

BULLETIN

## Government rejects joint call by unions and employers for competitive wage for sonographers

February 7, 2017

The BC Liberal government has rejected a call for immediate action to address the critical shortage of sonographers in BC by providing them with a competitive wage.

Instead of a wage adjustment and other financial incentives recommended in a report by the joint Recruitment and Retention Committee, which includes representatives from the employer, HEABC, and the union bargaining association, HSPBA, the only recommendation government authorized is an increase in the number of sonographers to be trained in BC. While this increase is welcome, it will not produce additional new sonographer grads until at least February 2018, so will not assist with the current crisis. And failure to provide any financial incentives will not assist health authorities to recruit and retain sonographers, including these additional new grads.

Public sector sonographers in BC earn significantly less than those working in private clinics or in the public sector in most other provinces. Both union and employer representatives on the Recruitment and Retention Committee agreed in making their recommendations to government that the “Sonographers’ recruitment and retention issue is primarily a wage issue” and that “a labour market adjustment is necessary and appropriate for Sonographers”. Government rejected this joint finding despite the fact that thousands of BC patients are waiting for ultrasound procedures because hospitals are unable to hire enough sonographers.

“The government’s response in the face of a growing crisis in patient care is extremely disappointing. It’s more than disappointing. It’s alarming. We know that patients are waiting months for necessary diagnostic testing, and as long as they don’t get a diagnosis that leads to treatment, their physical condition will continue to deteriorate. It is a short-sighted approach to health care,” said HSA President Val Avery. Health Sciences Association of BC represents 700 ultrasound technologists working in BC’s hospitals.

The joint committee submitted a 105-page paper detailing the crisis caused by shortages of sonographers in the health care system and recommended a number of strategies to recruit and retain sonographers in BC hospitals, including:

- A market adjustment for sonographers
- Other financial incentives to help recruit sonographers, such as signing bonuses
- A doubling of training spaces in the BCIT Diagnostic Medical Sonography Diploma program
- The introduction of a fast-track program for cardiac and general sonography

Details of the joint submission can be found here:

[Joint HSPBA/HEABC bulletin](#)  
[Executive Summary](#)  
[Full Report](#)

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