



HSA negotiators head to the table for members in all sectors

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Collective agreements covering the vast majority of HSA members working in health sciences and community social services expire on March 31, and HSAs negotiators have already begun work on the next agreements.

HEALTH SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS

Bargaining for the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association was scheduled to begin February 27.

HSA priorities for bargaining were set at a three-day bargaining proposal conference in November.

HSA President Reid Johnson said delegates to the bargaining proposal conference were clear about their overarching instruction to the bargaining committee.

-They want an approach to bargaining that says we respect the process, that we understand and respect the value our members bring to the system, and that we demand the same commitment to the process and to our members from government."

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Priorities set by delegates fall into four themes:

- Regain and maintain a competitive edge
- A modern system needs modern approaches
- Quality care depends on quality delivery by quality people
- Enhanced knowledge means enhanced health care

Johnson predicts that HEABC will be at the table with the government mandate of -net zero" replaced with the newly minted terminology of the same principle ... -cooperative gains." He said HSA will approach bargaining with an open mind, but carrying a clear mandate from the membership.

-We will enter bargaining with respect for the process, but that cannot be a one-way deal. Respect is a two-way street, and without a mutual commitment to the process, we cant move ahead," he said. And the bargaining team will be relying on members to support them to make improvements.

-We ask that our negotiating committee respect the direction of this conference," he told delegates. -We in turn must ensure that we respect the direction of our negotiating committee. Sometime in the coming months, our negotiating committee may come back to us and say "we took our agenda forward and now we need your help to earn the respect our members demand, and we to be prepared as a union to do that."

HSAs member representatives to the bargaining committee are:

- Val Avery (Board of Directors), Committee Co-Chair, Physiotherapist, Victoria General Hospital
- Kimball Finigan (Board of Directors), Committee Co- Chair, Radiation Therapist, BC Cancer Agency
- Cheryl Greenhalgh, Medical Radiation Technologist, Royal Columbian Hospital
- Edith MacHattie, Occupational Therapist, Centre For Child Development (Surrey)
- Denise Sylvest, Physiotherapist, Castlegar Community Health Centre and Talarico Place

Alternates to the bargaining committee are: Brendan Shields (Board of Directors), Music Therapist, Richmond Hospital; Candis Johnson, Supported Child Care Consultant, Child Development Centre of Prince George, and Rick Lascelle, Respiratory Therapist, Ridge Meadows Hospital.

With over 14,000 health science professionals, HSA is the lead union in the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Representatives of HSAs Community Health Services and Support workers began talks with the employer January 23. Talks commenced between the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) and the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) with the initial tabling of proposals. The CBA presented a summary of the priorities identified by health care workers and proposals related to harrasment and bullying. Negotiations resumed on February 6.

Delegates to a bargaining proposal meeting in October put wages and benefits at the top of the priority list. Members also directed their representatives to the bargaining table to seek improvements in vacation, anti-bullying language, job security, mileage rates and support for a transit subsidy, and professional development and education.

Delegates to the conference elected Kate Meier, a residential care worker at South Peace Child Development Centre, as their representative to the bargaining table. HSA Senior Labour Relations Officer Dani Demetlika will be HSAs lead negotiator. Linda Spenard, a mental health and addiction support worker at Columbian Centre Society, was elected as the alternate representative.

Members of the expanded committee ... an HSA committee to provide advice and feedback to the bargaining committee members ... are:

- Sharon Sawyer, a child care assistant at Thompson Nicola Family Resource Society, and
- Melanie St. George, an environmental health clerk at North Shore Community Health Services.

Six hundred HSA members are covered by the Community Health collective agreement. HSA is a member of the union bargaining association, also called the Community Bargaining Association. The BC Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU) represents the majority of workers in this sector.

NURSES

Ensuring the safety of patients in BCs health care facilities is the priority for the Nurses Bargaining Association, as they began bargaining in January for a new contract with the provinces health authorities.

HSAs Registered Psychiatric Nurses are represented by Lions Gate RPN Val Barker and Senior Labour Relations Officer Pat Blomme.

HSA President Reid Johnson said psychiatric nurses want to ensure they can continue to deliver safe and high quality care. -With hundreds of hours of specialized training, Registered Psychiatric Nurses are the caregivers of choice in mental health," he said. -Well be at the table advocating on their behalf."

The nurses wrapped up the first two days of preliminary bargaining discussions with health employers January 25. Bargaining was set to continue February 20.

Problems with patient safety and understaffing have been in the spotlight recently, as nurses have been forced

to care for patients in hospital hallways, lounges and other areas not appropriate for patient care, including a hospital coffee shop. Health employers rarely provide more nurses to handle these increasingly difficult caring conditions.

-As highlighted with critical safety concerns at Victorias Eric Martin Pavilion and at Abbotsford Regional Hospital, RPNs need adequate staffing, logical communication about patient files, and thorough risk assessments and safety procedures," Johnson said. -Safe, quality patient care starts with adequate staffing on the wards."

In a province wide survey last spring, a majority of BC Nurses Union members reported that normal nurse staffing levels are not adequate for the number of patients for whom they are required to provide care in hospitals, in community services and in long term care nursing homes. The concern is particularly overwhelming in hospital emergency wards, on medical units, in long term care and for case managers trying to find appropriate services for clients in the community. Members say that for much of the time, managers arent even meeting their inadequate normal staffing levels.

In the survey, members put patient safety and safe staffing at the top of their priority list for bargaining. They also want job security for nurses, at a time when health authorities have been cutting back nursing staff to save money, failing to hire new nursing graduates into full-time positions, and refusing to backfill nurses who are off sick or on vacation.

BCNU is the largest union in the Nurses Bargaining Association, which also includes the Health Sciences Association, the BCGEU, and the Union of Psychiatric Nurses.

COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES

The first dates for bargaining with the employer have now been set for the week of February 27.

HSA's bargaining representatives joined discussions at the bargaining associations strategy meeting in late January. Delegates to HSA's community social services bargaining proposal conference in December elected Jody Moore ... family counsellor, Cameray Counselling Centre ... as their representative. Margaret Blair- Cook ... supported child development consultant, Central Okanagan Child Development Association ... is the alternate. They will be supported by labour relations officer Sharon Geoghegan.

Also elected to serve on the expanded HSA bargaining committee were:

- Joyce Pielou, child and family counsellor, Campbell River Family Services
- Marcia Eberl, womens counsellor, Victoria Womens Transition House Society
- Yvonne Adebar, infant development program consultant, Sources Infant Development Program

The Community Social Services Union Bargaining Association (CSSBA) represents all the unions certified by the BC Labour Relations Board to represent the 15,000 workers in the community social services sector in our province. The BCGEU is the largest union in the community social services sector.

There are 220 employers in community social services divided in three sectors: Community Living, General Services and Aboriginal Services.

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