



Non-union workers fearful of wage disparity

HOSPITALS

By JOHN MINER, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

Last Updated: April 28, 2010 10:35am

Non-union hospital workers in London fear they will fall behind their unionized colleagues as a result of the provincial law that freezes the wages of employees not covered by a labour contract.

The concern was raised at open forums held by London Health Sciences Centre with non-union staff at Victoria, South Street and University hospitals in the past week.

"People were upset, emotional. They were concerned about the fairness of the situation," said Steve Coulahan, chief human resources officer at LHSC.

The hospital has followed the practice of providing non-union employee groups with the same financial increases bargained by their unionized colleagues. LHSC has close to 3,000 non-union staff, including nurses, technical staff, service workers and office and clerical staff.

But as part of its cost-cutting measures, the Ontario government froze public sector wages for two years, including hospital workers. Union agreements were exempted from the freeze.

The McGuinty government has stated it wants to see 0% increases for unionized staff when their contracts come up.

"Employees wanted some assurance of that, that there would be equity re-established at some point," Coulahan said.

Non-union staff were also concerned about the impact on pensions for people retiring in the next year or two, he said.

The concerns raised by the non-union staff are being forwarded by LHSC to the Ontario Hospital Association, Health Ministry and the Local Health Integration Network.

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