



HEU occupational conference energizes delegates in preparation for 2014 bargaining

After two-and-a-half days of discussion and debate, delegates to HEU's occupational conference returned to their locals with a clear agenda on their bargaining priorities.

About 380 HEU members – covered by the facilities contract – gathered in Richmond to talk about their work, the challenges they face, and how their jobs contribute to the health care system in British Columbia.

It was the first time the union's five occupational job families – patient care, patient care technical, support, trades and maintenance, and clerical – gathered together in one pre-bargaining session since HEU began the occupational conference series in 2005.

Over the course of the conference, through round-table brainstorming and large plenary sessions, delegates streamlined their primary bargaining objectives, including wages, job security, educational opportunities, and resolving implementation issues of Fair PharmaCare.

They also collaborated on creative and effective ways to generate public support for those objectives, as well as receive endorsement from other members on the health care team.

A theme of unity underlined the conference, as HEU secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson reminded delegates that the union is stronger and more successful at the negotiating table when members support one another's bargaining issues regardless of job classification.

"We talk about the 'health care team' for a reason," said Pearson in her keynote address. "It's because we know that the system works well when all component parts are supported and respected... British Columbians rely on the skills and expertise of HEU members to deliver quality care and services – by working together as a unified health care team. And you accomplish that by having a clear understanding of the diverse jobs you're all doing as part of that team.

"When we are a united force, we are strong and powerful. That was demonstrated in 2012 with our 96 per cent strike vote. Employers recognized that. The government recognized that. And HEU members recognized that we are stronger together."

Members also received greetings from HEU president Victor Elkins, financial secretary Donisa Bernardo, assistant secretary-business manager Jacquie de Aguayo, and Musqueam Nation elder Jewel Thomas.

The facilities subsector collective agreement expires on March 31, 2014.

September 27, 2013

