



Government presents objectives for ambulance service as facilities talks resume

Bargaining talks covering 47,000 B.C. health care workers resumed February 11 with a presentation from a top health ministry official on the government's broad objectives for the provincial ambulance service.

B.C.'s Deputy Minister of Health, Stephen Brown, explained the government's intention to expand the use of emergency health services personnel in the delivery of primary and community care, especially in rural and remote locations.

Brown also urged the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) and the Health Employers Association of B.C. to define a process that would help government meet its objectives in this area.

FBA spokesperson and Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson is hopeful that the deputy minister's presentation is a signal that health employers will adopt a workable approach to addressing collective bargaining issues for ambulance paramedics and emergency health services administrative staff.

Emergency health programs including the ambulance service were transferred into the health sector in 2010. Both ambulance paramedics and emergency health services administrative staff are represented through their respective unions within the FBA.

Later this week, the FBA is also expecting to hear a response from health employers on a number of non-monetary contract proposals tabled in January.

Talks are scheduled through the end of February. The collective agreement expires March 31, 2014.

HEU, CUPE Local 873, the BCGEU, and the IUOE Local 882/882H – represent just over 99 per cent of health care workers covered by these talks. The less than one per cent of FBA workers represented by seven other unions are collectively represented in negotiations by the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers Local 5.

The collective agreement includes a diverse group of occupations including care aides, ambulance paramedics, health records staff, laboratory and other diagnostic specialists, sterile

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supply technicians, emergency dispatch personnel, trades and maintenance workers, activity aides and rehab assistants, IT specialists, pharmacy technicians, admitting and booking clerks, administrative staff, cleaning and dietary staff, and many others.

This set of negotiations covers the largest single group within B.C.'s public sector.

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