



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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HEU members set focused bargaining objectives for 2012 bargaining

Nearly 300 HEU delegates have wrapped up two days of lively debate at the union's 19th Facilities Bargaining Conference in Vancouver. And they equipped their newly elected bargaining committee with a strong mandate for 2012 contract negotiations.

The two-and-a-half day conference brought together members from across the province to deliberate and vote on bargaining demands submitted by the union's locals. They also voted on bargaining priorities stemming from this fall's occupational conference series, which were forwarded by HEU's Provincial Executive.



HEU's secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson is the lead negotiator for the Facilities Bargaining Association. She told delegates that the union's biggest challenge for 2012 will be the government's insistence that collective agreement improvements must be paid for in "cooperative gains".

"I think all of you know that on the front lines of health care where you work, there's not a lot of savings to be had," said Pearson. "Any low-hanging fruit – it's been picked. It's been canned and it's been eaten.

"And I'll be damned if we're going to spend this round of bargaining looking under the seat cushions for spare change. We're not at the bargaining table to find ways to cut services to patients and residents – we're there to provide quality care to British Columbians."

Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour, spoke passionately about B.C.'s political climate and how the current economic meltdown is caused by corporate greed, not unionized workers. He emphasized the importance of public sector unions being united in "cooperative research, cooperative communications and cooperative action" as we go into 2012 bargaining in solidarity.

The new facilities bargaining committee is: Jim Calvin (mental health rehabilitation assistant, Chilliwack), Carol Bathgate (LPN, Kiwanis Village Lodge), Jim Kelly (infrastructure operations analyst, HSSBC – VGH site), Joyce Beddow (RCA, Ashcroft),

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Barbara Nederpel (LPN, Royal Inland), Tracy Struck (staffing clerk, Kitimat), Mike Cartwright (power engineer, Prince George), Ruby Kandola (pharmacy technician, Surrey), Ian Walker (computer technical support, Royal Jubilee) and Debbie Dyer (nursing unit assistant, Royal Columbian). Ten alternates were also elected.

“As the union’s chief negotiator, I couldn’t be more pleased to go to next year’s bargaining table with the diverse group of members elected today,” said Pearson. “They are all dedicated activists with strong leadership skills. I feel confident that our members’ interests will be in capable hands.”

But it wasn’t all serious business. Attendees were also entertained by popular local slam poets Adelene da Soul and Scruffmouth, along with Canada’s Juno-winning singer/songwriter Shari Ulrich who energized the crowd with two of her classics, including “Stand”. Delegates and guests then joined the performers – including the HEU band of P.E. members and staff – for a powerful rendition of “Solidarity Forever”.

The facilities subsector collective agreement, representing 37,000 health care workers in B.C.’s acute care hospitals and residential care homes, is set to expire on March 31, 2012.

November 22, 2011