

THE UNION ADVANTAGE



Better wages and benefits



Job security



A stronger voice at the bargaining table



Ways to address unsafe working conditions



Access to training opportunities

Every day, in communities across B.C., HEU members are providing critical services to people in need.

And they're doing it with the backing of a union that knows just how valuable their work is to the people and communities they support.

Over the decades, HEU members have made tremendous gains for health care workers, while improving the quality of care and support we all rely on.

That's meant better wages and working conditions. More rights and control in our workplaces. Pay equity. Improved safety standards. And greater respect.

As an HEU member, you join more than 60,000 other members working in hospitals, care homes, and community health and social services agencies. In fact, HEU is the largest and oldest health care union in the province.

Your involvement is our most valuable resource. It connects you to a long and proud tradition of activism that's been the backbone of HEU since we were first established in 1944.

And it's the key to our collective strength.



WATCH A VIDEO
ABOUT HOW YOUR
UNION WORKS OR
GET AN ELECTRONIC
VERSION OF THIS
BOOKLET AT:



HEU is a powerful and respected advocate with a proven commitment to standing up for the issues you face.



YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

Collective bargaining gives workers a powerful tool when it comes to gaining greater control over their working lives.

Instead of being forced to deal with their employer on their own, unionized workers have a strong collective voice in negotiating the conditions of their employment and protecting their rights on the job.

Your **collective agreement** covers all aspects of your working life—wages, **benefits**, hours of work, safety, and more.

It's a legally binding contract that protects you and your co-workers from unfair treatment, **discrimination** and disrespect. But it only works when you use it. So check it out!

RESOLVING WORKPLACE DISPUTES

With a union **collective agreement** in place, you and your co-workers have a **grievance** and **arbitration** process to resolve workplace disputes.

If you are experiencing a problem, your local **shop steward** can help you find the most effective way to resolve the matter and decide if a **grievance** is warranted.

The workplace problem you are experiencing could also affect others. Sometimes, filing a **grievance** may help bring about greater fairness in your workplace for the benefit of everyone.

If you don't know who your shop steward is, call HEU (1.800.663.5813) to locate your shop steward or your site's **staff representative**.





At HEU, you have a direct voice in bargaining. And you vote on whether to accept the terms of your collective agreement.

BARGAINING YOUR CONTRACT

Collective bargaining is one of the key benefits to joining HEU. Through your **HEU local**, you have a direct voice in bargaining.

You bring forward the issues you want to see as bargaining priorities. You vote on whether to accept the terms of your **collective agreement**. And you decide if **job action** may be necessary to pressure the employer.

Contract negotiations are carried out by a **bargaining committee** which is elected by members.

Before bargaining, **bargaining conferences** allow members to elect their bargaining committee and decide on key bargaining priorities.

At some work sites (private or non-profit), members will elect their own bargaining committee and identify bargaining priorities.

The bargaining process can take as little as a few weeks or up to many months. It requires member participation at several levels to help ensure the issues are understood by workers and the employer.

Once the bargaining committee and the employer have reached an agreement, the members will receive a written report explaining the terms of the agreement called a **comprehensive report**. A **ratification** meeting will be held where members can discuss the proposed contract with their bargaining committee, ask questions, and then vote in-person or virtually on whether or not to accept the tentative agreement.

A LONG & PROUD TRADITION

BUILDING THE UNION

HEU was formed in 1944, when then-separated women's and men's unions at Vancouver General Hospital joined forces to organize as one union, breaking new ground at the time.

It was sweatshop working conditions, with long hours, few breaks and no protections, that motivated health care workers to create a union that could stand up for equality, fairness, respect and social justice.

Since then, the union has built a strong history of fighting for justice, fairness and equity.





HEU.org/history-heu

HEU's history: the struggle to organize, the battle to end discrimination and our determination to create a just health care system for all.



ORGANIZING THE UNORGANIZED

In the 1970s, HEU started to organized workers in long-term care facilities, a sector that was largely unorganized and where conditions were terrible for workers and residents, especially in privately run facilities.

Successful organizing efforts in the community health and social services sectors followed in the 1980s and 1990s

ENDING WAGE DISCRIMINATION

In the 1970s and 1980s, the union embraced the fight to end gender-based **wage discrimination**. Over two decades, HEU fought for and won human rights complaints and changes to provincial legislation. And by 1992, HEU won **pay equity** language from the NDP government, resulting in annual pay adjustments worth hundreds of millions of dollars to members.

Pay equity remains one of HEU's most important achievements.

FIGHTING PRIVATIZATION

Starting in the 2000s after the B.C. Liberal government implemented **privatization** policies, HEU spent nearly two decades fighting back.

These policies **contracted out** public health care jobs to private corporations; caused thousands of health care workers to lose their jobs, **benefits** and union membership; and led to wage cuts for health care workers across the province. These attacks on health care workers severely fragmented our public health system for an entire generation.

Fighting back against **privatization** was a core focus of HEU in the 2000s, as our union worked to protect both workers' rights and public health care.

We fought in the courts, in the media, and by re-organizing thousands of contracted-out workers back into the union, to improve their working conditions.

LANDMARK RULING TO PROTECT ALL WORKERS

Our **privatization** fightback led to a landmark Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 2007 that enshrined collective bargaining as a Charter-protected right for workers across the country.

By 2018, our union's tenacity paid off, when the BC NDP government repealed the disastrous **privatization** policies of the previous government, and then returned thousands of contracted-out health care jobs back into the public sector—a historic win for health care workers and the labour movement in B.C.

Today, the same struggle for fairness and respect continues to attract health care workers to HFU.



WHO ARE HEU MEMBERS?

HEU members work in more than 300 job categories in health care across British Columbia, in a variety of health care settings including hospitals, long-term care and assisted living facilities, adult day centres, First Nations health centres, and community services.

Our membership is diverse.



82% identify as female or a gender other than male



37% identify as racialized members



12% identify as persons with disabilities, visible and non-visible disabilities



5% identify with sexual orientation other than straight/heterosexual



3% identify as an Indigenous person



27% speak a language other than English at home

Our union's ongoing work for justice and fairness builds on members' rich experience and knowledge.

YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Workers Compensation Act requires employers to ensure the health and safety of their workers on the job.

As workers, you have:

- The right to know about any health and safety hazards (physical, chemical, biological, work design, stress, **discrimination**, harassment, and violence) that you are likely to be exposed to at your workplace.
- The right to participate in keeping your workplace healthy and safe. That may include being on a joint employer-employee health and safety committee (Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee).
- 3. The right to refuse unsafe work.
- 4. The right to exercise your health and safety rights without repercussion.

It is important that you report all health and safety concerns using your employer's incident and injury reporting process to ensure that unsafe working conditions, and work-related injuries and illnesses are properly recorded and investigated, and that unsafe conditions are corrected.

When you are short-staffed, an employer cannot expect you to take on additional workload if it would compromise your health and safety or create an unsafe work environment. Your supervisor must set your priorities for you.

Remember, it is your right to have, and your employer's responsibility to provide, a safe work environment.



YOUR UNION DUES AT WORK

At HEU, your union dues are working for you.

You are never without the backing of skilled staff and union resources. And part of every dues dollar you pay provincially goes back to your **local** to support members' activities.

That's because active member participation—in the workplace and the community—is the greatest source of HEU's power when it comes to improving the lives of union members



Here are some of the primary benefits of being a member of HEU.

SERVICING REPRESENTATION

Your provincial **servicing representatives** (or "reps") are available to help you and your co-workers protect your rights under your **collective agreement**, ensure fair and equitable treatment in the workplace, and link your **local** to the broader issues that affect members and their communities.

Depending on the issue, servicing reps work with individual members, stewards, and the **local executive** to resolve workplace problems and organize for better working and caring conditions.

Servicing reps are also trained to represent you in such circumstances as processing **grievances** and dealing with job classification or pay rate issues.

If you don't know who your servicing representative is, call the HEU Provincial Office (toll-free) at **1.800.663.5813** and we can help you identify your rep.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Health care can be dangerous. Throughout HEU's entire history, we have worked hard to protect members from job-related injuries and illnesses.

We do this by giving our members up-to-date information about their occupational health and safety (OHS) rights and how to advocate for improved safety measures to reduce the risks they face on the job.

We also train local Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee (JOHSC) members and Worker Health and Safety representatives to work directly with members at the work site to address problems as they arise. And when needed, we provide support to help make sure employers live up to their health and safety responsibilities.

As a member of HEU, you are entitled to a host of benefits. And you are never without the backing of skilled staff who can help you protect your rights.

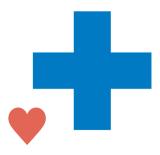




YOU CAN FIND RESOURCES
ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH AND SAFETY AT



HEU.org/health-safety



WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND LONG-TERM DISABILITY ADVOCACY

HEU members with a work-related injury or illness who want to appeal a WorkSafeBC decision can get help from the union's workers' compensation appeals team.

Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, there are two levels of appeal. The first allows workers to request an internal review of the decision. The second level is an independent appeal at the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal. At both levels, our team will review the decision you wish to appeal, file your review or appeal for you if they agree there was a mistake or unreasonable decision, advise you, and directly represent you at the tribunal hearing.

HEU members with a non-work-related injury who have long-term disability (LTD) insurance can also get assistance from the HEU appeals team if their LTD **benefits** are terminated or denied. Our team will review your file, and where there is enough evidence to support an appeal, they will file the appeal for you, help gather additional medical evidence, and prepare you to meet with the panel of doctors.

You can contact the appeals team by phone at HEU's WCB/LTD Hotline (604.456.7186 or toll-free at 1.877.438.5550) or by email (benefits@heu.org).

LEGAL SUPPORT

HEU's efforts to protect and advance the rights of our members under the law is an ongoing responsibility.

Our provincial servicing representatives and legal staff regularly bring cases forward to the B.C. Labour Relations Board (LRB), arbitration boards and the courts that have far-reaching importance for health care workers in their day-to-day work.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

HEU provides members with a wide range of opportunities to gain new skills, upgrade their education, learn how to organize collectively to solve workplace problems, and facilitate social change in their communities.

HEU also coordinates additional training and educational opportunities for members through our partnerships with other unions, community organizations and educational institutions.

For members covered by the Facilities subsector collective agreement, HEU oversees the FBA Education Fund, a health care education and training fund that provides skills upgrading and career mobility opportunities for union members.

RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS

A big part of our job is keeping members informed and generating community-wide support for health care workers and our issues.

We do that by working with the media, doing our own research, publishing special reports, bulletins and newsletters on a variety of topics, and conducting member surveys when we need to hear directly from you on emerging issues.

And we publish our award-winning newspaper—the Guardian—which is mailed to you at your home address. We also maintain an up-to-date website for members and the general public at www.heu.org.

As well, we communicate with members through email and social media platforms. You can follow us on any of these platforms:







hospital_employees_union

MAKE SURE YOU RECEIVE REGULAR UNION COMMUNICATIONS BY KEEPING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION UPDATED WITH THE UNION AT:



BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Every year, HEU makes available about 50 bursaries—ranging from \$350 to \$1,000—to HEU members, their children, or their spouses, including common-law spouses and same-sex partners.

The bursaries can be used at any post-secondary educational institution and are awarded to students who need financial assistance and can demonstrate satisfactory academic standing.

Bursary and scholarship information and application forms are usually forwarded to locals in the spring.



YOUR UNION BELONGS TO YOU

HEU is committed to making sure every member can have a say in how the union is run. How you choose to be involved is up to you.

Whatever your involvement, you can contribute to making HEU a democratic, member-driven union where your issues and interests always come first.

GET INVOLVED IN YOUR LOCAL

All members belong to the provincial union through their **locals**. Together, members at the local level elect their executives.

They decide what support they need to resolve their issues and how to use the local's financial resources. Shop stewards—the union's frontline advocates—are either appointed by the **local executive** or elected by the local membership.





HEU'S BIENNIAL CONVENTION

HEU's biennial **convention** takes place every two years on even numbered years. This is where members from across the province gather and collectively decide the union's priorities, set policies and elect leaders.

During the **convention**, **delegates** discuss and vote on any proposed changes to HEU's *Constitution and By-Laws* (www.heu.org/constitution-and-laws). They also elect the union's **Provincial Executive** and ratify the hiring of HEU's secretary-business manager. You and your co-workers choose the **delegates** from your **local** you want to send to HEU's **convention**.

Information about the biennial **convention** is available at: www.heu.org/convention.

HEU'S BARGAINING CONFERENCES

HEU's **bargaining conferences** are important to the democratic process of the union and HEU's fight for fairness, justice and dignity for working people.

At these public, private, and sectoral bargaining conferences, members come together to debate bargaining proposals, decide on bargaining priorities and demands for their upcoming negotiations, and elect bargaining committees.

Participating locals are asked to bring forward issues from their members and to select **delegates** to attend their conference.

All conference **delegates** can put their name forward for the bargaining committee.

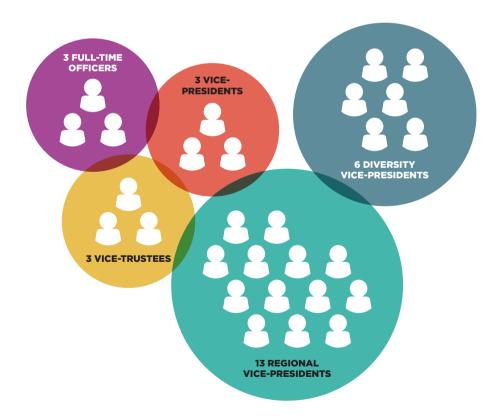
THE PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

Within HEU's 28-member **Provincial Executive**, we have two full-time elected officers—the president and the financial secretary.

Other executive members who fill the offices of vice-presidents, trustees, regional vice-presidents, and diversity vice-presidents continue to work at their regular jobs while carrying out their union duties.

HEU's secretary-business manager is also a member of the Provincial Executive, as well as the union's Chief Administrative Officer, the union's main spokesperson and the lead negotiator for the Facilities Bargaining Association.

Together, they are a strong team whose primary task is guiding HEU according to the policies and directions determined by the union's membership.



EQUITY KNOWS NO BOUNDARY

HEU has a deep commitment to fighting for social justice and equity for all working people. More than 90 per cent of HEU members identify as a member of an equity-deserving group.

That's why HEU established six **Equity Standing Committees** (ESCs), each representing one of HEU's equity groups: Indigenous Peoples; Pink Triangle; Ethnic Diversity; People with Disabilities; Two-Spirit, Women and Non-Binary; and Young Workers.

These standing committees are enshrined in the HEU constitution. They seek to increase members' involvement in the union and work to eliminate **discrimination** and inequity within the union and at the workplace. They meet as caucuses, deliver education at HEU workplaces, provide support and advocacy to members, and work in solidarity with other social justice groups.

ESCs consist of seven elected members and one diversity vicepresident. ESC members are elected by equity-seeking HEU members at HEU's Equity Conference every two-years.

Learn more about HEU's work in advancing equity and human rights, including its diversity, equity and inclusion work, at:

www.heu.org/equity-and-human-rights





ETHNIC DIVERSITY STANDING COMMITTEE

The Ethnic Diversity Standing Committee aims to break down barriers and to develop greater understanding among HEU members.

The committee provides support to ethnic diversity members and education to all members on issues of race and discrimination. Members come from various ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES STANDING COMMITTEE

The Indigenous Peoples Standing Committee seeks to educate all HEU members about Indigenous, Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis history and culture, and to raise awareness of issues that Indigenous workers and their communities face.

The committee works to create greater unity, recognition and a sense of belonging in the union. All Indigenous members are invited to participate.



YOUNG WORKERS STANDING COMMITTEE

The Young Workers Standing Committee engages with young workers, aged 33 and under, to raise awareness to all HEU members about youth issues. The committee educates non-union and unemployed youth about the labour movement, social justice issues, and their rights. As well, it identifies and develops action plans on issues affecting young workers.

The Young Workers Standing Committee was formerly a Provincial Executive subcommittee, and was established as an equity standing committee at HEU's 32nd biennial convention in 2021.



PINK TRIANGLE STANDING COMMITTEE

The Pink Triangle Standing Committee is dedicated to improving and enhancing awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues within the union and the workplace.

Its goal is to create non-discriminating environments that provide fair and equal rights for all union members and that guarantee safe, positive and harassment-free workplaces.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES STANDING COMMITTEE

The People with Disabilities Standing Committee welcomes HEU members with visible or invisible disabilities who are currently working, on long-term disability, are receiving Workers' Compensation, or have been on sick leave for a long time.

The committee promotes the contributions of workers with disabilities, advocates for improvements to disability benefits and resources, as well as accessibility.



2-SPIRIT, WOMEN AND NON-BINARY STANDING COMMITTEE

As one of the largest unions of women workers in British Columbia, HEU has a long history of fighting for the rights of women, non-binary and 2-spirit people in both the workplace and the community.

The committee works with grassroots women's groups, community coalitions and other trade union committees dedicated to social and economic equality and the advancement of women and gender rights.

GLOSSARY OF HEU AND UNION TERMS

Arbitration

A way of settling a disagreement between the employer and the union using an arbitrator (a third-party or independent person, usually chosen by both the employer and union). The arbitrator's decision is final and binding on the employer, the union and any employees affected.

Bargaining conference

Conferences organized before bargaining begins to determine bargaining priorities and to elect the bargaining committees. Bargaining conferences are normally held for public sector bargaining. Independent sites (for-profit and non-profit) usually hold pre-bargaining meetings.

Benefits

Negotiated entitlements on top of wages. For example, a benefit can be a pension, vacation time, drug and medical plans, long-term disability, or life insurance. The employer pays for all or part of these benefits, depending on the collective agreement.

Certification

The legal process of a labour board deciding that a union can be the bargaining agent for employees in dealing with their employer. Once certified, the union has a legal right and obligation to represent all employees in the bargaining unit. To get certification, a union must show that a majority of the workers support it.

Charter-protected right

A right defined under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Convention

A meeting held every two years, attended by member delegates. At this meeting, delegates set the direction of the union for the next two years and discuss and vote on changes to HEU's *Constitution and By-Laws*, policies and procedures. It's also where we elect the Provincial Executive.

Collective agreement

A written agreement between the union and employer that tells workers and the employer what their rights and responsibilities are. It is also called a contract. The collective agreement covers such things as wages, benefits, hours of work, conditions of work, seniority, how to handle disagreements.

Collective bargaining

Negotiations between a union and employer for a collective agreement.

Comprehensive report

A comprehensive report, or comp report, is a document that outlines the gains reached in a tentative agreement.

Constitution

A document that sets out the structure of an organization and its basic rules of operation.

Contracting out/Contracted-out

When an employer uses another employer to do work of the bargaining unit.

Delegate

A union member elected by fellow members or appointed by elected union leaders who represents their workplace or local at a meeting or event (e.g., bargaining meeting, convention, or union conference).

Discrimination

When a person or group of people is treated differently for an improper reason.

- Direct discrimination is when a person is treated differently based on race, gender, or other characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination is when a rule or policy applies to everyone, but it ends up negatively affecting a particular group.
- Systemic discrimination is when different treatment based on stereotypes or prejudice is deeply rooted in an organization.

Equity Standing Committees

Six committees made up of members, as mandated by HEU's constitution, each representing one of HEU's equity groups: Indigenous Peoples; Ethnic Diversity; Pink Triangle; People with Disabilities; 2-Spirit, Women & Non-Binary; and Young Workers.

Grievance

A complaint by one or more employees or the union that the employer has breached the collective agreement.

Job action

A concerted activity by employees that impacts the employer's regular operations and is designed to put pressure on the employer. Job actions can include a strike, overtime ban or work-to-rule (where workers stay on the job but change how they do things).

Local (or union local or HEU local)

A union local is a branch formed under a larger union. An HEU local is a branch of HEU. The name and composition of a local is determined within 90 days of certification. Sometimes newly certified sites are merged with existing HEU locals.

Local executive

Members elected at the local level to represent their local and fill the following positions: chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary, conductor, warden, and trustees.

Privatization

When work or services are moved from the non-profit sector to the for-profit sector.

Provincial Executive

Members elected by delegates at HEU conventions to guide the union's work in-between conventions.

Shop steward/steward/union steward

A union officer who represents co-workers in dealing with the employer.

Ratification / ratify

A vote of bargaining unit members to accept or reject a proposed collective agreement (or tentative agreement).

Staff representative

An employee of the union who helps local union officers represent workers.

Tentative agreement

A collective agreement reached between the employer (or the employer's bargaining agent) and the union's bargaining committee that will be proposed to the bargaining unit's membership for a ratification vote.



UNION OFFICES

Provincial Office

5000 North Fraser Way Burnaby, BC, V5J 5M3 1.800.663.5813 604.438.5000 HEU@HEU.ORG

The Provincial Office is located on the traditional territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. As a province-wide organization, our members live all over B.C., on land that is mostly unceded (never surrendered), traditionally belonging to more than 200 First Nations.

Regional Offices VANCOUVER ISLAND

Victoria

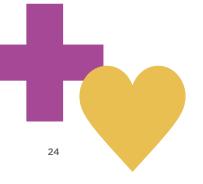
201-780 Tolmie Avenue Victoria, V8X 3W4 1.800.742.8001 250.480.0533

The Victoria Office is located on the traditional lands belonging to the Lkwungen (Lekwungen) peoples, and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ First Nations.

Comox

6-204 North Island Highway Courtenay, V9N 3P1 1.800.624.9940 250.331.0368

The Comox Office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation.



INTERIOR REGION

Kelowna

250 - 1815 Kirschner Road, Kelowna, BC, V1Y 4N7 1.800.219.9699 250.765.8838

The Kelowna Office is located on the traditional and unceded land of the syilx/Okanagan people.

Nelson

745 Baker Street Nelson, V1L 4J5 1.800.437.9877 250.354.4466

The Nelson Office is located on the traditional territory of the Ktuanxa, the Syilx, and the Sinixt peoples

NORTHERN REGION

Prince George

1197 Third Avenue Prince George, V2L 3E4 1.800.663.6539 250.564.2102

The Prince George Office is located on the unceded, traditional lands belonging to the Lheidli T'enneh.

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