



Contracted support services workers gear up for fall bargaining

Union continues to press for work to be brought back under health authority control

With collective agreements for most contracted support services workers (CSSW) expiring at the end of September 2020, HEU members in this sector are preparing for bargaining.

At the same time, the union continues to push for contracted support work to be brought “in house” under the direct control of health authorities where workers would be covered by the Facilities Collective Agreement.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered face-to-face meetings and large gatherings, HEU is forging ahead with bargaining preparations, using other tools and electronic platforms that will allow for member participation in the bargaining process.

That process already started with a telephone town hall meeting that was held on July 22, 2020 to brief members on bargaining plans and to answer their questions.

“We’re adjusting quickly to establish a new normal in how we prepare for bargaining,” says Máire Kirwan, HEU Coordinator of private sector organizing, bargaining and servicing.

More than 4,000 HEU members are heading into bargaining this fall including housekeeping, dietary, laundry, and retail workers, who are employed by Acciona, Aramark, Compass/Compass Marquise, and Sodexo.

Tentative bargaining plan

HEU’s bargaining plan will roll out over the summer months and into September, in order to be ready to bargain by November.

As a first step, HEU will be putting together a nominating committee—which will include representatives from every bargaining unit—to oversee the election of the bargaining committees which is anticipated to take place in September.

The union will also circulate a bargaining survey, so that CSSW members will have the opportunity to share their priorities.

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By early fall, locals will be asked to submit bargaining demands and then the newly elected bargaining committees will meet to prepare the demands.

The union will also provide opportunities for the bargaining committees to report back and consult with members on the bargaining package.

Here are the tentative timelines for CSSW bargaining:

- Mid-July: CSSW Telephone Town Hall on bargaining preparations
- Early September: Appointment of Nomination Committee
- Mid-September/Early October: Nominations and elections of bargaining committees
- Mid-September: Call for bargaining demands
- Late October: Bargaining demands deadline
- Early November: Preparation of bargaining demands by bargaining committees
- Mid-November: Report back to bargaining units
- Late November: Open bargaining

Union focused on bringing services in-house

As it prepares for bargaining, the union is staying focused on its broader goal of bringing Contracted Support Services back under the direct control of the health authorities.

“Health care workers in housekeeping and food services bore the brunt of the BC Liberals’ disastrous privatization strategy in the early 2000s,” says HEU’s Secretary-Business Manager, Jennifer Whiteside.

“And members are still feeling the impacts of this today with workers in this sector being some of the lowest paid workers in the health care.”

HEU continues to advocate for the implementation of the Labour Adjustment Framework that the union negotiated with the Health Employers’ Association of BC, outlining the process for bringing contracted services back in-house.

“We know that bringing work back in-house is what will make the biggest difference for our members rather than having services delivered by private, multinational contractors,” says Whiteside, adding that bringing services back in-house will result in better outcomes for public health care delivery as well.