



## Tentative agreement limits contracting out, while protecting benefits and restoring vacation days

*Five-year deal includes 5.5 per cent general wage increases and improvements to premium pay, additional funding for FBA Education Fund, portability of seniority and service; long-standing issues for paramedics also addressed*

A tentative agreement has been reached between the multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) and the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) that covers 47,000 health care workers.

The agreement caps contracting out at 100 FTEs a year, restores vacation day accumulation over the term of the five-year agreement, and introduces a joint benefits trust to manage members' extended health and long-term disability benefits over the long-term.

Wage increases are in line with other public sector settlements reached under the current government negotiating mandate and provide for a 5.5 per cent boost spread over five years.

Two days of vacation accumulation, frozen in the 2010-2012 contract, will be restored over the term of the agreement, and also reflected in pay-in-lieu pay for casual employees.

There are also modest increases to evening, night, weekend and on-call differentials and the transportation allowance.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says that the 96 per cent strike mandate delivered by members two weeks ago was critical to securing an agreement with HEABC.

"With the backing of members, we were able to focus employers on reaching a fair settlement," says Pearson who is chief spokesperson for the FBA.

"We've limited the damage that contracting out can inflict on jobs and services, and we've negotiated an arrangement to jointly manage benefits while securing the funding to ensure that they are sustainable over the long-term."

HEU members vote on the tentative agreement in June. Today, HEU's Provincial Executive reviewed the settlement and is recommending members approve the agreement.

Members will continue to have access to the union-managed FBA Education Fund which will receive \$3.75 million in additional funding to support training and upgrading in health-related occupations.

There are also additional rights that will expand employment opportunities, including the ability to port seniority and service to another Facilities employer, and for casuals to register on two casual lists instead of one.

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And the agreement protects the sick leave payout provision which had been targeted by employers at the bargaining table.

On the health and safety front, the agreement includes language which will limit the number of six-day rotations in new or revised schedules, and provide a process to investigate the health risks associated with shift work.

For the second time, emergency health services workers, including both ambulance paramedics and EHS administration, were included in the Facilities negotiations. Ambulance paramedics will continue to be covered by separate collective agreement provisions. Language for EHS administration staff will be melded into the main Facilities agreement.

The tentative agreement includes provisions that address outstanding issues with pay scales for paramedics, while potentially enhancing paramedics' ability to participate in a community paramedic program. Paramedics will also gain access to a BlueNet Card for extended health benefits.

HEU members are advised to check the website next week for more details on the settlement, as well as for schedules of information meetings and ratification votes.

A comprehensive report is also being prepared which will include the complete settlement and a summary of the main points.

The collective agreement includes workers in hospitals, residential care facilities, emergency health services, and logistics and supply operations. It's the largest bargaining unit in B.C.'s public sector.

A wide range of occupations in the bargaining unit includes care aides, ambulance paramedics, health records staff, lab and other diagnostic specialists, sterile supply techs, emergency dispatchers, nursing unit clerks, trades and maintenance workers, activity aides and rehab assistants, IT specialists, pharmacy techs, admitting and booking clerks, administrative staff, cleaning and dietary staff, and many others.

The current collective agreement with the Health Employers Association of B.C. expired on March 31, 2014. The current round of bargaining began on January 14. The agreement was reached with the assistance of mediator Vince Ready.

HEU represents about 85 per cent of health care workers covered by these talks. Fourteen per cent are represented by CUPE Local 873, the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 882/882H.

Another seven unions represent less than one per cent of workers in the FBA, and are represented at the bargaining table by the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers Local 5.

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