

RIVERBEND BARGAINING SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Your bargaining committee would like to thank all the members who took the time to fill in our bargaining survey. Members who completed the survey and told us about their concerns gave us a good understanding of the problems we are facing collectively in our workplace.

We are especially grateful to the 15 people who agreed to be Worksite Contacts to help the bargaining committee ensure that members in every department and shift are kept informed and engaged throughout negotiations.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Members identified pay increases as their top concern, and 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 spoke about how heavy workloads are impacting their own health as they do their best to provide quality care to residents.

Wages

77% of respondents said that wages are not enough to keep up with the cost of living and 91% struggle to pay for basic costs like housing and food. 46% said that they have had to take on other jobs to make ends meet, and 51% said that they are looking for other opportunities that pay more. Wages don't reflect the value of our work and the workload we deal with.

One solution which 100% of members want is an automatic Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

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

- *75% of my wage goes for rent. How can I survive with the 25%? We don't have wage increases on the grid. I have been working for this company for [many years]. After all this time I am [not making a living wage]. That is sad and degrading.*
- *My pay is not even enough for my mortgage and food to put on the table.*
- *Due to low income and high expenses, it is very hard to survive with the income I get.*
- *We should be [paid] within industry standard.*
- *My other job pays more about 2 dollars more.*
- *Life has become very difficult and expensive, and we are underpaid*

Workload

82% said that heavy workloads are damaging their mental and/or physical health.

- *My work area has fewer staff than before, but the workload has stayed the same or increased.*
- *Absent workers are not replaced, increasing the workload for those on shift.*
- *I am not able to take my breaks because of the workload.*
- *I am not provided with appropriate scheduled time and computer access to complete The Learning Centre required modules.*

61% said staffing, workload and scheduling are not appropriate. Here's what members had to say in their own words:

- *Our department [is] always short [of] staff*
- *They're not replacing pre-approved vacation and LOAs.*
- *We are expected to work short when a call in happens.*
- *The workload has consistently increased over the past months, but staffing has stayed pretty much the same, especially for nursing staff. making it hard to catch up with the workload.*

With high rates of exhaustion, vacations become even more important, but members are reporting difficulties with scheduling time off. 42% said it is difficult to get approval for vacation/time off, while 37% reporting being expected to find my own coverage for vacation/time off.

Health and RRSP Benefits

14% of respondents were not eligible at all for benefits, while those who are eligible identified the top areas where the coverage was non-existent (especially for vision, health spending and orthotics) or not sufficient (especially for paramedical, medications and dental). 51% stated that the employee share of benefit premiums is too high, and 59% expressed that covering the whole premium costs on parental and other leaves was burdensome. Exclusion of workers over 65 from life insurance coverage was also pointed to as a concern, given the relatively advanced age of many Riverbend staff.

60% were concerned that the RRSP benefits are lower than at other seniors care employers.

Health and Safety and Workplace Culture

50% of respondents did not agree that there was a positive workplace culture at Riverbend, with many pointing the health and safety concerns. 43% said they had been insulted, threatened or injured by a resident, but 51% said management did not respond appropriately to safety concerns.

54% said they worry that the lack of paid sick time is increasing exposure to COVID and other viruses at work, and 49% reported that sick note requirements are making it difficult to use what sick leave is available. In addition to increasing sick leave and addressing the sick note problem, members also want to be able to access personal leave days.

Here are some member comments:

- *Managers are the ones giving stress to staff.*
- *Senior managers should respect everyone despite their position. The respect should two ways*
- *Staff should be given access to parking in the basement when the weather is too cold*

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.

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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