

August 16, 2022

The Parties continue talks at the bargaining table

BURNABY—The nine-union Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA) was back at the table in the first two weeks of August for further discussions with the Community Social Services Employers Association (CSSEA). The community social services sectoral agreements cover more than 17,000 unionized workers across the province and include workers in the Community Living Services, General Services, and Indigenous Services sub-sectors.

Since bargaining began in February, your committee has continued to push for the shared priorities that the members from all unions have identified in the sector. Those priorities include a fair and equitable compensation package, health and safety improvements in the workplace, mental health supports for all workers, and meaningful and tangible recognition and reconciliation for all Indigenous workers.

After months of discussions, we have made progress at the bargaining table and have reached agreement on non-monetary priorities and language improvements to your collective agreement.

Last week, the two parties began more in-depth discussions on monetary priorities. Unfortunately, at this point in the process, we continue to be far apart in our positions.

Your bargaining committee is not prepared to accept any offer that does not include a compensation package that recognizes the value of community social services workers and protects against rising costs.

Essential Services discussions are ongoing

Community social services workers are the glue that holds our communities together. When someone is in need, it is you that supports them. For too long many of you have subsidized the province's social safety net with your own compensation, mental health and time spent away from your families and friends. Now, the community social services sector is at a crisis point with staff shortages, high turnover and increased medical leaves.

Your bargaining committee has been hard at work for many months to make the gains that you have identified and need. And if we are not able to do that at the bargaining table, we may need to take job action, as a last resort.

Essential service discussions with employers started in July and are in progress.

Determining essential service levels is a legal process that is necessary and a normal part of the bargaining process. It prepares us for every scenario, including if we need to take job action. Essential service levels for each workplace identify what work needs to be done to keep you and the people you take care of safe. It is different than when the provincial government determined what jobs were essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If there is an essential service order from the Labour Board for the program that you are working in or the service that you provide, your union will ensure that the levels are met. You may be hearing information that is confusing.

Your bargaining committee is still in active negotiations with the employers' representatives. Our goal is to negotiate a fair agreement with appropriate compensation while doing our absolute best to minimize impact on you and the community you serve. But we need to be prepared for all possible scenarios, including the ability to apply pressure through various forms of job action.

Next steps

Our next round of negotiations is scheduled in September. If we are not able to get the best possible agreement for you and your coworkers, then we will come back to you for guidance on our next steps. There are various ways that you as union members can stand strong and united, up to and including job action, which will be coordinated by your bargaining committee. And remember, you cannot be disciplined for participating in any form of job action.

We will be thoughtful and strategic, and we will keep you informed at every step of the way. This is your agreement, and you will have a say as we move forward.

Keep connected

While negotiations are happening, you can help out by making sure that all of your co-workers have their union cards and have updated their contact information with their union representatives or stewards. Please share this bulletin!

It is important that every workplace has the [most up-to-date contact information](#) so that we can keep everyone in the loop and stay engaged. Please check in with your worksite contacts and stewards and make sure that everyone in your workplace has signed union cards, too.

In solidarity,

Your Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA) Negotiating Committee