



Community health reaches tentative five-year deal

The Community Health Bargaining Association (CBA) has reached a tentative, five-year contract for more than 15,000 community health workers across the province, including 1,500 HEU members.

If ratified, the tentative agreement would be effective April 1, 2014 until March 31, 2019.

The early coordinated talks at the three tables, led by BCGEU, also included Community Social Services and the public service agreement (with the provincial government).

Both the multi-union CBA and the CSSBA (for community social services) include HEU members, and they approved the early talks with the goal of finding common ground to reach settlements.

Highlights of the proposed contract include:

- Wage increases which total 5.5 per cent over five years for all members; with an Economic Stability Dividend in four of the five years providing the possibility for further wage increases.
- Additional wage comparability adjustments totaling two per cent over three years for members with occupations similar to those covered by the facilities subsector agreement.
- Increased health and welfare benefits to equal benefits in the facilities subsector agreement.
- Increased mileage and meal allowances to the level of the public service agreement.
- Maintained current provisions for employment security and protection against contracting out.

Examples of benefit improvements include: removal of the pre-existing condition restriction for LTD, Medical Referral Transportation benefits unlimited for a beneficiary's lifetime, and increased coverage of hormone-replacement medication.

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The parties also agreed to establish a Joint Community Benefits Trust. The jointly run trust will take over the management and decision-making of community health benefits starting on April 1, 2016.

The Joint Benefits Trust in community health contains the following assurances:

- HEABC will provide \$2.4 million in leveling funds to cover benefit cost increases over the term of the agreement. This way, the trust has the money to maintain benefit levels without increasing costs to members.
- An additional Long-Term Disability (LTD) cushion. Though projections show that the leveling funds should more than cover the cost of benefits, the first two per cent of increased premium costs caused by increased use will be absorbed by HEABC.

The CBA is led by BCGEU, and includes workers in community health throughout B.C. represented by HEU, UFCW 1518, HSA, CUPE, and others.

Members will receive a comprehensive report on the tentative agreement along with information on ratification balloting in the coming days.

December 3, 2013