

Bargaining Update



FACILITIES

Members back safety proposals with hard-hitting stories at bargaining table

Negotiations for a new facilities subsector collective agreement continued this week, with the multi-union bargaining committee pressing for effective pandemic response tools, and stronger collective agreement language for orientation and training of new staff.

The unions say pandemic response tools need to include:

- improved access to a range of PPE and safety attire
- better communication and information sharing
- provisions that strengthen members' ability to respond to health and safety issues

“COVID-19 continues to put workers, patients and residents at risk, with a large number of new cases occurring in health care settings,” says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard, also spokesperson for the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA).

“Health care workers need access to equipment and procedures that ensure that they can keep themselves safe while they provide critical care and support. And there needs to be plans in place for outbreaks or epidemics we may face in the years to come.”

Four HEU bargaining committee members from around B.C. shared their direct experiences with the employer.

They talked of the physical risks and emotional toll heightened by miscommunication, conflicting directions and inadequate access to PPE, especially during the early days of the pandemic.

Care aide Chena Binns said workers “should be given the education and information so that when we’re faced with outbreaks, clusters or any form of communicable disease, we know support is there, and we won’t have to face the fear of the unknown alone.”

Binns’ concerns were echoed by other members, including Rhonda Bruce and Tina Clemente.

The union also raised issues around the orientation and training of new staff -- key to recruitment and retention.

HEU pharmacy tech Diane Tomei described the inadequate and fragmented training that can be delivered when a student or new hire is oriented by staff who are rushed and overworked.

Stronger provisions for training, she says, “would go a very long way to being able to keep new people, and promote a higher standard of safety.”

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Binns had the opportunity to work in a dedicated position at her hospital to orient and mentor new staff.

“It was an opportunity for the new hires to feel supported, connect with staff and feel that their job is valued. Staff come up to me to this day, even years later, thanking me for the support I provided,” says Binns.

Member Jesse Winfrey also shared workplace experiences in support of stronger collective agreement provisions.

Worker safety continues to be a high priority for the FBA in these talks, including updating provisions that ensure workplace health and safety, like the operation of Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees.

In addition, the parties discussed ways to foster respectful workplaces like measures to address Human Rights Code concerns and bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment.

The parties expect to return to the table June 17.

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