



HSPBA Bargaining Update: Work Continues Over Summer

July 11, 2022

As we enter the summer, unions leading negotiations for health science professionals (Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association - HSPBA), community health (Community Bargaining Association - CBA) and community social services (Community Social Services Bargaining Association - CSSBA) continue to coordinate efforts to speak with a louder voice to support common goals.

Along with other unions and negotiating tables, the HSPBA negotiating committee has tabled a wage proposal that seeks to deal with rising inflation. We have not yet had a substantive response on this. However, members may be aware that the BC General Employees Union, which was scheduled for an earlier start to negotiations this year, has received -- and rejected -- a wage offer.

BCGEU members recently voted 95 per cent in favour of going on strike to back contract demands for the direct government employees public service contract. The BCGEU is focusing its efforts over the next several weeks on negotiating essential services levels in anticipation of possible job action. BC's essential services legislation requires that agreement be reached on essential services of staffing required to protect the public from immediate and serious danger, while balancing workers' right to strike.

HSA and other unions in the health care sector have been working on establishing agreement on essential service staffing levels since January, ensuring that HSA is in a position to support job action in the event that bargaining breaks down at any of the health care bargaining tables.

If your bargaining committee is not able to get to a tentative agreement that they believe meets your needs, they may make a recommendation to conduct a strike vote to show the employer they have your full support for a contract that values the work you do.

HSPBA negotiations, led by HSA and conducted by professional negotiators, subject experts on labour relations issues, and members elected by their colleagues to bring front-line perspectives, are now on a scheduled pause, but a working group will continue throughout the summer negotiating items addressing issues of health and safety.

There are still significant health and safety issues to deal with, such as workload, fatigue, point of care risk assessments, access to PPE, violence prevention and support for the new Health Care Occupational Health and Safety Society (SWITCH BC). Focused discussions on OHS issues led by a small sub-committee have made some encouraging progress to date. The joint employer/HSPBA group met separately on seven occasions since bargaining began in March, and has reached tentative agreement in key areas, including new language on the employers' responsibility to address threats of violence against workers or their families, requirements for employers to consult with joint occupational health and safety committees on risks associated with musculoskeletal injuries, new language on health and safety training for supervisors, and improved language covering potentially violent or aggressive behaviour from patients, residents or clients.

There are no plans for job action for members covered by the HSPBA contract at this time. While progress at the negotiating table is slow, we remain focused on achieving movement when discussions resume after the summer pause.

In the event that you do encounter a picket line this summer, do not cross, and contact your union for direction.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017