



Biomedical Engineering Technologists headed for Arbitration

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HEABC and HSA have failed to reach an agreement on an appropriate wage rate and other classification issues arising from the Biomedical Engineering Technologists (BMETs) placement into the Paramedical Professional Collective Agreement as a result of a May 6th ruling by the Labour Relations Board. The LRB ruling simply places the BMETs into the existing PPBA agreement and is not the same as an expired collective agreement in which the parties can bargain new provisions.

Prior to the 1996 LRB ruling which placed all BMETs into the Facilities Support Unit, about 1/3 were HSA members and covered by the HSA master agreement. In that agreement, BMETs had a "job family" which started at grid level 8 with provisions for additional classifications such as sole charge, special procedures, and different supervisory levels. It is HSA's position that given the circumstances, the BMETs should be returned to their former placement within the PPBA agreement. Since the only professions on schedule B are those that were imposed by legislation, not negotiations, BMETs would be on schedule A.

The employers' position is that the BMETs should be placed on the miscellaneous wage rate schedule A with the staff position being at grid 6 and another unspecified supervisory level. Additional classifications would not be available under this scheme.

As a result of this breakdown in discussions and the wide disparity in positions, the parties have agreed that the matter will proceed to arbitration. Both parties are committed to seeing that this occurs as soon as reasonably possible. Whatever the outcome, it will be retroactive to May 6, 2005.

"It is very disappointing that the employer is failing to recognize the previously negotiated terms, especially since the employer took the position at the LRB that the BMET's duties have expanded in the last 10 years", says Ron Ohmart, Executive Director of Labour Relations for HSA, who is handling the discussions with HEABC.

In the meantime, BMETs should be working with their employers to return to a 36 hour work schedule by reaching mutual agreement through the Appendix 6 process in the collective agreement.

In addition, BMETs will be transferred to the HSA Long Term Disability Plan beginning the first pay period in June. The premium is paid by the employee and is currently 3 per cent of regular earnings.

Updates will be posted on HSA bulletin boards and the HSA website.

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