

Clerical workers prepare for bargaining

Welcome to *PaperWork* – the voice of HEU clerical workers – written by clerical workers for clerical workers.

Your newly appointed HEU clerical subcommittee was recently part of the union's pre-bargaining occupational conference, which ran from the September 24-26 in Richmond. This occupational conference, for facilities subsector members, was unique because it was the very first time since its inception back in 2005 that all of HEU's occupational groups came together in unity.

There were about 380 HEU delegates from the five occupational job families – support, patient care, patient care technical, trades and maintenance, and of course 85 members from the clerical group – representing HEU members from all across the province.

Delegates all started out together in one large plenary on the first evening, and then we were with our own individual occupational groups over the next two days. We heard speeches from our president Victor Elkins, our secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson, and our financial secretary Donisa Bernardo.

In her speech, Bonnie Pearson said, "We are going into another tough round of bargaining and by uniting all of the occupational groups together at this conference, the union is stronger, and we'll be more successful when we are united at the bargaining table."

On the final day of the conference, the occupational groups each brought forth their top four bargaining priorities. The priorities will be forwarded as demands by the Provincial Executive to the Facilities Bargaining Conference in November, where



2013-2014 clerical subcommittee: Tommy Liu, Talitha Dekker, Melodie Lagrotta, Carol Kenzie, Tina Clemente, Bev Trynchy, Scarlet Scheibel, with contest winners Carolyne Rychly and Helen Tessier.

they will be debated and voted on with the other bargaining demands submitted by HEU locals.

During the conference, the clerical subcommittee held a fun contest. We asked clerical delegates to submit ideas for a poster slogan for next year's Clerical Team Appreciation Day. There were a lot of unique and fun entries that your clerical subcommittee had to decide on, and we congratulate **Helen Tessier** and **Carolyne Rychly** of the PHSA Amalgamated local (Willingdon site) on their winning submission. A beautiful gift basket filled with coffee, teas and other goodies was presented to them at the conference.



Contest winners Carolyne Rychly and Helen Tessier (PHSA local) with their gift basket.

As HEU clerical members, we have rights and a strong voice. Our HEU mantra clearly states that "Our work matters: Building Strength and Unity". We encourage you to stay united and educate yourselves and your sisters and brothers about your collective agreement rights and responsibilities. Being a member of a union is a commitment; job security is what unites us.

STAY UNITED, IN SOLIDARITY!

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The history of HEU's clerical subcommittee

The first edition of *PaperWork* was published in April 2007. At that time, one in five HEU members was a clerical worker. Due to the shift in HEU membership, this has now changed to one in four.

So, do clerical workers matter? Is it important that we have an outlet to voice our opinion? Is it a good idea for us to have a strong voice? Do we need members on a clerical subcommittee to work for us? You bet.

Serving on the clerical subcommittee is a two-year commitment, and writing *PaperWork* is part of the process to empower clerical workers to grow and expand our knowledge. In 2007, the mandate, or plan, of the clerical subcommittee was to build a network of clerical members throughout HEU.

We have done that. Our Clerical Action Network is now more than 1,200 members strong. The other part of the plan, getting the word out, was through *PaperWork*. We have done that as well. And you can read previous issues of *PaperWork* on our HEU website. Slowly, but surely, the clerical subcommittee members have added campaigns, posters, contests, etc. to recognize our valuable, often behind-the-scenes, work!

It became clear during the last occupational conference that we still have a lot of wishes on our list, and we still need to get clerical members more involved, more educated and most of all, we need to educate the employers of every health authority we work for – about our work and why it matters.

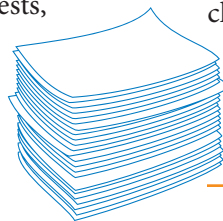
We believe that the clerical group has “suffered” from the divide and conquer method of shared and consolidated services, including the 132 Lower Mainland medical transcriptionists who were contracted out this past summer. Although we work for different health authorities throughout

the province, we share a common goal of making the work environment better for all of us.

Workload remains a huge problem for clerical workers. We seem to have the right work ethic for the employer to take advantage of. In other words, we tend to stay late to finish something we started, we tend to skip coffee breaks or work through our lunch breaks. The workload issue was raised at the 2007 occupational conference and unfortunately, it hasn't gone away. It really is up to us to stop it, to say to ourselves or to a co-worker “coffee time” and go for a walk at lunchtime. Step away from your desk!!

We have come a long way and have made some significant improvements over the years, most recently in our last facilities contract with securing “no re-testing” language. There's still so much work to do and even though we've been at it since 2007, six years later, we are dealing with some of the same issues. Changing the employer's attitude to recognize that we are an invaluable and crucial part of the health care team, and changing our own attitude on how we see ourselves is an evolutionary process that we're still in the middle of.

We are not front-line caregivers. That's not what we chose as our profession. Yet, every single shift, we all bring a lot of “care” to what we do. And that's just as important.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

HEU represents about 10,000 clerical workers?

HEU's clerical team works in nearly 90 job classifications?

Clerical represents 24 per cent of the HEU membership?

You can contact us directly at clericalworkers@heu.org