

# RIVER RIDGE BARGAINING SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

Your negotiating committee would like to thank all the members who took the time to fill in our bargaining survey, which gave us a good understanding of the problems we are facing collectively in our workplace.

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 respect from management are leading to health and safety concerns.

### Wages

76% of respondents said wages are not enough to keep up with the cost of living, while 43% struggle to pay for basic costs including housing and food. 48% said that they have had to take on other jobs to make ends meet, while 67% said that the wages don't reflect the value of our work and the workload we deal with.

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

- *The extra responsibilities in the building that are expected . . . should be reflected by the wage.*
- *My wage and workload do not align at all. I have to rush to get everything done in a day. I feel I am working very hard, and my wage does not reflect that.*
- *Premiums for weekend nights should pay more.*
- *Workload is more than the pay per hour.*

100% of respondents think our wages should when inflation does - also known as a Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA).

### Workload

65% said that a stressful environment at work is damaging to their mental, and/or physical health. Workload concerns are a big part of that stress:

- *[We are] expected to "just figure it out" or "do our best" when we are short. . . . In the past it has been brought up to different management members over the years and some form of assistance has been asked or feedback has been given to management about a different way of distributing the work. These concerns and suggestions always fell on deaf ears.*
- *Continuous instances of short staffing and more burdens being pushed to the nursing staff from the management.*
- *Unable to take the breaks because of short staff.*

Also, 61% reported that they are expected to do work of other positions (e.g. HCAs to do recreation activities).

## Health and RRSP Benefits

Top concerns which members have with our health benefits include: The lack of a health-spending account, no vision coverage, low annual amounts for paramedical services such as chiropractors, and no coverage for orthotics and compression stockings. Shortage of paid sick leave and the cost of maintaining benefits when off work were also concerns.

- *In the event of any kind of surgery or injury, finances are a burden.*

Several respondents complained about the maze-like process for enrolling in the RRSP matching program.

- *When staff are asking about enrolment, they are sent links that do not work, when it is brought up, the same link is sent again. We do not have the ability to ask for help with enrolment and are told: "You have to do it through Manulife." The inferior knowledge and lack of support is the reason why there are so few enrolled into this program.*

## Health and Safety and Workplace Culture

65% said that management is not respectful and/or approachable.

- *Aggression and disrespect between departments is mirrored by the disrespect and bullying often coming from management.*
- *Stand up meetings are not used appropriately. They often include verbal aggression, blame and condescending speech towards staff. And is held in a public space in front of residents, family and visitors.*
- *Every day a new policy is being implemented and . . . staff is told to follow that new policy and when that policy fails in a few days, then the management comes up with another new policy . . . [We are] unable to remember which policy is in effect and which one is not.*
- *The feeling of not being appreciated, respected or advocated for is a growing frustration.*
- *Work morale declining due to "budget." Example, staff now can't have coffee unless bringing [their] own.*
- *Abuse from residents . . . is not addressed at a level where I feel protected and advocated for. We are told to document it, but then it goes no further.*
- *Concerns varying in nature are often voiced, but little to nothing is done, leaving a sense of being defeated and hopeless that anything can change.*
- *There is a policy in place about bullying and harassment and respect in the workplace, but for some reason it does not seem to apply to certain members of management. . . . There is a lack of concern when staff are victims of abuse from residents and family members and even management. When staff are the victims we get "make sure you chart it."*
- *Staff who need to drink water will have to come to the break room in the basement to drink water. That is not at all how an employee can be treated. Employees cannot be deprived of drinking water. However, at other nursing facilities staff is allowed to keep their water bottle with them.*

## TAKING ACTION

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

It is 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 27 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 15 days.

For example, provisions in Article 11 of our agreement which deals with Hours of Work, specifies at 11.05 that employees should be paid for their meal break if they are on call (e.g. taking the phone when on break) and if they are recalled from a break then they should be paid the overtime rate for those 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.

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/>.

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