



President's Report: Addressing years of erosion

December 20, 2018

ADDRESSING YEARS OF EROSION

By HSA President Val Avery

The Report, December 2018

I am pleased to report that a tentative agreement has been reached between the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) and the Health Employers' Association of British Columbia for the term of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2022.

I'm proud of our bargaining team and their tireless work to reach an agreement that strengthens our public health system through strategic solutions and delivers on the bargaining priorities set out by members.

In addition to a general wage increase for all, this tentative agreement addresses issues that health science professionals have struggled with for the past two decades: unsustainable workloads, chronic shortages and vacancies of critical members of the health care team, a dysfunctional system of addressing increasing challenges in health and safety and work, and valuing the important contributions of each and every member of the health care team.

A key element of the collective agreement is it delivers \$10 million in funding to address decades-old inequities in job categories. The tentative agreement lays a foundation for an improved system to recognize the changing nature and work responsibilities for health science professionals into the future by equalizing professions with pay grids that don't currently adhere to the same logic found across other job families when it comes to monetary recognition for educational credentials, advanced practice, and leadership and supervision roles.

This agreement works to modernize the classification system and will deliver significant, immediate pay increases to many of our members who, for too long, have been subject to job classification models inferior to fellow members in the HSPBA.

Through two and a half months of bargaining, both the union and employer bargaining committees focused on negotiating collective agreement solutions that address years of erosion in the system that affected our members' ability to provide the care that British Columbians expect and deserve. It is an agreement that has been one year in the making, starting with HSA's Bargaining Proposal Conference in December 2018.

The message from members at that conference was that after almost two decades of government neglect, we had an opportunity to focus on stopping the downward spiral that public services, including health care, was in.

The impacts of those two decades of neglect were felt acutely all around us: the highest child poverty rate in the country, a minimum wage that was falling behind, a crisis in mental health and substance use care, and deterioration of early childhood services and support. In acute care, it was seen in waitlists, dwindling resources, and crisis-driven management that undermined confidence in the public health care system.

As the new government has demonstrated, it is committed to a reset, with dramatic action on improving access to primary care services, addressing acute care backlogs, reducing diagnostics waitlists, focusing resources on mental health and addictions services, and growing multidisciplinary health care teams. In addition to a \$3-million professional development fund achieved outside the collective agreement, a \$400,000 annual professional development fund was negotiated into the collective agreement.

The terms of the tentative agreement you will be voting on are the result of some tough negotiating that

focused on achieving a solid foundation on which to build long-term solutions to the challenges in the public health care system - challenges that did not appear overnight. The changes negotiated start us on a course to ensure that the expertise, knowledge, and services health science professionals bring to the modern health care team are reflected in the collective agreement.

Watch your email and the HSA website for details on information and voting meetings. If HSA does not already have your home email address, please provide it to us by visiting the hsabc.org.

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