



HEABC targets benefits at bargaining table

Negotiations for a new Facilities collective agreement resumed this week with health employers once again identifying benefits as one area where they want to cut costs in the contract.

It's the first time that the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association has met with the Health Employers Association of BC since late July.

The FBA has advised HEABC that the time to table their entire package is this weekend so that the two sides can move bargaining forward in a meaningful way.

FBA spokesperson Bonnie Pearson says that health employers also need to provide the unions with the detailed data on contract costs that it promised to disclose months ago.

"It is very difficult to have productive discussions when health employers fail to provide the information all parties require to evaluate proposals and find solutions," says Pearson, who is also secretary-business manager for the Hospital Employees' Union.

The FBA is also waiting for HEABC to provide a comprehensive response to the unions' package of proposals which were tabled earlier this summer.

HEABC is operating under the government's so-called co-operative gains mandate where contract improvements are funded through system savings and savings elsewhere in the collective agreement.

The FBA has consistently taken the position that union members deserve a fair and reasonable settlement that improves health and safety, protects the integrity of benefits and provides for a modest wage increase.

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.

About 46,000 workers in more than 270 job classifications are impacted by the talks, making it the largest single set of negotiations in the current round of public sector collective bargaining.

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.

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