



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU clerical team has clear vision in bargaining preparations

More than 80 HEU clerical representatives gathered from across the province on September 22 and 23 as part of the union's occupational conference series to prepare for 2012 facilities subsector bargaining. The facilities contract expires on March 31, 2012.

During the two-day pre-bargaining conference, HEU's clerical team – which represents 22 per cent of the union's membership in 87 job classifications – shared stories about their often “invisible” work, and spoke candidly about their workplace challenges – such as heavy workloads, inconsistent practices across health authorities (benchmarks, vacation approvals, skills and education, job duties), poor communication, health and safety issues (including ergonomics), and outdated equipment/computer programs.



After much lively debate, they also streamlined a list of bargaining priorities.



Those priorities will be taken by the Provincial Executive to the Facilities Bargaining Conference in November.

On the first day, Judy Darcy, who recently resigned from HEU to pursue provincial politics, introduced Bonnie Pearson, the union's new secretary-business manager. Pearson has more than 30 years of experience working in the public and private sector, and has worked at HEU as the coordinator of servicing and most recently, assistant secretary-business manager.

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“I’m honoured to introduce your new secretary business manager,” said Darcy. “There is nobody I would rather sit side by side with in the trenches than Bonnie Pearson. We’ve been to hell and back together, joined at the hip through two rounds of really tough bargaining and the *Bill 29* settlement. This is a woman with a killer sense of humour, much love for the labour movement and HEU absolutely in her heart.”



Over the course of the conference, members participated in unity-building and advocacy workshops, and took part in presentations by the union’s servicing director Chris Dorais on consolidation and shared services, and communications director Mike Old on the value of social networking.

The HEU clerical subcommittee also updated clerical representatives on upcoming outreach initiatives, including Clerical Team Appreciation Day on November 17, and an anti-bullying campaign.

In her bargaining address, Pearson painted a clear picture of the current political and economic realities in the province and their impact on public sector bargaining. She also emphasized the importance of being united as HEU members and with our public sector allies when we go to the bargaining table.

“Our union and our members are resilient,” said Pearson. “We’ve faced 10 years of attacks from a vicious government intent on union-busting and privatizing many of the public services we hold dear. And today, we’re stronger than ever. We’ve negotiated two solid contracts since the 2004 strike, and we’ve done this in pretty challenging circumstances.”



Conference participants included nursing unit assistants (unit clerks, unit coordinators); staffing, admitting, registration, health records, purchasing, accounting, booking, chemo, payroll and housekeeping clerks; switchboard operators, administrative assistants, medical transcriptionists, health records technicians, and supervisors.

In his closing remarks, HEU president Ken Robinson spoke about the diversity of HEU members’ work across the occupational job families, and the importance of raising our public profile so that the politicians, the general public, and other union members know the value of HEU members’ role in our health care system.

The union’s final occupational conference is patient care on September 27, 28 and 29 in Richmond.