

Media Release: NS Health Support workers frustrated as government, employers delay meaningful bargaining

February 20, 2025

HALIFAX—The Health Support Council of Unions says members who work as skilled trades workers, power engineers, porters, dietary, housekeeping, and other essential classifications within acute care, are growing concerned after their employers have refused to talk about any monetary items through five months of negotiations.

“If Premier Houston, armed with his supermajority in the legislature, cannot provide a budget and a mandate for the health care workers who keep the lights on, feed patients and keep our hospitals clean, then his commitment to ‘fixing’ health care seems to have ended when he called the early election,” said Unifor Atlantic Regional Director Jennifer Murray. “After five months, there’s no explanation beyond indifference to these essential health care workers that we should have zero response to items that have already been negotiated and implemented in the three other acute care bargaining units in the province.”

The Health Support Council of Unions, led by Unifor with representatives from NSGEU and CUPE, began negotiations in September 2024, looking to bring this bargaining unit up to the standards and wage increases previously won by the Nurses, Health Care, and Administrative Professionals bargaining units.

“It is time for government to make a fair offer to these hardworking members of the health care team,” said NSGEU President Sandra Mullen. “These workers play an important part in keeping our health care facilities operational and their labour should be recognized and valued appropriately.”

Essential services negotiations are ongoing and, once completed, would put the more than 4,100 workers in a legal strike position, if required.

“These workers are vital to the everyday operation of our health care system,” said CUPE 8920 President Dianne Frittenburg. “Without them, the hospitals would cease to function, and yet the Houston government has continued to leave these workers behind. It’s not just unfair, it’s shameful. Why does Houston’s government think these workers are less worthy of the same treatment the other health care bargaining units have already received?”

The Council of Support Unions, made up of representatives from Unifor, NSGEU and CUPE, represents 4,100 workers in acute health care in Nova Scotia who support patients as utility workers, mechanics, skilled trades workers, power engineers, dietary aides, porters, laundry workers and more. Unions representing workers in acute care in Nova Scotia bargain as a council in four bargaining units divided by job classifications in Nursing, Health Care, Administrative Professionals, and Health Support.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Shelley Amyotte, Unifor National Communications Representative, 902-717-7491, Shelley.Amyotte@unifor.org

Holly Fraughton, NSGEU Communications Officer, 902-471-1781, hfraughton@nsgeu.ca

Taylor Johnston, CUPE Atlantic Communications Representative, tjohnston@cupe.ca