

BULLETIN

## Lots to talk about

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Like those of you who attend a lot of meetings, I notice that some of them aren't that productive.

But that's not how I feel about the regional meetings we hold annually. With more than 16,000 members working in over 75 professions at 250 facilities in communities all over the province, I look forward to the regional meetings as an opportunity to connect with you and hear what you have to say about the work you do and the challenges we face as an organization.

This fall is no exception.

We're several months into another extraordinarily challenging round of contract negotiations. Like last time, but using different terminology, the government is insisting on zeros unless we're willing to give up the benefits needed to pay for wage increases. Members are frustrated with this sort of penny-wise, pound foolish attitude where the government's obstinate refusal to consider a fair and reasonable salary increase is exacerbating recruitment and retention issues that grow worse each day, threatening the quality of patient care and, in some cases, the lives of the people we serve.

Our members in the community social services sector have already voted in favour of striking to support their efforts to achieve a fair collective agreement, and at many other tables in the public sector ... strike mandates are in place and strike votes are rolling out.

Our dedication to our patients and clients runs deeply. We don't take the possibility of job action lightly. But we are faced with the challenge of a government that is willing to play political games with the people who hold our health care and social services systems together every day, and we need to consider action that balances the public's need for our services and our members' need to be treated with respect. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this.

Here's another thing: with essential service levels being hammered out, we've noticed a trend towards a growth in excluded management ranks, leaving fewer professionals involved in direct patient care. We're concerned about this, and I hope to hear about how this is affecting your workplace.

With a provincial election now just months away, and a government intent on picking fights with public employees like you in a misguided attempt to score a few votes, we're going to have a lot to talk about.

See you there.

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