



CUPE COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Better Care. Healthier Communities.

June 20, 2022

HSPBA Bargaining Update: Frequently Asked Questions on Bargaining and Job Action

The HSPBA bargaining committee is engaged in focussed discussions with the employer through most of June. The discussions are being led by subgroups of the committee negotiating matters related to managing union leave disputes and expedited arbitration procedures.

Negotiations continue, and progress is being made, but more slowly than hoped for at the outset. To date we have had high level discussions on wages and monetary proposals, including issues related to leaves, classifications and recruitment/retention. We hope to make as much progress on this as possible before negotiations pause for a summer break.

The committee continues to work hard to achieve the goals set by health science professionals at last fall's bargaining proposal conference: agreements on action for recruitment, retention, respect, recognition of the responsibility held by health science professional members of the health care team, and supporting resilience in our physical and mental well being.

FAQs

The HSPBA's lead union has posted a series of FAQs based on questions about how the bargaining process works, and what happens if job action becomes necessary. The full list is posted [here](#). Below are a number of the most common questions:

Our current contract expired in March. What happens now?

While the contracts covering CUPE members in community health expired on March 31, 2022, the terms of these agreements remain in force until new contracts are negotiated and voted on by all union members. That means your pay and benefits remain unchanged for the time being.

Who is negotiating my new contract?

The Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) collective agreement is being negotiated by a bargaining committee comprised of professional negotiators employed by the union, subject experts on specialized labour relations matters, and ordinary CUPE members elected by their peers to ensure member concerns are addressed at the bargaining table and in the new agreement.

When might we go on strike?

Negotiations for the contracts covering CUPE members began in March 2022 and are still in the early stages. Talks with the employers will likely continue for the next few months. If no progress

is made by the fall, and bargaining is at a stalemate, CUPE may consider taking a strike vote then.

What if another union goes on strike in the next few weeks?

If you see a picket line at your workplace, do not cross it. If another union plans to go on strike, they will communicate through the BC Federation of Labour with other unions who may have members affected by the strike picket line.

What would a strike or job action look like?

We take job action when withdrawing our services is the only power left to us to achieve our bargaining demands, and before taking any sort of job action, we must take a strike vote.

Job action can take many forms. It could start with the refusal to perform specific duties and escalate to an all-out withdrawal of everything but essential services. A common form of job action is “work to rule”. This is where you refuse to do any duties that are not specifically part of your job description, like certain paperwork, administrative duties, or portering. A ban on overtime is a similar form of job action. These types of job action place pressure on the employer while keeping members at work. Rotating job action is where members withdraw their services for a short period of time, usually one day. An example of rotating job action is to withdraw services in one department for one day, and then have the members return to work the next day while another department withdraws their services. This type of action minimizes financial loss to CUPE members while putting pressure on the employer.

Maintaining care for patients and clients remains a top priority, and essential levels of service, which are negotiated with the employer, must, by law, be maintained.

What are essential services? How will I know if I’m considered essential?

Essential service levels are currently being negotiated between the union and the employer. No job action can be taken until such time as the final levels are agreed to by the BC Labour Board.

In the event of job action, the union will take over responsibility for scheduling the work needed to achieve essential services, and in order to be eligible for these essential service shifts, CUPE members must perform picket duty. This can take a number of forms as there are a lot of jobs that need to be done during job action. CUPE will work with the steward and job action team at your workplace to ensure that members know what to do and that essential service shifts are distributed equitably.

During the time that members attend work for essential service shifts, they are paid their regular salary by the employer. When members are performing their picket duty jobs, they are paid by the union.