

It's time to BARGAIN!

HEU's largest collective agreements will expire on March 31, 2025. That means it's time now to start negotiating a new contract for our Facilities, Community Health and Community Social Services members.

Private sector collective agreements have different expiry dates, with the union bargaining more than 135 independent contracts.

YOUR VOICE MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Find out how you can get involved and stay informed.

INSIDE:

Be part of your
local bargaining

How to write
a bargaining
demand










What is bargaining?

Bargaining is a democratic process where your union and employer negotiate the terms and conditions of your collective agreement.

This contract determines your wages and benefits – including your hours of work, seniority, vacation entitlement, sick leave provisions and health and safety protocol, among many other union rights and workplace protections.

Ways you can get involved

-  submit bargaining demands for your local to debate and vote on
-  complete a pre-bargaining membership survey
-  attend a special local meeting to prepare for bargaining
-  support your local's bargaining priorities by voting on them
-  get elected to attend a bargaining conference
-  run for a position to serve on the bargaining committee
-  vote on your tentative agreement to reject or ratify it

“I helped write some bargaining demands for our local, and they got support and ended up getting bargained into the contract. So I’d say to members — if you think there’s something in our contract that could be improved, get involved and speak up!”

*HEU member,
FBA local*



Our biggest gains are made at the bargaining table

Bargaining is tough. But each hard-won improvement sets the bar higher.

The collective agreement that protects you today is built on decades of work — dozens of rounds of bargaining, thousands of meetings, countless hours of research, and the courage and commitment of members like you.

Provisions that are common today, like equal pay for equal work, employer-paid pensions and sick leave, were hard-fought victories for working people.

In 1968, HEU bargainers achieved our first “master agreement” that covered health care workers at all hospitals. This grew our bargaining strength, and established common working and caring conditions. Today it’s known as the Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) collective agreement.

Starting in the 1970s, HEU fought for pay equity to compensate for decades of unequal pay for women workers. In the 1990s, members received more than \$500 million in pay equity adjustments.

And the latest FBA agreement commits the employer to a wage comparability review. Why? Because HEU can show that health care workers lost wages and pay equity gains during the B.C. Liberal government rollbacks and layoffs in the early 2000s.

Because health care is publicly funded, government legislation and policy affects bargaining in both the independent and public sectors.

So pushing for change doesn’t end at the bargaining table.

But that is where we see results. And it’s where we can help raise the bar again, and give tomorrow’s workers an even stronger foundation to build on.

“If the idea of bargaining appeals to you, think about getting involved in shaping your next contract. It’s one of the most powerful tools to improve your workplace – and your life.”

Lynn Bueckert,
*HEU Interim Secretary-
Business Manager*



Who takes part in HEU bargaining?

HEU members are represented at the negotiating table by a **bargaining committee**, a group of members democratically elected at a local meeting or conference. The committee is supported by HEU bargaining staff.

The bargaining committee represents your **“bargaining unit”** – a group of workers who are covered by a single collective agreement.

At its simplest, a bargaining unit can be one workplace with a single employer.

In other cases, workers in different facilities – and even in different unions – are joined into a **bargaining association**.

These workers are covered by a single collective agreement, and representatives from the different work sites and unions work together to bargain with the employer.

“I thought bargaining was all about union leaders and lawyers – I never really thought of ordinary members being involved.

But our bargaining committee got a lot of support, and I felt confident at the table because I knew what we were asking for was fair and right.”

*Bargaining committee member,
independent sector*



Public sector bargaining associations

The Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA) is an example of a bargaining association.

The FBA includes HEU members at hospitals and public health facilities across B.C. It also includes a smaller number of workers in these facilities who belong to other unions. They bargain as a group, and are covered by the facilities collective agreement.

About 75 per cent of HEU members belong to the FBA.

There are other bargaining associations that some HEU members belong to – the two main ones are the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) and the Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA).

These types of associations are called the **sectoral bargaining units**, and represent public health sector workers.

The public sector health employers also belong to associations. The FBA bargains with the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC), whose members include six health authorities and more than 200 smaller employers.

Independent bargaining

About 11,000 HEU members work at facilities operated by for-profit companies and non-profit agencies who are not affiliated with the health authorities. We call this our **independent sector**.

Some of these workplaces are a single bargaining unit covered by one collective agreement.

Some workplaces have two or more employers – for example, one contractor may employ the members providing care services, while a different company employs support services workers. In this case, there are two bargaining units, and the union negotiates two collective agreements.

Some employers operate multiple facilities in different locations. These workers may bargain a single agreement for all the workplaces.

Whether you are in a large bargaining association or an independent agreement, the bargaining process is similar.

As a union member, you vote to elect HEU members to sit on the bargaining committee.

These bargaining representatives, along with HEU professional bargainers, negotiate directly with your employer.



What bargaining units are HEU members in?

HEU represents more than 60,000 health care workers across British Columbia, with members working in hospitals, seniors' care and community services.

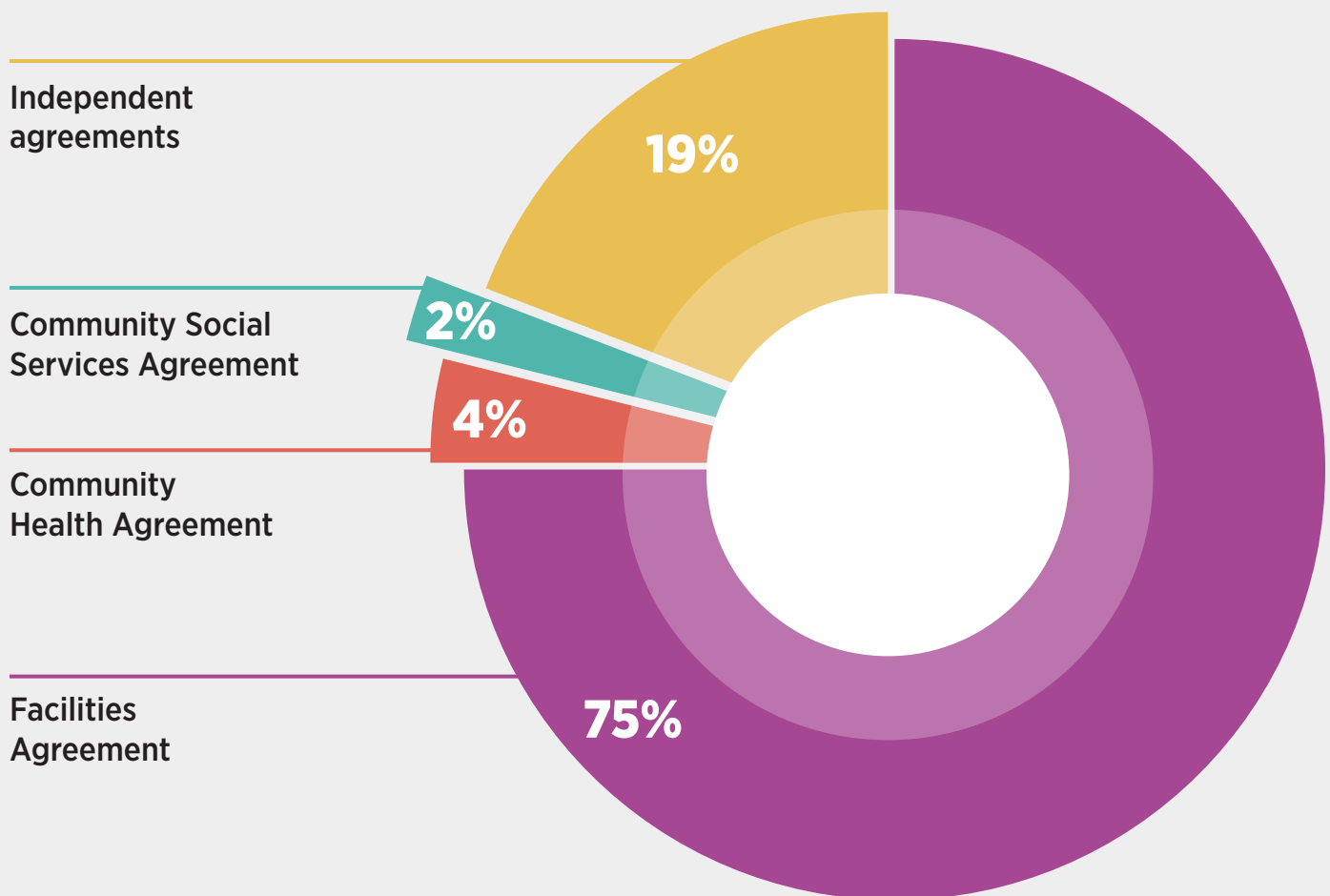
The majority of members are covered by three public sector collective agreements.

The union also negotiates more than 135 independent contracts.

HEU members are covered by different collective agreements, depending on where they work.

What is a sector?

A sector or a subsector is a group of employers who provide a similar, or the same, service – such as health care or social services.



A small number of HEU members are covered under contracts with the Health Science Professionals Bargaining Association, and the Nurses' Bargaining Association.

Facilities Bargaining Association

About **41,000 HEU members** are represented by the nine-union Facilities Bargaining Association (FBA). Most publicly funded, acute care hospitals and many long-term care sites are part of the FBA. The employer is the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC), which represents more than 200 publicly funded health employers.

Community Bargaining Association

Around **2,300 HEU members** in the community health subsector, like those working in home support, addiction and mental health services, are represented by the eight-union Community Bargaining Association (CBA). The B.C. General Employees' Union (BCGEU) is the lead at the CBA negotiating table.

Community Social Services Bargaining Association

HEU has about **1,500 members**, such as those working in group homes, day programs and transition houses, who are represented by the nine-union Community Social Services Bargaining Association (CSSBA). The BCGEU is the lead at the CSSBA negotiating table. The employer is the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA), which represents about 200 publicly funded health employers.

Independent collective agreements

HEU represents about **11,000 members** who work for private or non-profit employers who are not affiliated with the public health employer group. These members work mainly in long-term care, and some assisted living facilities. This group has about 135 separate collective agreements, which are bargained one by one.

Indigenous employers

Our independent sector includes **more than 100 members** working for the Skidegate (Haida), Nisga'a and Stz'uminus nations. They are covered by three independent contracts at six work sites across the province.

If you're not sure if you're in a bargaining association, look on our website under collective agreements.

Each sector has a list of its member locals at the bottom of the page.

Or type your employer into the site search and find your collective agreement.

Scan to find your collective agreement.



How does public sector bargaining work?

Because the public sector bargaining associations contain multiple unions and many locals, there are a number of steps.

It begins with holding a sectoral bargaining conference, attended by **delegates** from all the locals. This is where **bargaining committee members** are elected, and **bargaining demands** are finalized.

To prepare for this conference, HEU locals meet to elect their delegates and talk about what changes they want to see in their collective agreement. Locals then vote on which of these changes they want to submit as formal bargaining demands.

At the conference, the delegates from all locals vote on all the demands submitted.

HEU's Provincial Executive will also submit **bargaining demands**.

Finally, a **demands package** is finalized. These are the demands that the bargaining committee will take with them to start negotiating with the employer.

What is a bargaining demand?

A bargaining demand is any improvement or change you would like to see in your collective agreement. It can involve wages, benefits, working conditions, changes to language, and much more.

All members have the right to put forward a bargaining demand for consideration by their local.

Bargaining demands are decided on at a local **General Membership** or **Special Meeting**. This is also where locals **elect delegates** – members to represent them at the **bargaining conference**.

This meeting must have “quorum” which means a certain minimum percentage of local members must attend.

Once a motion is put forward and seconded, a discussion (debate) takes place, followed by a vote.



If the motion passes, then your local executive submits it as a bargaining demand to HEU's Provincial Office.

Each bargaining demand from your local must be on a separate HEU Bargaining Demand form, and signed by the chairperson and secretary-treasurer.

Individual members may not submit demands that were not approved by their local.

See next page for tips on how to write a bargaining demand.

How does independent sector bargaining work?

In the independent sector, your local elects members directly to the bargaining committee.

Bargaining committee members are elected at a local General Meeting or Special Meeting.

The elected bargaining committee conducts a **membership survey** to determine priorities. This can be done with the support of HEU servicing and bargaining representatives assigned to your work site.

The bargaining committee submits the survey results and membership priorities to your HEU representative. They work together to produce a **bargaining demands package**.

The independent sector may hold occasional bargaining conferences, to talk about common priorities and issues. Each local will still bargain separately.

Your bargaining committee, which includes the HEU representative, negotiates directly with your employer.

A collective agreement is a legal contract, and needs to be written in specific ways. This can involve unfamiliar terms and phrases. Find a quick guide to union language on our website at www.heu.org/bargaining-glossary

How do I say this?

Scan for a quick guide to union language.



How to write a public sector bargaining demand

A bargaining demand has two parts:

- A **call for action** – what you’re hoping to achieve.
- The **reason** for the demand – why the change is needed.

A clearly written, easy-to-understand demand has a much better chance of being accepted. It also helps to talk to your co-workers before the meeting to get their support, and encourage them to attend and vote for it.

It can be specific, such as “Raise vision care benefits to \$750 per year” or it can be more general, such as “HEU will bargain to improve wages.”

Here’s an example of a general bargaining demand written in **PLAIN** language.

HEU WILL:

1. Bargain to improve wages.

BECAUSE:

1. Wages need to keep pace with the rising cost of living, including housing and groceries.
2. Inflation is at its highest in decades.
3. HEU members and their families are struggling to make ends meet.

You can also submit a bargaining demand in the traditional **FORMAL** language:

WHEREAS wages need to keep pace with the rising cost of living, including housing and groceries; and

WHEREAS inflation is at its highest in decades; and

WHEREAS HEU members and their families are struggling to make ends meet.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that HEU bargain to improve wages.

TIP

If you want to change something that is already in the agreement, include a note about where it can be found. This helps the bargaining committee understands the exact change your local wants.

EXAMPLE: We want laid-off members to receive severance pay after five years of service, not 10. (Article 43, facilities subsector).



You can find your current collective agreement on the HEU website at **heu.org/collective-agreements**



At the table — what happens during bargaining?

After the bargaining committee has been elected, and members' bargaining demands have been decided on, it's time to meet with the employer.

The union notifies the employer they want to schedule bargaining dates.

Contract talks usually take place over several months.

Once the bargaining committee is satisfied that the membership's key objectives are achieved, the union and employer reach a **tentative agreement**.

The union then prepares a **Comprehensive Report** highlighting the changes to the collective agreement. This includes all additions, revisions and deletions.

The tentative agreement is then brought to the members to vote on. This is called a **ratification vote**.

How do you ratify a collective agreement?

The bargaining committee tries to make sure all members have read the tentative agreement and understand the changes. They will hold information meetings, publish bulletins, and reach out through email, phone or text.

The vote may be held in person, or held online using the Simply Voting secure election platform.

Members can choose to **accept** or **reject** the tentative agreement.

If the contract is accepted, then provisions go into effect and a new collective agreement document is prepared.

But if the contract is rejected, then the bargaining committee and employer go back to the negotiating table to continue talks.

If members vote NO, anything agreed to in the tentative agreement may or may not still be on the table when bargaining resumes. So, voting NO means you can risk losing some of the gains negotiated.

"I learned a lot about our collective agreement as a shop steward. But being part of bargaining took my understanding to a whole new level! And I'm really proud of all the HEU members on my bargaining committee – we learned so much from each other."



STAY CONNECTED.

If you haven't been getting regular HEU emails, we may not have your correct address. Update your information here!



STAY INFORMED ON BARGAINING UPDATES:

www.heu.org/collective-agreements, find your sector, and scroll to the bottom.

