

Facilities Bargaining Association

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Tentative agreement reached for 47,000 health workers

The multi-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) representing 47,000 health care workers has reached a tentative settlement with B.C.'s health employers. The five-year agreement was reached with the assistance of mediator Vince Ready.

The FBA bargaining committee is unanimously recommending the agreement to its constituent unions, and the provincial executive of the Hospital Employees' Union voted today to recommend ratification to its members. HEU represents a majority of the workers covered by the collective agreement.

The settlement includes 5.5 per cent in general wage increases over the life of the agreement, limits contracting out, expands employment options and protects benefits.

It also includes provisions that enhance the ability of paramedics to work within a community paramedicine model, and addresses outstanding issues around paramedics' pay scales.

Details of the agreement will be distributed to union members next week.

HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson says the 96 per cent strike mandate delivered by union members two weeks ago helped secure the tentative deal.

"Health care workers signaled clearly that they were determined to protect jobs and improve working and caring conditions," says Pearson, chief spokesperson for the FBA.

"This agreement meets those conditions and provides a measure of stability and certainty in a health care system that is under considerable stress."

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 BC expired on March 31, 2014. Negotiations began on January 14.

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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