



Employers need to pick up pace in FBA talks, say unions

The FBA bargaining committee is back at the table and Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) chief negotiator and HEU secretary-business manager Jennifer Whiteside reports that the parties are making some headway, but need to pick up speed in order to deal with an extensive bargaining agenda.

The Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) and FBA bargaining representatives had taken a two-week break from contract talks to accommodate HEU's week-long biennial convention at the beginning of November, and resumed negotiations on November 13.

"Last week, we were able to table most of our remaining non-monetary proposals, and have secured agreements on several language items aimed at improving members' rights in the workplace," says Whiteside.

"And in light of the B.C. government's legislation to repeal *Bills 29* and *94*, a major focus under discussion this week is strengthening the contracting-out protections health care workers lost under that legislation, enacted by the BC Liberals, 16 years ago."

Whiteside says another priority area under discussion this week are union proposals to deal with chronic short-staffing and unacceptable workloads across the health care system.

"Our hospitals are routinely working over-capacity. Members in every part of health care, in all parts of the province, are coping with extreme workloads, inadequate staffing and increasingly unsafe working environments," says Whiteside.

"We are very clear at the table. It is simply not okay to continue to ignore the day-to-day conditions our members are up against, on the ground, without seeking effective, practical solutions to remedy the situation. Our members cannot continue to go to work expecting they will be working short either because vacancies aren't backfilled or because employers are failing to address the workload crisis in our facilities."

She says all parties recognize the injury rates in health care are unacceptably high, but action is needed.

"Government and the employer must up their commitment to our members' health and safety," says Whiteside. "We've tabled language to create a province-wide agency with a mandate to promote programs and practices aimed at creating safer work environments, with the resources needed to make that happen."

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The BC Health Services Division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees

She says the FBA expects to be starting discussions on monetary issues toward the end of next week.

Bargaining in the facilities subsector initially kicked off on September 11, 2018.

Members are encouraged to check the HEU website (HEU.org) for news from the bargaining table. Members can also sign up for updates at heu.org/updates, and by texting FBA to 604-265-7417.

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