

# Facilities Bargaining Association

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## Health talks resume Thursday

Negotiations for a new collective agreement covering 47,000 health care workers will resume Thursday with the assistance of mediator Vince Ready.

Last week, the 11-union Facilities Bargaining Association announced that its members voted 96 per cent in favour of strike action after negotiations that began in January failed to produce an agreement.

FBA spokesperson Bonnie Pearson is hopeful that the strong strike mandate delivered by union members will focus all parties on reaching a negotiated settlement.

“Our objective is to negotiate a fair and respectful settlement that improves working and caring conditions on the front lines of our health care system,” says Pearson, who is the secretary-business manager of the Hospital Employees’ Union.

“With the assistance of Mr. Ready, it should become clear whether we can achieve this outcome at the bargaining table.”

The negotiations cover the largest bargaining unit in B.C.’s public sector, with 47,000 workers in hospitals, residential care facilities, emergency health services and logistics and supply operations.

The main issues at the table are job security, protection of benefits, health and safety and changes to the ambulance service.

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 and broke off in late March.

The Hospital Employees’ Union represents about 85 per cent of health care workers covered by these talks. A further 14 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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