures that would expand job opportunities for workers while preserving the public's investment in their skills and experience including:

- effective use of health care resources through consolidated health authority-wide seniority lists that include affiliates;
- seniority-based bumping with no comparability provided an employee has the ability to perform the duties of the position;
- better severance for workers who lose their jobs to cuts, closures and privatization; and
- a mechanism to promote worker input on changes to service delivery with a view to preserving jobs and promoting improved services to the public.

"We urgently need solutions to the constant threat of job loss and continuous chaos and instability plaguing health care as a result of Bill 29," says Darcy.

"The public knows it and workers know it. Now it's up to health employers to recognize that the status quo is not sustainable."

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