



Facilities negotiations on hold; strike votes begin Monday

Talks for a new Facilities collective agreement are on hold and the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) will be asking members for a strong strike mandate in votes that start Monday across B.C.

The FBA negotiating committee returned to the bargaining table Friday hoping that health employers would rethink their demand that workers take on huge benefit costs in return for modest wage increases.

But the Health Employers Association of B.C. (HEABC) and government are holding to their position that workers take on 25 per cent of the costs of their benefits – or an equivalent cost burden – as a precondition of any wage increase.

FBA spokesperson Bonnie Pearson says that's a raw deal that would cost union members hundreds of dollars a year.

“Any modest wage increase would be wiped out by escalating benefit costs,” says Pearson. “And quite frankly, workers in this sector have sacrificed more than their fair share over the last decade.”

Facilities negotiations began last February, but it wasn't until mid-September that HEABC first tabled its demand that members pay for a quarter of benefit costs.

Since then, the FBA bargaining committee has managed to convince employers to remove some of their more provocative proposals from the table.

While there has been some movement on the FBA's priority issues such as six day rotations, employers have not moved far enough. And, to make it more difficult, everything remains conditional on an agreement where members take on 25 per cent of the costs of benefits.

Pearson says that union members can voice their opposition to the employers' demands by providing their bargaining committee with a strong strike mandate.

“I'm convinced that we can conclude a collective bargaining agreement without the huge additional costs to workers demanded by health employers,” says Pearson.

The collective agreement includes more than 270 job classifications working at hospitals, care homes, diagnostic treatment centres, emergency health services, logistics and supply operations and corporate services.

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