

BARGAINING UPDATE



ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES (AHS), RECOVERY ALBERTA, PRIMARY CARE ALBERTA

LOCALS 041, 043, 044, 045, 046 - NURSING CARE

AHS Nursing Care: negotiating team stands up for the wages we deserve

Your team met with AHS for bargaining on Feb. 12 and 13. We started off by sharing our case for significant wage increases.

All Nursing Care staff are underpaid. We know we all need much higher wages to match our increased scope of practice and the sky-high costs of living, especially when compared to the rest of Canada. We know that our employer should give us those raises if they want to avoid a strike.

Your team made that argument loud and clear. But a good argument also needs solid evidence, and we provided a lot of that, such as:

- The ways we are not treated equally with other AHS staff groups;
- AHS is facing a recruitment and retention crisis;
 - here is a 12% overall vacancy rate;
 - Only 33% of sick hours are backfilled.
- How much more private agencies pay their nursing staff – you know, the same agencies that AHS contracts to do our work;
- A review of wages paid in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. AHS used to love comparing us to other provinces, but they don't want to anymore now that our wages have fallen behind;
- A review of new nursing care agreements in B.C. and Manitoba, both of which gave workers much higher raises;
- A review of inflation and grocery prices in Alberta. The data shows a 29% increase in costs since 2017. Our wages have only gone up 4.25% in the same time period.

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We also shared some proposals that would help fix the staffing crisis, like making improvements to scheduling and increasing how much we are paid for premiums, being on-call, and getting called back.

AHS was not prepared to have any of these conversations. They appeared taken aback, as if statistics about our work, the rising cost of living, and the recruitment and retention crisis were all breaking news to them.

Rollback our rights? No thanks!

AHS then handed us their solution to “internal churn” - in other words, the high rate of employees who move from job-to-job within AHS.

Unfortunately, AHS’s “solution” to internal churn is to roll back our rights!

Their first proposal would restrict your right to take different jobs. Under this proposal, permanent members who take a temporary vacancy would not be allowed to take another temporary vacancy for 12 months after the first temporary position ends.

The second proposed rollback would let AHS accept only external applicants for certain positions. Most importantly, it would let them do this when they create a new unit, new program, or when they get funding for more FTEs.

We told AHS we would not accept their “solution.” We will not give up our right to take different jobs within AHS, Recovery Alberta, Primary Care Alberta, or any other new organization the government creates. We will also never agree to allow AHS to hire only external applicants for certain jobs.

These proposals prove one thing: AHS just does not get it. At all.

Solidarity and strike captain training

We have already agreed to meet again on April 7 and 8. Your team also proposed more dates in March and April for AHS to bring updated proposals.

AUPE members must be prepared for the possibility of a strike or lockout. That’s why we are urgently recruiting Strike Captains.

Register today for an upcoming Strike Captain Course. This in-person course is just 1 day and you will receive time off work to take it.

AUPE’s education staff are here if you need help registering. Please contact them to help you sign up as soon as possible.

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Learn more about being a Strike Captain and register for a course near you.

Keep wearing red to show your solidarity! Email photos of you and your coworkers wearing red to photos@aupe.org to share on AUPE’s social media.

Please contact a member of your negotiating team if you have any questions.