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Health employers and Nurses' Bargaining Association ratify five-year agreement

HEABC members and the Nurses' Bargaining Association (NBA) have ratified a five-year provincial collective agreement for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2019. HEABC and NBA entered into formal negotiations in September 2015 and reached a tentative agreement on March 31, 2016.

The agreement provides labour stability, with a five-year term consistent with the province's Economic Stability Mandate and other health sector agreements. The agreement also includes provisions that will facilitate health employers and the NBA working together on a variety of issues to improve patient care, working conditions for nurses, and streamline hiring and replacement processes for employers.

Some of the highlights of the agreement are:

- Modest wage increases (5.5 per cent over five years)
- Economic Stability Dividend to be paid if the province's real gross domestic product exceeds the official annual forecast
- Provisions to support the sustainability of employee benefits
- Integration of Licensed Practical Nurses into the NBA Provincial Collective Agreement
- Provisions to address the issue of staff turnover
- The development of provincial frameworks to address workplace violence and promote psychological health and safety in the workplace
- Commitments to address specialty nursing, rural and remote recruitment and retention, and nursing scope of practice issues
- A mechanism for overseeing the implementation of provisions related to nurse staffing and replacement
- A mechanism for improving health care labour relations dispute management in BC

Now that the NBA and employers have ratified the agreement, HEABC will lead a cooperative contract implementation process to facilitate and track key collective agreement commitments.

"The employer and union bargaining committees both showed tremendous commitment to the process to achieve this agreement," said Tony Collins, interim President and CEO, HEABC. "Even though we had our disagreements, both parties remained focused on the goal of improving patient care and working conditions for health care professionals."

Background

Nurses Bargaining Association (NBA)

- NBA bargains on behalf of approximately 41,870 unionized employees working in BC's health sector – including registered nurses (RNs), registered psychiatric nurses (RPNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs).
- The largest union in NBA is the BC Nurses Union (BCNU), followed by the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), and the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA). The Union of Psychiatric Nurses of BC (UPN) merged with the BCNU in December 2014.

- In 2013, the Government of BC passed legislation – the Health Authorities Amendment Act – transferring all LPNs from the Facilities and Community bargaining associations into the Nurses' Bargaining Association. Previously, the majority of LPNs were included in the Facilities Subsector collective agreement.
- RNs and RPNs work in hospitals, long-term care, community and public health, home support and mental health facilities.
- LPNs work in hospitals, long-term care, community and public health, and home support.
- The last round of bargaining with NBA concluded with a tentative agreement on September 25, 2012 after eight months of negotiations. That two-year agreement covered the period between April 1, 2012 and March 31, 2014 and encompassed province's Cooperative Gains Mandate.

More information:

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