

EDGEMONT BARGAINING SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Your bargaining committee would like to thank all the members who took the time to fill in our bargaining survey. 63% of the members (including casuals) at Edgemont across all departments completed the survey and told us about your concerns, which gave us a good understanding of the problems we are facing collectively in our workplace.

We are especially grateful to the 39 members who agreed to help the bargaining committee keep in touch with all the members at Edgemont by acting as worksite contacts! With your help we will be able to keep our group engaged and informed throughout the bargaining process.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The survey results paint a picture of a membership struggling to make ends meet because of low pay and inadequate benefits. At the same time, members expressed how short-staffing, heavy workloads lack of clear direction and accountability from management are leading to health and safety concerns for staff and inadequate care for residents.

Wages

78% of respondents said that wages at Edgemont are not enough to keep up with the cost of living and 67% struggle to pay for basic costs like housing and food. 43% said that they have had to take on other jobs to make ends meet, and 72% said that the wages don't reflect the value of our work and the workload we deal with. To make matters worse, many people (46% of respondents) are struggling with frequent payroll errors that are not corrected efficiently.

Here is what members said in their own words about wages:

- *We need to increase our wage!! We are struggling in life paying bills and costs of everything goes up!! Lots of stress [. . .] We need help please.*
- *Wages are not well compensated for overwhelming workload.*
- *Pay is very low, hard to manage daily expenses, lots of stress*
- *Our wages should take into consideration knowledge, experience and education*

Workload

74% said staffing levels, scheduling and workload are not appropriate, and 63% said heavy workloads are damaging to their health (mental and/or physical).

Members also provided clear reasons for this workload crisis: positions are left vacant for long periods of time, absences are not replaced, resident occupancy has increased without increase staffing, residents with higher needs than the staff are equipped for are being admitted, and staff are being assigned duties beyond the scope of their classification (eg. nursing staff dealing with resident TV/remote issues or cooks washing dishes).

- *Only two LPNs are working on the floor for the whole facility, so workload is overwhelming. There were times that there was no assigned LPN or HCA for the next shift even if the staff is on approved vacation/sick leave. So LPN on the floor has to call agency for coverage. This is adding to LPN workload: calling HCA who are off and if no one is available or no one bids the shift, we have to call agency, then get a call from agency for coverage and assigning HCAs on the floor to help with other residents. Recently, most of the HCAs are working double shift to cover the shift. No quality of breaktime as LPN is on-call. No extra LPN to cover the floor if on break.*
- *Always short staff with no replacement, we can't give the proper care for the client.*
- *Some of the residents need to be in long term, some of them are overweight and we don't have lifting equipment, other residents have a bad dementia and need to be in memory care.*

Respondents also provided clear solutions: increase staffing in certain areas (eg dishwasher), stop admitting residents who should be in long term care, provide clear and reasonable management direction regarding work assignments, and hire a scheduler.

- *Streamlining workflows and assigning clear roles for tasks can further enhance efficiency. Additionally, [management] being actively involved in supporting employees and addressing those who do not meet role expectations shows that hard work and dedication are valued.*
- *We need a sole scheduler. Almost all the schedules were mistaken.*
- *I'm working with the company 10 years and I still have only a part time line.*

Health and RRSP Benefits

More than a third of respondents were not eligible at all for benefits, while those who are eligible identified the top areas where the coverage was not sufficient (vision, health spending and paramedical, such as massage or chiropractic). Two thirds were concerned that the RRSP benefits are lower than at other seniors care employers.

Health and Safety and Workplace Culture

45% of respondents said that the workplace culture at Edgemont was not positive, and comments identified management responsibility for this problem.

Management leadership and effective response are particularly important when it comes to health and safety concerns, but 47% said management has not responded appropriately to OHS concerns (eg. violent resident behaviour or lack of PPE). Instead of providing assistance, managers are creating more obstacles. For example, 38% reported that sick note/medical documentation requirements make it difficult to use sick leave.

Also, management responsibilities for scheduling and accurate payroll are not being carried out effectively.

- *We have a new [. . .] manager which expects perfection. That is the reason everyone is feeling too much stress and this brings frustration and disappointment and anxiety.*
- *[One manager] lacks professionalism and accountability. [The manager] swears frequently [. . .] I find the swearing to be extremely offensive and uncomfortable. [. . .] The manager] also often puts the blame on others immediately without investigation, rather than assume the responsibility [. . .] The management team frequently takes long vacation making it difficult for employees to perform our duties when immediate approval is needed. Overall, there is little accountability from the management team.*
- *I think health and safety in the workplace need to be improved to ensure employees can perform their roles without unnecessary physical strain or risk. The current workload, especially during peak times, often leads to fatigue and soreness, as I frequently experience [. . .] pain after shifts.*
- *Staff had to share the two worn-out eye goggles [. . .] So during the entire month of the two outbreaks, I had to share the eye goggles and felt unsafe as it was unhygienic. If they can't even take care of their own staff, how do you expect this company to take care of residents efficiently and adequately?*
- *We have been requesting for a first aid kit for almost a year, but the management have not provided it yet.*
- *Address the frequent paycheck mistakes. [. . .] Our payroll clerk said this is not her responsibility but that of the DOC.*
- *Schedules are rarely posted one month ahead, sometimes a day before the next pay period, causing us difficulty in making plans.*
- *The manager is giving a hard time to staff especially in approving application for stat and vacation, even if they gave their application months before.*

TAKING ACTION

The majority of respondents said that they would take various kinds of action to help us achieve our bargaining priorities. For example, members said that they would share union information, wear union buttons, sign petitions, attend rallies or even vote in favour of strike action if the employer refuses to meet our bargaining priorities.

It is also important that members inform themselves about their rights and entitlements under the collective agreement and bring forward any concerns and potential violations in a timely manner. When the employer is not following the collective agreement, members need to file grievances. The Grievance Procedure is outlined in Article 30 of our agreement, but the main thing to understand is that you need to provide the details of your concern to the union (1-800-232-7284) as soon as possible, but not less than within 10 days.

For example, provisions in Article 12 of our agreement which deals with Hours of Work, specifies at 12.05 that employees should be paid for their meal break if they are on call (eg. taking the phone when on break) and if they are recalled from a break then they should be paid the overtime rate for that 30 minutes. We know that this is not happening, but we need everyone to speak up and demand this payment by submitting exception forms and, if the employer does not pay, filing grievances.

Members also should file grievances if payroll errors are not corrected within 5 days of letting the employer know about the error, which is their obligation according to Article 15.11 (b). Similarly, members raised concerns about not getting vacation or other requests approved in a timely manner. If you are denied or are not hearing back about your request, file a grievance!

Members also identified potential violations when it comes to part-time employees, such as excluding eligible employees from enrollment in health (Article 25.02) and RRSP (Article 38.02) benefit programs as well as incorrect assignment of pick up shifts to casuals before part-time employees (Article 12.11).

For more urgent concerns such as health and safety, employees can also file grievances and notify your worksite OHS committee representative, but may also raise concerns directly with Alberta Occupational Health and Safety which can accept anonymous complaints online: <https://ohscomplaintsportal.labour.alberta.ca/prescreening/>.

NEXT STEPS

We will be meeting as the bargaining committee again soon to take what you told us in the bargaining survey and turn it into our ongoing proposals for bargaining. Then we will exchange proposals with our employer, and we will keep you posted on the details of those meetings.

If you have any questions, concerns or would like more information, please get in touch with your bargaining team!

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