



Health employer “efficiencies” would limit job opportunities

B.C.'s health employers made it clear at the bargaining table this week that they want to limit employment mobility for regular employees and expand the use of casuals in the workplace.

Friday marked the fourth week of bargaining between the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) and the Health Employers Association of British Columbia (HEABC) for a new collective agreement covering 43,000 health care workers across B.C.

FBA spokesperson Bonnie Pearson says she is disappointed with the first volley of bargaining demands tabled by health employers under the guise of administrative efficiency.

"In a tough bargaining environment, it would be much more helpful if HEABC would support improvements in non-compensation areas of the contract such as work-life balance and employment mobility." says Pearson, who is the secretary-business manager of the Hospital Employees' Union.

"Instead, health employers have unleashed a laundry list of demands that restrict our members' opportunities to earn enough money to stay in health care by making it harder – not easier – to access additional shifts and new opportunities for advancement."

HEABC tabled a number of demands which would limit the ability of part-time workers to access additional hours of work, restrict full-time workers' access to more family-friendly shifts and new work opportunities, and expand the use of casual workers.

HEABC also wants to change the way seniority is accumulated.

The FBA also tabled a number of proposals this past week including provisions that would provide better access to flexible schedules, allocate overtime hours by seniority, and improve the method by which casuals are called in for work.

The diverse bargaining unit includes more than 270 job classifications working in every area of health care including bedside and emergency care, lab and other diagnostic services, health records, trades, facility maintenance, food services, pharmacy and finance.

HEU represents about 85 per cent of health care workers covered by the talks. Another 14 per cent are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 873, the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 882/882H. Eight other unions represent one per cent of workers covered by the talks.

The current Facilities collective agreement expires March 31.

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