

Bargaining for a new collective agreement has begun between the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) and the Nurses' Bargaining Association (NBA). These negotiations are taking place under the cooperative gains mandate where increases to wages, benefits or other improvements to collective agreements will be made if savings are found within existing budgets. Here are the facts on Registered Nurses in BC:

- There are approximately 32,800 Registered Nurses in the NBA. Of these, 49 per cent are full-time, 26 per cent are part-time, and 25 per cent are casual.
- Since 2001, the number of Registered Nurses practicing in BC has increased by 23 per cent or nearly 7,000 Registered Nurses.

Providing Fair Wages & Benefits

- Since 2006, Registered Nurses in the NBA have received wage increases of 20.79 per cent while the rate of inflation (BC Consumer Price Index) during this period was 9.65 per cent. This includes a three per cent labour market adjustment and benefit improvements in both 2010 and 2011 – the result of an early agreement with the NBA prior to the introduction of the net-zero mandate for the 2010 bargaining round.
- In 2011, the average annual total compensation (including wages and benefits) for one full time General Duty Nurse was \$104,400.
- Registered Nurses in BC receive one of the most generous and comprehensive total compensation packages in Canada:
 - BC is the only province in Canada where employers of nurses pay 100 per cent of the premiums for dental, extended health, group life and long-term disability benefit costs. In most other provinces, Registered Nurses pay a portion of the premium costs for these benefits.
 - Benefits for nurses under the NBA collective agreement represents an annual cost of \$190 million for BC health employers.
 - In addition, part-time employees currently receive the same health and welfare benefits as full-time employees.
 - At a maximum of nine weeks vacation, Registered Nurses in BC receive more vacation than any of their counterparts across the country. Most other provinces do not offer Registered Nurses more than seven weeks of regular paid vacation.
 - At 36 hours for a full-time work week, Registered Nurses in BC have the shortest work week in Canada when compared to Registered Nurses in other provinces.

Supporting Education

- Since 2001, the Province has invested more than \$200 million through the BC Nursing Strategy to educate, recruit and retain nurses.
- BC has more than doubled the number of nurse training spaces, adding more than 4,500 new spaces since 2001 and producing a record number of graduates who have received more than 20,000 degrees, diplomas and certificates in BC. This includes the addition of nearly 3,500 registered nursing seats. Since 2001, the Province has created 16 four-year Bachelor of Science Nursing degree programs and three accelerated three-year Bachelor of Science Nursing programs (British Columbia Institute of Technology, Vancouver Community College and the University of the Fraser Valley). These seat increases have resulted in over 10,000 students graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing between 2001 and 2010.
- Through the nurse education bursary, over 6,200 awards have been provided to nursing students in excess of \$19.8 million in education funding since 2001.
- The BC Loan Forgiveness Program forgives eligible health professional graduates their British Columbia student loans if they work at publicly funded facilities in underserved areas of BC. As of January 2012, more than 900 Registered Nurses received loan forgiveness awards.
- Additionally, starting in 2012/13, Registered Nurses will be eligible for federal Canada Student Loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 per year to a maximum of \$20,000.
- Paid education leaves for nurses have also increased. In 2006, there were 588,000 hours of paid nurse education leaves and in 2010 this reached 957,000 hours.

Creating Safe Workplaces

- In January 2011, a \$37 million Health and Safety in Action (HSIA) initiative was launched to further improve safety in the workplace. Under this initiative a provincial violence prevention program is being launched to give health care workers and their managers education and tools to prevent, defuse and/or deal with potentially violent situations to reduce their risk of injury and also to ensure that they feel safe in their workplaces.
- Between 2006 and 2010, \$19.6 million in targeted funding was provided for workplace occupational health and safety health initiatives for Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and Licensed Practical Nurses and Care Aides.
- The Nurses' Bargaining Association, the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association, HEABC and the health authorities are working on an Enhanced Disability Management Program to facilitate a more employee-centred, proactive and customised approach to disability management.

Addressing Healthy Workloads

- Health authorities work to ensure they have the right mix of health care professionals to support a healthy workload and deliver quality patient care. A key component of this includes utilizing the skills of Licensed Practical Nurses and Care Aides, while allowing Registered Nurses to work to their full capacity and focus on higher level nursing functions.
- The Ministry of Health, health authorities and HEABC have continued to work with the BC Nurses' Union through the Joint Quality of Worklife Committee (JQWC) and other forums to discuss workload and other related issues and to find reasonable and appropriate solutions to address workload challenges when and where they may arise.
- Progress is being made to address overtime for nurses across the province with overtime hours (including call back) decreasing by 30 per cent or 420,000 hours in 2010 compared to 2009.
- In addition, the difficult to fill vacancy rate for nurses has decreased from 4.4 per cent at the beginning of 2008 to 0.7 per cent in 2011.
- The Ministry of Health, health authorities and HEABC acknowledge that there are workload challenges for nurses in some areas of the system and HEABC will be discussing these in the current round of negotiations with the Nurses' Bargaining Association.

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