

How to Prepare to Strike

What is a picket line?

- A picket line is a key part of a strike, where union members gather outside their workplace to protest and prevent work from continuing until their demands—such as better wages or working conditions—are met.

The purpose of picket lines

- It serves as both a demonstration of solidarity and a way to pressure the employer to negotiate a reasonable collective agreement by discouraging non-striking workers or replacements from crossing and undermining the strike's impact.
- To inform the public that there is job action being undertaken and the reasons why the union had to resort to strike.

How to Picket

- Report to your Strike Captain at the start and end of your shift.
- Inform people crossing the picket line about the ongoing strike and politely ask them to respect the picket line.
- If people insist on crossing, try to get their name, address and license plate. If you have a camera, take a picture and submit it to your Strike Captain. Do not impede patients, other healthcare workers not on strike, scheduled essential services workers, ambulances, patients being transported by other means or any vehicles transporting essential medical equipment or supplies.
- Do not obstruct the public using the sidewalks or roadways in front of the picket line.
- When having discussions with the public, be as courteous as possible. Do not engage in heated discussions. Focus on the big takeaways.
- Bring family to the picket line from time to time. It is important for them to understand what you are picketing for and what you are going through to obtain a reasonable collective agreement.
- Keep the picket line clean. There will be garbage cans and recycling cans near the line. Clean up throughout the picket shift and prior to the end of the picket shift.
- If you are approached by anyone from the media, do not speak to them. Instead, refer them to the Strike Captain or HSA.
- Breaks will be scheduled to ensure consistent presence on the picket line.
- Dress appropriate for the weather and ensure you have inclement weather wear readily available.
- Ensure you have enough food and fluids with you for a full day of picketing.
- Wear your picket placard and HSA wear.
- Bring Government ID and Employer issued ID.
- Bring your cell phone.
- Bring a camera (if you have one).



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.



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

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

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.

FAQ- Picket Lines

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.

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 Agreements (ESAs). 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.

Pay, Benefits and Dues During a Strike/Lockout

Strike/Lockout Pay

When HSAA 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 HSAA 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.

- Strike/Lockout pay commences on the first (1st) day of strike or lockout provided it lasts longer than 24 hours.
- If you are on vacation during strike activities, you will not receive pay from your employer or your union.
- The Strike Captain(s) shall be entitled to a minimum of one (1) day paid union leave to organize the worksite prior to a strike lockout.
- A member who experiences extraordinary financial hardship as a result of a strike/lockout may apply to the Members Benefits Committee for financial assistance.
- All claims for strike/lockout pay must be submitted to HSAA within sixty (60) days from the conclusion of the job action.
- Members doing strike duties will receive strike pay equivalent to minimum wage for each hour they are actively participating in strike duties.
- As long as they work a minimum of 4 hours on strike duties per day
- You can only receive strike pay for 7.75 hours per day, and a maximum of 40 hours per week.
- Strike pay is NOT taxable income.

Health Benefits During a Strike/Lockout

HSAA shall pay the premiums for employee benefit plans, as per the collective agreement, for members on legal strike/lockout who would normally receive these benefits while at work.

Member Dues During a Strike/Lockout - Constitutional Provisions

19.05 With a majority vote of two-thirds (2/3) of its members, the Board of Directors may temporarily increase dues by up to 15 per cent of daily gross, if:

- a) the Strike Fund drops below 50 percent of what it was before the strike started or
- b) it drops to less than \$1,000,000 and the increase is used only for the Strike Fund

19.06 Extra dues shall be assessed if members work within their bargaining unit when their own bargaining unit is on a lockout or strike. These dues shall be deducted from their pay cheque. This includes when they are required by law to provide essential or emergency services. In these cases, they shall pay dues of 30 per cent of their daily gross pay (before deductions). These dues shall be in addition to their regular dues and shall be put into the Strike Fund.



Pay, Benefits and Dues During a Strike/Lockout

19.07 Extra dues assessed if members work during an alternate job action. This could include escalating strikes, when increasing numbers of members go out on strike. This could also include rotating strikes, when different sites go out at different times. The Board of Directors and bargaining committee may decide together if they shall be assessed these dues. In these situations, they may pay dues of 30 per cent of their daily gross pay (before deductions). These dues shall be deducted from their pay cheque. These dues shall be in addition to their regular dues and shall be put into the Strike Fund.

19.08 The monies generated from these higher-level dues shall be used to equalize the impact of the strike among those deemed essential and non-essential employees in accordance with applicable agreements between the Union and the Employer.

19.09 Any member who is not deemed essential and reports for work shall be fined by HSAA an amount equal to 100 per cent of their daily gross pay (before deductions). Any member who fails to comply with the payment of the fine imposed under this constitution shall cease to be a member in good standing until such fine is paid.

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

