



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU trades and maintenance workers set clear bargaining priorities

About two dozen trades and maintenance workers from across the province gathered at the union's Provincial Office September 15 and 16 for their pre-bargaining conference. The facilities subsector contract is set to expire on March 31, 2012.

During the two-day conference, trades and maintenance representatives participated in unity-building sessions, shared stories about their jobs and their workplace challenges – particularly around health and safety issues, fixing problems from the poor workmanship of low-bid contractors, contracting-in, and scope of practice concerns (multi-ticketed trades with no compensation for secondary qualifications or “red seal” certifications).



“Employers know the job won't be done properly with low-bid contractors,” said one member. “And then the problem is corrected with other budget money down the road. The public's not aware of that. On the surface, it looks like the job was done and on budget.”



Some members also described being pressured by management to perform jobs they're not qualified to do, and reported witnessing workplace injuries as a result. And some workers also spoke about the fire hazards of wearing polyester uniforms, which are cheaper to purchase, when working with torches or high-risk flammable machines.

The conference was also an opportunity for Judy Darcy, who recently resigned as HEU's secretary-business manager to pursue an NDP seat in the next provincial election, to thank our members for everything they do each

shift to keep B.C.'s health care system strong.

“We need justice and fairness for the working people, and we need to continue to stand up for health care,” said Darcy. “I want to assure you that we have a great team in place to lead us into the next round of public sector bargaining.”

Darcy then introduced the union's new secretary business manager Bonnie Pearson, who has worked at HEU as a coordinator of servicing and most recently, assistant secretary-business manager.

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“Bonnie is an extremely skilled negotiator with more than 30 years of experience,” said Darcy. “She has the best interests of HEU members always in her heart.”

In turn, Pearson introduced her successor, director of legal services Jacquie de Aguayo, as the new assistant secretary-business manager.



In her afternoon bargaining address, Pearson talked about the disruption of health care restructuring, contracting out, privatization, and the realities of a B.C. Liberal government still in power. And she emphasized the importance of unity when going into bargaining.

“Although we’re facing challenging times – economically and politically – and we have hurdles to jump, HEU is a resilient union with members willing to stand up for our rights and stand together for a fair contract. We are stronger together.”

During a presentation by the union’s research director Chris Kinkaid and servicing director Chris Dorais, conference participants were able to provide input on a Lower Mainland Trades Committee Pilot Project and a survey initiative looking at ways to increase productivity while saving money.

Members gave a lot of feedback around using in-house crews, improving inventory practices, having more consultation, improved communication, and the need for more preventative maintenance.

Conference participants included plumbers, painters, power engineers, electricians, maintenance workers, journeyman machinists, carpenters, millwrights, HVAC technicians, laundry mechanics, cooks, and shift/TDG engineers.

During a large plenary debate, trades and maintenance representatives streamlined their bargaining demands, which will be submitted by the Provincial Executive to the Facilities Bargaining Conference in November.



And members were encouraged to talk to colleagues at their locals to generate support for those bargaining demands, and deliver the message to their families, neighbours, communities about the contribution all HEU members make to B.C.’s health care system.

The union’s next occupational conference is Patient Care Technical on September 20 and 21.

September 16, 2011