



CUPE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Better Care. Healthier Communities.

November 4, 2022

B.C.'s 22,000 specialized health care professionals reach tentative agreement

B.C.'s 22,000 specialized health professionals working in hospitals and communities around the province reached a tentative agreement late Wednesday night after more than eight months of negotiations between the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) and Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC).

Jeanne Meyers, executive director of Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) and lead negotiator for the HSPBA, said the multi-union bargaining association went to the table with strong direction from members to address wages that have fallen behind their colleagues across the country. Members also wanted to see recruitment and retention strategies to support specialized health care professionals working under crushing workloads, and respect for the critical contributions of specialized health care professionals on the health care team.

CUPE bargaining committee team member Jennifer Kassimatis said that CUPE members were clear about their priorities for this round of bargaining.

“Our bargaining team worked tirelessly to ensure that we would achieve gains for our members in many areas, beginning with a general wage increase—in line with other provincial public sector agreements—that recognizes the rising cost of living,” said Kassimatis. She added that the tentative agreement also redesigns the outdated classification system and removes barriers to accessing positions in the HSPBA agreement for Indigenous workers while also building in cultural recognition for those workers.

CUPE Health coordinator Andrew Ledger said the agreement also provides some recognition of the extensive hours worked by our members throughout the pandemic and the many challenges they continue to face.

“The committee is proud of the accomplishments made in this tentative agreement,” said Ledger. “We look forward to upcoming information sessions, where we will provide more details about the significant gains we’ve made and recommend acceptance.”

Important features of the tentative agreement include:

- General wage increase that acknowledges the impact of the rising cost of living.
- Overhaul of an outdated job classification system to better recognize the complexity and scope of the work of CUPE members on the specialized health care team.
- Provisions to address the recruitment and retention crisis.
- Addressing occupational health and safety issues ranging from workers’ mental health, unsafe workloads, improved infection control standards, access to personal protective equipment and violence prevention.

- Acting on recommendations from the In Plain Sight report on the experience of Indigenous workers, patients, and clients in the health care system to work toward reconciliation and culturally safe health care.
- Plotting a roadmap for improved inclusion within the health care workforce for communities that experience marginalization.
- Scheduling and leave provisions to improve work-life balance.
- Improvements to continuing education and recognition of professional status.

HSPBA represents workers in five unions: HSA, CUPE, BCGEU, PEA, and HEU. Health science professionals are critical members of the multidisciplinary health care team, providing specialized health care services in acute, rehabilitation, community, and long-term care settings. CUPE positions covered by the contract include environmental health officers, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, and social workers, among others.

Complete information about the tentative agreement will be provided to members across the province in the coming weeks, with dates for an online ratification vote to be determined.