



Bargaining 2021/2022: Frequently Asked Questions

Here are the most frequently asked questions about Bargaining 2021/2022.

What is a strike?

A strike is a type of job action where members of a union work together to withhold services in support of achieving important gains in the workplace - like fair wages, safe working conditions, respectful treatment.

In an ideal world, strikes would not be necessary. And usually they are not because employees and employers are able to discuss workplace changes respectfully and reasonably. However, sometimes there are significant disagreements and when that happens, union members work together to show their determination to the employer. Strikes are only held after members have their say by holding a vote, and they are always a last resort. HSA members have gone on strike in the past to achieve fairness and respect, and must be prepared to do so again.

Because of the essential nature of our work, by law, HSA members cannot conduct an all-out strike with a full withdrawal of services -- instead, we take job action while providing an essential level of service.

When might HSA go on strike or hold a strike vote?

Negotiations for the contracts covering HSA members began in March 2022, and are still in the early stages. Talks with the employers will likely continue for the next few months. If no progress is made by the fall, and bargaining is at a stalemate, HSA may consider taking a strike vote then.

What does a strike vote mean?

Before taking any sort of job action, we must take a strike vote so that all members can have a say in how they want to support their bargaining committee in taking a strong stand to achieve a fair agreement.

It's important to note that a strike vote does not necessarily mean that members will go on strike; it does mean that they are willing to take job action, if needed, to achieve a fair contract, and often this is enough to get the employer to agree to a more reasonable position.

What if another union goes on strike in the next few weeks or months?

If you see a picket line at your workplace, do not cross it. Immediately call the union office at 604-517-0994 or toll-free 1-800-663-2017.

If another union plans to go on strike, they will communicate through the BC Federation of Labour with other unions who may have members affected by the strike picket line.

What could a strike or job action look like?

We take job action when withdrawing our services is the only power left to us to achieve our bargaining demands, and before taking any sort of job action, we must take a strike vote.

Job action can take many forms. It could start with the refusal to perform specific duties and escalate to an all-out withdrawal of everything but essential services.

A common form of job action is “work to rule”. This is where you refuse to do any duties that are not specifically part of your job description, like certain paperwork, administrative duties, or portering. A ban on overtime is a similar form of job action. These types of job action place pressure on the employer while keeping members at work.

Rotating job action is where members withdraw their services for a short period of time, usually one day. An example of rotating job action is to withdraw services in one department for one day, and then have the members return to work the next day while another department withdraws their services. This type of action minimizes financial loss to HSA members while putting pressure on the employer .

Maintaining care for patients and clients remains a top priority, and essential levels of service, which are negotiated with the employer, must, by law, be maintained.

What are essential services? How will I know if I’m considered essential?

Essential service levels are currently being negotiated between the union and the employer. No job action can be taken until such time as the final levels are agreed to by the BC Labour Board.

In the event of job action, the union will take over responsibility for scheduling the work needed to achieve essential services, and in order to be eligible for these essential service shifts, HSA members must perform picket duty. This can take a number of forms as there are a lot of jobs that need to be done during job action.

HSA will work with the steward and job action team at your workplace to ensure that members know what to do and that essential service shifts are distributed equitably.

During the time that members attend work for essential service shifts, they are paid their regular salary by the employer. When members are performing their picket duty jobs, they are paid by the union.

How much is strike pay?

The HSA Board of Directors sets the level of strike pay for HSA members. As there is no imminent job action to be taken, the Board has not yet determined the amount for picket pay.

What if I am on leave or vacation during a strike or job action?

Employers will decide how to deal with the question of vacations during job action, and we don’t know what they have in mind at this point.

Generally speaking, if the strike were to begin before your vacation starts, the union may not be able to compel the employer to provide you with your vacation pay. If you start your vacation before job action starts, you would remain on vacation and when you returned to work, if the job action was still continuing, you would need to connect with the union.

Employers are aware that it is difficult to ensure all members get their vacation time; therefore it is in their

best interest to ensure that members have access to that time when it is scheduled.

Our current contracts expired in March. What happens now?

While the contracts covering most HSA members expired March 31, 2022, the terms of these agreements remain in force until new contracts are negotiated and voted on by all union members. That means your pay and benefits remain unchanged for the time being.

Who is negotiating my new contract?

HSA members are covered by four major agreements -- the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) collective agreement, the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) collective agreement, the Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA) collective agreement, and the Nurses Bargaining Association (NBA) collective agreement.

Each agreement is being negotiated by a bargaining committee comprised of professional negotiators employed by the union, subject experts on specialized labour relations matters, and ordinary HSA members elected by their peers to ensure member concerns are addressed at the bargaining table and in the new agreement.

How does bargaining work?

HSA has produced a short video that provides a quick overview of the process by which union members like you participate in the negotiation of contracts.

If you have other questions, your steward is a good source of information.

What is the status of bargaining?

- HSPBA: bargaining is ongoing.
- CBA: bargaining is ongoing.
- CSS: bargaining is ongoing.
- NBA: bargaining has not yet started; HSA nurses set their priorities at a bargaining proposal conference in Fall 2021. It is anticipated bargaining will begin in October 2022.

You can find previous updates and bulletins here: <https://hsabc.org/contracts-and-bargaining/bargaining-20212022>

What can I do to make sure I'm getting bargaining updates?

Make sure that we have your personal (not work) email address by completing the contact information update form: <https://hsabc.org/contact/member-contact-update-form>

I want to help; what can I do?

To get involved with bargaining, start with these 3 steps:

1. Watch the 'How Does Bargaining Work' video to familiarize yourself with the process;
2. Read the bargaining bulletins in this round of negotiation;
3. Contact your Steward to let them know you want to help.

For more general information about how you can get involved in your union, watch this explainer video

Is your question not answered here? Send us a note at [info \[at\] hsabc dot org](mailto:info@hsabc.org).

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