



CSS Bargaining Update: FAQ from the bargaining table

June 8, 2022

The bargaining committee has been hard at work at the negotiations table with the employers' association ensuring that member priorities are heard. The committee is taking a break from negotiations and has scheduled the next round of talks for the week of June 20.

Here are some key updates about the bargaining process and a few frequently asked questions.

What is the Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA), and the Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA)?

The Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA) represents unionized workers in the community social services sector, and the Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA) represents the employers.

In the early 2000s, the BC government restructured bargaining so that all unionized community social service workers funded by the provincial government would bargain collectively. This created provincial sectoral collective agreements, rather than separate and independent agreements for each community social services employer. This process standardized working conditions, compensation, and benefits across the sector.

The CSSBA Negotiating Committee (the bargaining committee representing workers) is made up of union members and representatives of nine unions in the CSSBA tasked with negotiating new terms of a collective agreement for over 17,000 unionized community social services workers employed in every community across the province. The CSSBA Negotiating Committee sits across the table with the CSSEA bargaining committee, who represents over 200 community social services employers across the province.

What unionized workers does CSSBA represent?

Within the community social services sector, there are three subsectors - Indigenous Services, General Services and Community Living Services. Improvements to all three collective agreements are negotiated at the main Community Social Services bargaining table. Workers that are covered under the Indigenous Services agreement have unique and specific concerns and needs. In recognition of this, negotiations for the Indigenous Services agreement are underway at a separate and concurrent bargaining table as the main Community Social Services bargaining table.

The collective agreements for all three subsectors expired on March 31, 2022. Terms and conditions of the agreements continue until new agreements are ratified. Bargaining commenced in February.

What is happening right now at the bargaining table?

The CSSBA Negotiating Committee and the CSSEA bargaining committee recently started to discuss monetary priorities. These are items that have a dollar value and are costed against a "total compensation envelope" that has been approved by the BC government and presented to the CSSBA Negotiating Committee by the CSSEA bargaining committee. We are working hard to make gains at the table and we know that it will be challenging because not all of the priorities that members have identified will be achieved. The CSSBA Negotiating Committee has a difficult task ahead to determine what the majority of the 17,000 in the province will ratify in the renewed agreements.

Bargaining is ongoing and we are back at the table the week of June 20.

Essential services negotiations will start soon. This is part of the bargaining process and is a tool that we may need in our toolbox to advance negotiations.

What are 'essential services'?

Everyone's job is important. But under the Labour Code, some jobs are identified as 'essential'.

Section 72(2) of the *Labour Relations Code* defines essential services as "**facilities, productions and services**" that are "**necessary or essential to prevent immediate and serious danger to the health, safety or welfare of the residents of British Columbia.**" It is important to understand that essential services negotiated under the *Labour Relations Code* for the purposes of job action are **not** the same as the essential services designated during the COVID-19 pandemic for temporary pandemic pay.

Should I help my employer with setting essential services levels right now?

No. There is an established timeline in place for the employers to provide the union(s) with their proposed essential services levels for the community social services sector. The union will then be in a position to determine which ones we agree with, and which ones we will challenge. The Unions should not work with employers to set essential services levels at this time. Members should not engage with their employers on essential services levels at their worksites.

There is a provincial CSSBA Essential Services committee with representatives from each union who will coordinate essential services negotiations for their union. They will also assist with the coordination of essential services on behalf of the bargaining association with CSSEA's essential services coordinating committee.

Each union representative on the CSSBA Essential Services committee will receive the employers' proposals on essential service levels. They will then coordinate with and distribute to the local union representatives.

The CSSBA Essential Services committee are as follows:

BCGEU - Shelly Appleton and Deb Wilson
CUPE - Michael Reed
HEU - Robbin Knox and Christina Lloyd Jones
HSA - Colin Brehaut
CSWU - Shelley Moore
CLAC - Aleasha Wegner
USW - Marty Gibbons
BCNU - Carolin Bleich and David Ling

This provincial essential services committee reports to the Lead Negotiator of the CSSBA Negotiating Committee and they will ensure that the CSSBA Negotiating Committee remains informed and up to date on the progress of essential services negotiations.

I have heard that we are taking a strike vote, is this true?

No. Right now, there are other union members at another public sector bargaining table that are at a different stage in their bargaining process and are taking a strike vote. The CSSBA Negotiating Committee representing members covered under the Community Social Services collective agreements are still at the bargaining table and have not called for a strike vote. Many of us work with other public sector workers, and we may hear information about other public sector bargaining tables. It is important that you stay informed about what is happening in community social services and that you receive communications from your negotiating committee.

Where are we in the process now?

The bargaining process begins and ends with you - your ideas and your vote. To help you understand the bargaining process, we have designed the [attached infographic](#) to help illustrate the steps along the way from your ideas to the negotiating table.

Please check with your coworkers to make sure they are also receiving these email updates and share this bulletin with them.

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