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Health care workers at two long-term care homes begin one-day job action today

HEU members from seven seniors' care facilities want Good Samaritan Canada to address demands for better benefits, sick leave and working conditions

[BURNABY] - This afternoon, Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) members will walk off the job for a period of six hours at two of Good Samaritan Canada's seven long-term care work sites across the province, in an effort to reach a settlement after two years of collective bargaining.

"Good Samaritan is playing games with HEU members' livelihoods when it comes to key priorities for workers in their long-term care facilities," says HEU secretary-business manager Meena Brisard.

"After two years of bargaining, during which Good Samaritan delayed and cancelled dates, the employer is still offering no reasonable improvements to benefits, sick leave or shift differentials – despite the fact this employer has received substantial wage-levelling subsidies from the B.C. government since March 2020," Brisard says.

"This employer has also demanded an end to contracting-out protections. Already, Good Sam is bringing in temporary staff from agencies and paying a premium for them. They should invest in building a regular work force in our community," Brisard said.

Limited, one-day job action will take place from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, October 20 at only two locations: Delta View Care Centre in Delta, and Pioneer Lodge in Salmon Arm.

The workers at Delta View and Pioneer Lodge are among nearly 1,100 HEU members at seven Good Samaritan facilities around B.C. who have been without a contract since March 31, 2020 – more than three and a half years.

On October 17, HEU issued 72-hour strike notice, following the conclusion of essential service negotiations. Members voted 98 per cent in favour of a strike on July 21, and HEU workers at all Good Samaritan locations are now in a legal strike position.

This is the third successive round of bargaining during which the workers took a strike vote to get the employer back to the bargaining table. This is the first time, the union has escalated to job action with this employer.

“We have been asking the employer for more than two years now to bargain a fair deal with reasonable improvements.” says Brisard.

“Members are calling on Good Sam to support their employees with a fair compensation package and working conditions, support the seniors in their care with a regular, fully-staffed facility, and support the community with stable, permanent jobs,” she says.

“The challenges facing Good Samaritan workers and the residents they care for underscores the need for the B.C. government to make fundamental reforms to the long-term care system” says Brisard.

“This includes the implementation of its 2020 election promise to restore the standard wages, benefits and working conditions dismantled by the previous BC Liberal government,” says Brisard. “Such an action by the current provincial government would fully address the concerns HEU members are raising at the bargaining table with Good Samaritan right now.”

The union has designed its job action to ensure continuity of care of residents and is taking place under essential services guidelines as required by the B.C. Labour Code.

Brisard will speak with striking workers at Delta View at 2:15 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 20. The facility is located at 9341 Burns Drive in Delta.

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HEU represents more than 60,000 health care workers across B.C., including about 28,000 working directly with seniors in long-term care and other care settings.

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