



Time to send health employers and government a strong, united message

Facilities unions to seek strike mandate from members

Health care workers are being asked to send employers a clear message that they're united in their determination to secure a respectful collective agreement that protects public health care services and jobs, and provides for safer workplaces.

The multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) voted unanimously to seek a strike mandate from members after 10 weeks of negotiations failed to produce an agreement that provides job security, protects benefits, and addresses out-of-control injury rates in health care.

On Friday, the Provincial Executive authorized the strike vote for HEU members in the FBA.

FBA spokesperson Bonnie Pearson says it's important that government and health employers understand that the unions' bargaining committee is backed by a strong and united membership.

"It's clear that employers and government need to be reminded of our resolve to negotiate a fair and respectful agreement," says Pearson, who is also the secretary-business manager of the Hospital Employees' Union.

The current collective agreement expires on Monday.

Health employers have rejected the FBA's proposal to extend the moratorium against contracting out that was negotiated back into the contract in 2012. The current moratorium expires on Sunday.

Employers have also rejected union proposals to improve health care delivery through better use of ambulance paramedics in the community. Instead, HEABC is seeking to rewrite long-standing contract provisions that have covered B.C. paramedics for decades.

"It's important that our unions report on the status of bargaining to our memberships and return to the table with a strong mandate to protect services, jobs and benefits," says Pearson.

The FBA is an 11-union bargaining group led by HEU and representing a wide range of health care workers in hospitals, residential care facilities, diagnostic treatment centres, the provincial ambulance service, emergency health services, and a number of shared services such as logistics and supplies.

Other unions in the FBA include CUPE Local 873, BCGEU, IUOE Local 882 and PPWC Local 5.

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