



Facilities talks continue next week

At the Facilities table, negotiations for a new contract covering 46,000 health care workers have wrapped up for the long weekend and will resume on Wednesday next week.

Progress continues to be slow, with the parties reviewing last year's integration of the operations of the B.C. Ambulance Service (BCAS) into the health care sector.

Bonnie Pearson, spokesperson for the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association, says health employers have been single-minded in their insistence at the bargaining table that terms and conditions of employment for ambulance paramedics and dispatch personnel be merged into the main body of the Facilities Collective Agreement.

“Despite the priority health employers have put on integrating the agreements, they have not made a persuasive case for why this is at all necessary,” says Pearson, who is also secretary-business manager for the Hospital Employees' Union.

Last year, the Labour Relations Board appended the terms and conditions of BCAS employees to the Facilities agreement. This arrangement has not hampered operational integration of BCAS into the health sector.

“Given the tough bargaining environment and the number of other issues we need to address, I have to wonder why integration of the agreements – an extremely complex undertaking of questionable value – should be taking up so much of our time at the bargaining table,” adds Pearson.

The collective agreement covers a diverse health care team that includes workers in hospitals, nursing homes and diagnostic treatment centres as well as emergency health services and shared services such as logistics and supply operations.

HEU represents about 85 per cent of health care workers in the FBA. 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 in the association represent one per cent of workers covered by the talks.

May 18, 2012

