



What is a strike?

A strike is an action taken by the members of a union for the purpose of compelling their employer to agree to return to the bargaining table and agree to terms and conditions. This is done through the withdrawal of some or all of their labour. The action is taken in accordance with the Alberta Labour Relations Code.

What is a lockout?

A lockout occurs when an employer shuts down a workplace, suspends operations, or refuses to allow employees to work. The action is taken in accordance with the Alberta Labour Relations Code.

What is picketing?

Picketing is an action taken by the union, where members gather at a pre-determined area to bring awareness to the public, clients, patients and other healthcare employees of the employers' refusal to negotiate a fair and reasonable collective agreement. The withdrawal of labour and a strike line is used to apply pressure on the employer to come back to the table.

Can the employer discipline me for my role during the strike?

Management cannot discipline members for supporting their union during a legal strike.

When can a strike or lockout legally occur?

Following a 14-day cooling off period, the union holds a supervised strike vote. It can occur after negotiation and mediation have failed. If the vote is successful (50+1%), the union can serve notice to strike. The first notice requires 72 hours and a listing of the sites that will be participating in the strike. The strike vote is valid for 120 days. If the union does not exercise the right to strike in that time frame, a new vote must occur. This process is the same for the employer in a lockout situation.

What is a scab?

A scab is an individual that does any form of work for the employer during the strike or lockout. The work can be obvious or insidious, like working from home or via electronic devices. If you believe that someone is scabbing, refer the matter to the Strike Captain or union representative.

Scabs need to be identified and photographed and that information passed onto the Strike Captain. Designated (scheduled) essential services workers are not scabs. They are required to adhere to the Essential Services Agreement (ESA) schedule.

If I'm scheduled to work under the Essential Services Agreement (ESA) and I have to go into work, will people consider me a scab?

No, it is important that all members understand that members who are scheduled to work must comply, they do not have an option. ESAs are developed and enforced to ensure that there is no interruption of essential care or treatment that would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public. Essential services is not about "who", but about the services that are deemed essential. As one member put it: their heart is on the line with their co-workers, but their heads and hands have to be at work.

FAQs for Picketers

How many picketers do we need on each picket line?

This is dependent on which sites are participating in the strike. The strike committee will determine the picketing strategies, including site location and coordination of picketers.

Are we going to be all alone at our sites, or are there going to be people to help set it up, do sign-up, etc.?

HSAA will be working with the Local Unit Executives, Stewards, and staff from HSAA to support the needs of the membership during any work stoppage, whether that be a strike or lockout. We will be seeking the support of other unions to help support our picket lines.

How do picket lines effect the bargaining process?

Solidarity and strength in numbers on the picket line sends a message to the employer that we stand together and are willing to fight for a fair deal. There is a saying: "the longer the line, the shorter the strike".

What should be done if the police come?

Immediately notify the Strike Captain and they will engage with law enforcement. Ensure you are polite and professional when speaking with law enforcement. Report all visits by law enforcement to the Picket Coordinator.

Do I have to obey security guards?

The picket line belongs to the union and all instructions come from Strike Captains. Security guards do not have authority or jurisdiction over the picket line.



Is there a limit to the noise that we can make?

Picket lines should be noisy; however, picketers must adhere to any noise bylaws. The Strike Captain is responsible for ensuring the noise bylaws are known and adhered to.

Who do I contact in the event of problems on the picket line?

Your Strike Captain is your first point of contact for all issues or problems on the picket line. There will be communication devices available for any emergencies and the Strike Captain will be readily available at all times while the picket line is active.

Can I take pictures or videos while on the strike line?

You are encouraged to take pictures of the picket line, the solidarity of members, great slogans, etc. It is crucial that you do not take any photos or video of patients accessing healthcare services. If necessary, you can take pictures and videos of security, managers and scab workers.

FAQs for Picketers

What if I'm sick, have a doctor's appointment or a family emergency?

Inform your Strike Captain if you are unable to attend your scheduled shift on the picket line. If you are scheduled to work under the ESA, you will need to contact the scheduler to ensure coverage of that shift. If you were scheduled on the picket line, you may be requested to attend at another time or location.

What if I'm not comfortable picketing?

You will need to contact your Strike Captain for potential reassignment of alternative work. If you do not accept alternative work, you will not be eligible for strike pay.

What if I have a disability or medical restrictions?

The union is obligated to adhere to medical restrictions. There is alternative work available if being on the picket line is not within your restrictions. You will need to identify your restrictions to the Strike Captain and alternative work will be assigned.

What about our patients?

HSA job action in most instances requires an Essential Service Agreement (ESA). These ensure that all patients and clients receive any urgent or emergency care. Our strike or job action will be reducing labour that is required for care that is not urgent. No patients or clients will be deprived of services that they need, but there may be some delays in non-urgent care. If there is a situation arises that requires more people than are currently scheduled, there is a process to increase the staffing levels. Sometimes, we have to put our needs first to ensure that the healthcare system stays functional, properly funded and staffed. This does not mean we don't care about our patients and clients; it simply means we have to ensure we remain healthy to provide healthcare.



Do criminal laws apply to strike action picket lines?

When you are picketing you are still required to follow the law, and can be subject to arrest, charges and conviction under the Criminal Code of Canada. If a member of the RCMP, City Police or Sheriff department respond to the picket line, immediately notify the Picket Captain. They must be treated with respect and professionalism.

Strike/Lockout Pay

When HSA members are on strike, striking workers will receive strike pay equivalent to minimum wage for each hour they are actively participating in strike duties. Members who are providing essential work and are required to continue working will have union dues assessed at a rate of 31.4%. As HSA collects these additional dues, the funds will be redistributed proportionately among the striking members to help supplement strike pay. This process ensures fairness and solidarity, with those continuing to work supporting their fellow members on the picket lines.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the role of my Strike Captain?

- To be the designated representative of the union while on duty.
- Provide leadership, guidance and support to all members on the picket line.
- Ensure that picketing is in accordance with HSAA policies and legislation.
- Be the first point of contact for members that are unable to attend their scheduled picket shift.
- To be the first point of contact with peace officers, security or any other contact related to the picket line.
- To be responsible for ensuring adequate attendance, supplies, and supports are available.
- Ensure the safety of picketers.
- Disseminate all updates coming from the Strike Committee, the Board of Directors or others.
- Refer all requests for interview to Strike Headquarters.
- Communicate with and report back to the Strike Coordinator
- Ensure that Strike Coordinators are made aware of good human interest stories. It is great to have these stories on the website or in the media, as it helps to boost morale and solidarity.
- Record attendance at the picket line and submit data for Strike Pay. This includes signing in picketers as they arrive and signing out picketers when they leave.
- Assign duties as needed to members, such as leading in song or chants, photography, pamphlet or leaflet distribution.
- Report to the line at least 15 minutes prior to the start of their shift to ensure a smooth start.
- Will remain on the line until the end of their shift.
- Ensure that the picket line area is clean prior to end of shift.

Where can you find more information?

Scan for Bargaining Updates!



Scan for Strikes and Essential Services Information!



Questions or Concerns?

Please contact:

Member Resource Centre

1-844-280-4722

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Strike Line Checklist for Strike Captains

Please note **needs will vary** from location to location.

Please note the strike fund does not cover any costs incurred prior to the commencement of a strike/lockout and no costs incurred after ratification.

Any exception costs not identified on the budget **must be pre-approved.**

Also, please note that **this is not an exhaustive list** of what you may require

- ☐ On strike signs
- ☐ Lockout stickers
- ☐ Rain ponchos
- ☐ Burn Barrels (note: verify municipal fire guidelines before setting up)
- ☐ Firewood
- ☐ Gas - flying squads, generators, runners
- ☐ Trailer, tent, protection from the elements
- ☐ Porta potties
- ☐ Generator
- ☐ Safety vests (high traffic areas)
- ☐ Safety cones
- ☐ Office costs - paper, photo copying, postage
- ☐ May require cell phones to communicate from one entrance (gate) to another

- ☐ HSAA branded items/merchandise
- ☐ First aid kits
- ☐ Flash lights - lighting for night picketing
- ☐ Caution tape, if roping off an area
- ☐ Folding plastic tables
- ☐ Garbage bags
- ☐ Rope
- ☐ String or stakes for signs
- ☐ Staple gun
- ☐ Clipboards/pens
- ☐ Tarps
- ☐ Toilet paper, paper towels, kleenex
- ☐ Face masks, hand sanitizer

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mrc@hsaa.ca

