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HSAA POSITION STATEMENTS

The Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) is a trade union affiliated with the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and its subordinate bodies - the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) and the various District Labour Councils across Alberta. We hold to be true a set of values based in social democracy, social and environmental justice. These values guide us in taking positions on issues that arise on an ongoing basis.

HSAA is guided by its mission statement, which is: ***To enhance the quality of life of its members and society.*** Guiding our decision making, HSAA adopted this Strategic Plan: ***Our members and the public will understand and value unions.*** This is a long-term objective and in order to achieve it, our board of directors are currently working on the three short-term goals of Engagement, Awareness and Advocacy.

Our position statements flow from our values, mission statement and strategic plan, that are the basic rationale for each.

It is the position of HSAA that mandatory mass screening of health care workers for HIV infection would be unjustified abrogation of individual civil liberties, not in the best interests of health care consumers, workers or of Alberta Taxpayers.

Rationale:

From time to time there are suggestions for mandatory mass HIV screening for all health care providers in Alberta.

Such screening provides at most a snapshot of a particular moment in time and provides no assurance of the individual's HIV status at any time after the test, and

Health care workers are at far greater risk of contracting the virus from patients, but standard HIV screening of health care consumers is not proposed, and

The cost of wholesale screening of health care workers would be prohibitive, and

Such screening could lead both health care workers and consumers into a false sense of security, potentially leading to a relaxation of universal blood/body fluids precautions and exposure to not only undiagnosed HIV, but also to far more easily transmitted diseases such as Hepatitis B and C.

Approved AGM May 2002
Amended May 2018

HSAA will continue to advocate for and support:

- Strict adherence to the five principles of the *Canada Health Act*:
 - (a) *public administration*
 - (b) *comprehensiveness*
 - (c) *universality*
 - (d) *portability*
 - (e) *accessibility*
- Inclusion of community care, rehabilitation, home care, long-term care, addiction and mental health care and supportive living care within the scope of the legal framework defining medicare in Canada.
- Development of a national home care program, a national Pharmacare program, and effective preventive health care programs.
- Assurance of national standards through allocation of adequate federal funding to publicly provided health care.
- Allocation of appropriate funding by the Alberta government to address the health care needs of Albertans without transferring health care provision from public delivery.
- Recognition by governments of demographic factors, including population growth, age, poverty and other social determinants of health in resource allocation.

Rationale:

A clear majority of Canadians support the five fundamental principles enshrined in the *Canada Health Act*.

HSAA recognizes that while there are fiscal concerns, these must not supersede the primary goal of health care - the health and well-being of Canadians.

Methods of health care delivery and health care funding have shifted a substantial portion of care from hospitals and physicians' services into community and home settings, and long-term care settings, with provision by many other allied health professionals.

Costs of pharmaceuticals and other supplies, which are essential in the delivery of health care, are prohibitive for many Canadians.

Both federal and provincial government funding allocations have been inadequate to ensure that the health care needs of Canadians are met.

HSAA supports Tommy Douglas's vision of a "Second Stage of Medicare" remains to be completed.

Approved at 2008 AGM
Amended May 2018
Amended May 2023 Convention
Amended May 2024 Convention

It is the position of HSAA that, quality, affordable, accessible, regulated universal childcare and early childhood education be available to all families.

Governments must commit adequate resources to comprehensive regulations and their enforcement.

Rationale:

Unions, by virtue of their role as social advocates, have a responsibility to influence and encourage the establishment of universal high quality, publicly funded, non-profit, accessible and inclusive childcare.

Early childhood education enhances children's development and well-being and provides a foundation for life-long learning.

HSAA believes that children are society's most valuable resource, and access to high quality care for all families leads to better and more equitable outcomes for children and society.

Childcare providers and early childhood educators should be well trained, with formal education. Providers and educators should receive terms and conditions of employment befitting the value of the services they provide.

Childcare should be available at work sites or at other convenient locations, with hours that reflect the needs of the families they serve.

Amended May 2016
Reviewed May 2018
Amended May 2021

It is the position of HSAA that the focus of attendance management programs must be to help the employee to achieve satisfactory attendance, but not to harass or intimidate employees, not to deny benefits.

Rationale:

It is recognized that both the employer and employees have an interest in ensuring satisfactory attendance.

When healthcare workers attend work while sick, this puts the patients at an unnecessary risk to get ill.

Attendance management programs may result in inappropriate employer response in cases of illness, with the result that employees may feel harassed.

Approved December 3, 1998
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

It is the position of HSAA that Bullying and Harassment is considered unacceptable conduct. It is offensive, and in many cases, intimidates or humiliates others, and will not be tolerated by HSAA.

Rationale:

Bullying is defined as: Acts or verbal comments that could “psychologically” hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents, a pattern or behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. (CCOHS Definition).

Harassment means any single incident or repeated incidents of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying or action by a person that the person knows or ought reasonable to know will or would cause offence or humiliation to a worker, or adversely affects the worker’s health and safety, and includes

- Conduct, comment, bullying or action because of ethnicity, religious beliefs, colour, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, and
- A sexual solicitation or advance,

but excludes any reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor in respect of the management of workers or a work site. (Alberta OHS Act, sec. 1(q))

Alberta OHS Act has enacted obligations required of Employers, supervisors, and workers for the prevention of harassment in the workplace.

Every employer shall ensure, as far as it is reasonably practicable for the employer to do so, that none of the employer’s workers are subject to or participate in harassment or violence at the work site. (OHS Act, Part 1, sec. 3(1)(c))

Every worker shall, while engaged in an occupation, refrain from causing or participating in harassment or violence. (OHS Act, Part 1, sec. 5(d))

HSAA recognizes that harassment in the workplace compromises the integrity of the employment relationship and endangers employee well-being and job performance.

It is the responsibility of the employer to have a harassment prevention plan which includes a policy and procedures to provide a working environment which protects employees from Bullying and Harassment.

HSA will insist on a timely, thorough investigation to be conducted by the Employer in every Bullying and Harassment complaint and will vigorously pursue redress for all bargaining unit members who are harassed.

Approved December 3, 1998
Amended March 2019
Approved at Convention May 2019

It is the position of HSAA that students should not work without supervision, or in place of bargaining unit employees

Rationale:

It is recognized that student practicum placements are essential in the education of qualified health care personnel, HSAA feels it is in the best interest of Patients that all student activities are supervised by qualified and/or licensed healthcare professionals.

Approved December 3, 1998
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

It is the position of HSAA that volunteers shall not perform the work of, or replace, bargaining unit employees.

Rationale:

It is recognized that the presence of volunteers in health care facilities can add value to the health care system helping patients and families.

However, HSAA believes it is important that all patient care is performed by qualified and licensed professionals in the interest of patient safety.

Approved December 3, 1998
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA opposes a flat tax structure.

Rationale:

Flat Tax structure is regressive, providing a disproportionate benefit to higher income earners, and penalizes lower income earners.

Approved at May 2012 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA supports the concept of these programs and the provision of this benefit by the Employer.

HSAA will pursue ensuring members be a considered key stakeholder and have direct input to ensure providers and programs are adequate and meet the needs of our members.

It is HSAA's position that these programs will not replace employer benefit responsibilities and must be administered at arm's length and completely independent of the employer. Confidentiality must be maintained and the utilization of these programs by our members must be voluntary.

Rationale:

HSAA recognizes the importance of Employee and Family Assistance programs which provide counseling and support for staff members and their families.

Programs need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

HSAA recognizes that members need to ensure programs are meeting the needs by participating in provider review and renewal procedures.

Approved at 2001 AGM
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAА believes in the concept of union solidarity expressed as the participation of its Local Unit Members in Joint Union Activities.

Such participation, in support of causes that benefit Union members and their families, is encouraged.

Approved April 6, 2000
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA will advocate for inclusive communities, economic rights of all people, the right of all people to access publicly delivered health care, and terms and conditions of employment that enable people to work to the full extent of their abilities.

HSAA will conduct its activities in keeping with union principles and values of Human Rights, Equality and Non- Discrimination of all HSAA members and members of society.

Rationale:

All people should be able to live in any community without discrimination based on race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, political or religious belief, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, source of income, age and physical and mental disability.

All people have the right to form and join unions, receive favourable remuneration for working people and economic security for everyone in the event of disability, old age, unemployment or other lack of livelihood.

Even though employers have a duty to accommodate employees with disabilities, the marginalization and exclusion of such persons from full participation in meaningful work continues to exist in Alberta.

All people have the right to access publicly delivered health care; to access educational opportunities; to participate in the arts and cultural life of their community, and to live and work in a clean and healthy environment.

Approved 2013 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

It is the position of HSAA that the raising of children, while first and foremost the choice and responsibility of parents, is also a responsibility of our society at large.

Rationale:

Under no circumstances should provincial legislation have the effect of disentitling a parent from federal (EI) or contractual benefits.

Parental leaves should be funded to the maximum monthly allowance via Federal EI program for the full duration of the parental leave.

To foster the growing participation of parent's in the care of their children, there should be no gender distinction between employees in relation to parental benefits.

There should be no difference in the period of parental leave provided to adoptive or biological parents.

Approved at 2001 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

It is the position of HSAA that all levels of government must take responsibility for public policy to eliminate poverty and to provide the necessary support and social programs for those in need, while at the same time creating an environment of economic growth and individual initiative.

It is the position of HSAA that to eliminate poverty, all Canadians must have access to, quality public healthcare, a living wage and a meaningful range of human and social services, free from all forms of discrimination.

HSAA believes that freedom from poverty is a human right; we believe in equality among all people; we believe we are all entitled to social and economic security; we believe in dignity for all.

HSAA will:

Join in solidarity with the organizations calling upon the provincial, federal and municipal governments to work together with community organizations and others to develop a comprehensive plan with measurable poverty reduction targets and timelines to eliminate poverty in Alberta

Rationale:

Poverty is not the result of failure of the individual, but rather the failure of public policy in ensuring the economic and social well-being of Canada's citizens; and

Poverty is not merely relegated to those unable to work, but also to the growing segment of society known as the "working poor".

The gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen dramatically resulting in more people living in poverty than ever before.

The existence of poverty in a province and nation as wealthy as Alberta and Canada is an unnecessary tragedy.

Poverty in the midst of plenty is a failure of social policy not an inevitable or natural outcome, and consequently can be addressed by government and partner organizations; and

The reduction of poverty, on the way to its elimination, results in greater social cohesiveness and consequently better health outcomes for everyone in society, which in turn will make for less overall cost to the health care system; and

Reduction of poverty will result in positive economic benefit to Alberta, such as reduced crime, increased productivity in the workplace, and higher income and corporate taxation revenue.

Approved at 2002 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will support Source Testing on a voluntary basis and encourage procedural improvements, and educational programs for workers that will yield reductions in frequency of exposure, as well as train the worker on how to deal with exposure when it has occurred.

Rationale:

HSAA members may be exposed to infectious body fluids at work, body fluids in the form of needle stick injuries, and other inadvertent exposure, could lead to infection and illness in the affected worker.

Testing of the patient who was the source of the potentially infectious material may be helpful in predicting the potential transmission of certain pathogens.

Such screening at most provides a “snapshot” of a particular moment in time, and does not rule out infection in affected workers.

Such screening has the potential of instilling a false sense of security into the affected worker and could result in the affected worker not taking necessary steps in further transmission of infection.

Testing of Source patients does involve some risks minor risks to the patient.

Approved at 2004 AGM
Amended May 2018 convention

HSAА will support and encourage the development of policies and procedures that:

Minimize or eliminate exposure to any second-hand smoke, allergens, chemicals, molds, and scented products in all areas of employment. (Both on and off-site locations).

Recognize that workers who experience such health problems or disability are entitled to receive accommodation in accordance with Human Rights principles and legislation.

Ensure timely and accurate reporting to the Workers' Compensation Board where appropriate and necessary.

Rationale:

As a health care union whose members work for health care employers, HSAА should have a special interest in identifying emerging health hazards, and

Air quality in all areas of employment, both on employer property (including all buildings, grounds and parking lots) and all off site locations, may be affected by: second-hand smoke - various allergens (including mold, plant and animal allergens) - chemicals - scented products - temperature, and - humidity

Exposure to such substances may cause or aggravate health problems for some people (especially those with asthma, allergies and other medical conditions), and

Many health care employers have policies which are either too limited or only apply to on site locations.

Approved at 2004 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will defend and work to expand the hard-earned rights and benefits of all members regardless of employer.

Rationale:

Our Union is made up of members who work in public facilities and for private providers who are delivering vital publicly funded health-care services every day.

There is no conflict between advocating for a public health-care system and our commitment to all members.

Our members are all equal, regardless of employer. HSAA will be a strong advocate fighting for better wages, better working conditions, strong pensions, improved work-life balance, and superior workplace health and safety policies for every member.

Governments can make decisions to transition HSAA members from one system to the other and HSAA believes no member should suffer any loss.

Approved May 2023 Convention

CANADIAN RATIFICATION OF INT'L LABOUR ORGANIZATION CONVENTIONS 17.0

WHEREAS of the 185 Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Canada has only ratified 30; and

WHEREAS of the seven core Conventions of the ILO, Canada has only ratified five; and

WHEREAS of the 30 ILO Conventions developed since 1982 - all of which Canada voted for at the ILO's Annual Conferences - Canada has only ratified two

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that HSAA work with its affiliated bodies to develop and coordinate activities designed to influence the federal and provincial governments to:

- Have labour legislation comply with the ILO's freedom of association principles; - ratify the ILO's core Conventions: No. 98 - the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention and No. 138 - the Minimum Age Convention; and
- Establish an ongoing consultative process with the labour movement with respect to the ratification of ILO Conventions that Canada has voted for at the ILO's Annual Conferences.

Approved at 2005 AGM
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA believes that Federal and Provincial governments are failing in their responsibility under international labour and human rights standards to protect workers' rights by their continuous legislative attack on workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, take strike action and Right to Work legislation. HSAA will continue to condemn the use of legislation to restrict or deny the fundamental rights of workers.

HSAA will work with its affiliates to make progressive labour law reform a central focus of labour's political agenda and create public awareness around the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Rationale:

There has been a dramatic increase in the use of legislation by the federal and provincial governments to restrict and/or deny the collective bargaining rights of Canadian workers as evident by the 200 pieces of restrictive labour legislation proclaimed by the federal and provincial governments since 1982.

Amended 2013 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will strive in its procurement practices for goods and services to use providers that support the values of organized labour and encourage its membership to do the same.

Rationale:

Attaches great importance to the values of organized labour and international solidarity.

Members believe in the dignity and value of each person's work.

Is opposed to sweatshop working conditions.

HSAA's mission is "To enhance the quality of life of its members and society."

Amended at 2013 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA supports publicly owned, operated and delivered utilities.

Rationale:

All essential utilities should have public interest over shareholder interest in providing services. The rates of public utilities are regulated to protect citizens from unreasonable cost surges.

Keith Provost, a retired senior operating officer with Alberta Power, said Alberta's deregulation of electricity has proven to be a failed experiment. By Provost's calculation, it has cost Alberta consumers \$32 billion as at December 8, 2016.

Approved at AGM 2005
Amended May 2018 Convention

It is our belief that political leave language be included in bargaining demands to ensure our members who are elected to public office be allowed a leave of absence without pay but with no loss in seniority. Members should also have the ability to pay their full share of the benefits plan under the collective agreement during their term(s) of office.

Rationale:

HSAA understands the value full democratic participation plays in Canadian society

HSAA will continue to lobby parties in Alberta Legislature with the goal to obtain political leave legislation for all Albertans.

Approved at AGM 2005
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA WILL use all means available to ensure that members have access to any pension plan for which they are eligible; and

HSAA WILL prioritize this work and report on its progress to Convention annually.

Rationale:

HSAA believes that defined-benefit pensions and supplemental pensions are critical to living with dignity during retirement; and

HSAA believes that all members have the right to the maximum pensionable benefits afforded to them.

Approved June 2019

HSAA is opposed to child labour in Alberta, Canada and the rest of the world.

HSAA will continue to advocate for changes to the Alberta Labour Relations Code to prevent child labour and better protection for youth in the workplace.

Approved at 2006 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA believes that the Alberta Labour Relations Code must mandate arbitration as the dispute mechanism used when impasse is reached between the union and the employer in bargaining first contracts.

Rationale:

After a successful union drive, workers in a bargaining unit have the right to have a collective agreement that outlines the terms and conditions of their employment.

Without first contract arbitration legislation, employers have been known to draw out the bargaining process in an attempt to reach an open period without a negotiated contract having been ratified, thereby giving them a better argument to make a decertification argument to the bargaining unit workers.

HSAA recognizes the provisions for first-contract arbitration that were legislated by the Alberta Government in *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services* in 2016 and demands that this remains the rule of law in Alberta.

Approved at May 2018 Convention

HSAA supports and encourages the development of policies and procedures which will identify environments which may be detrimental to the auditory health of members. Provide audiometric testing, at the expense of the employer, for members exposed to noise levels which may approach but not exceed legislated limits.

As a healthcare union, whose members work for healthcare employers, HSAA should have a special interest in emerging health hazards, and the Alberta OH&S Code recognizes that excess noise levels, as defined in section 218 a) & b), can cause loss of auditory function, and there may be health problems we are not aware of and which are not reflected in current standards. We must also ensure that proper hearing protection is provided by the employer to all employees.

Approved at AGM 2006
Reviewed Jan 2018
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA supports the introduction of a national and/or provincial pharmacare program to ensure all Canadians and Albertans can access necessary medications without the worry of financial burden.

Rationale:

About one third of working Canadians don't have employer-funded prescription drug coverage and even those with drug plans are paying ever-increasing co-payments and deductibles.

Canada needs to combine the purchasing power of all Canadians under one plan. An annual investment of billion \$1 by the federal government will mean Canadians save \$7.3 billion a year on the medications they need.

An overwhelming majority of Canadians believe our public health care system should include a universal prescription drug plan.

A report released by the Parliamentary Budget Officer estimates savings of \$4.2 billion a year for the federal government alone.

Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will:

Promote within the union and to individual members materials including those prepared by the National Union and affiliates on the subject of climate change.

Support the establishment of “Green Committees” within HSAA workplaces and encourage these Committees to join with other labour, environmental, faith and social justice groups to study and promote measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change in a manner that is fair to workers and their communities.

Encourage members to undertake consumer actions which will reduce energy consumption and increase recycling and reuse options.

Support reinvestment in local communities by supporting economic diversification as well as green infrastructure, energy efficiency, renewable energy, bioenergy and innovation.

Continue to examine our own practices and explore opportunities to reduce the union’s environmental footprint.

Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA will adopt sustainable, environmental and ethical purchasing policies for its own operations and advocate for others to follow our lead.

Rationale:

The goals of sustainable, environmental and ethical purchasing policies are to ensure that garments purchased are made under humane working conditions in compliance with accepted international standards and also to ensure that any food, agricultural products and commodity purchases would be fair trade whenever possible.

Approved at 2008 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will advocate for workplaces where our members and other workers are safe to go to and from work without the fear of domestic violence.

We will advocate for workplaces that are free from intrusion of an abusive domestic partner.

Our members have the right to work unhampered by the threat of domestic violence towards themselves or their co-workers

Rationale:

One in three workers has experienced domestic violence, and for many the violence follows them to work.

Domestic violence costs Canadian employers millions of dollars per year plus; the costs to workers, their families and society at large.

Women who are victims of domestic violence are more likely to have trouble obtaining and maintaining quality permanent work, to change jobs frequently, and to earn less money; this lack of security leaves them without the resources to leave their abusers and reinforces the cycle of abuse.

Domestic abusers also suffer at work, often having trouble focusing, and occasionally causing violent incidences at their own workplaces; abusers' behavior commonly leads to lost work time, reduced workplace productivity, and poses a risk to co-workers.

Approved at 2008 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSA will pressure the federal government for legislation that will protect net neutrality for all Canadians.

Rationale:

Corporations or government should not have the ability to interfere or interrupt transmission of any content regardless of subject, ownership or destination which is not deemed illegal by law enforcement.

Citizens of the world need non-discriminatory access to the Internet to ensure they are able to fully participate in the global economy and in the democratic institutions of this country and not be able to block content during political unrest as seen during the Arab Spring or Ukrainian Uprising.

TELUS has already violated net neutrality when it blocked the website Voices for Change, which was created by the members of the Telecommunications Workers Union who were fighting for better pay and working conditions for the Telus Employees in 2005.

Amended 2014 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSA will advocate for electoral reform in Alberta, including the promotion of proportional representation

Rationale:

The traditional first past the post system in Alberta has contributed to low voter turnout, while proportional representation encourages greater voter participation because it treats all citizens more equally, better reflecting their intentions in the outcome of an election.

Amended 2014 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will:

Work with affiliate unions, federations of labour, labour councils, seniors groups and other allies to vigorously oppose provincial and federal government and employer attacks on defined-benefit (DB) workplace pension plans;

Work with affiliates and allies to develop materials, raise public awareness and educate union members about the value of DB pensions and the threats to these plans, including integrating a discussion of the value of DB and workplace pensions;

Continue to support and promote defined benefit pension plans and oppose legislation that would allow employers to convert DB plans to targeted-benefit (TB) or defined-contribution (DC) pension plans;

Work with affiliates and federations of labour to pressure provincial governments that are introducing provincial public pension plans to ensure they follow the Canada Pension Plan/Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/QPP) model of universal coverage and that they do not have opt out provisions.

Rationale:

Defined-benefit (DB) pensions provide fairness to workers, income security for retirees, and vital revenue for public services, local vendors, and hundreds of thousands of households;

DB pensions are deferred wages, earned and paid for by employees;

Allowing TB or DC plans in the federal sector will do nothing for 12 million Canadians without a workplace pension plan;

Doubling future CPP/QPP benefits will provide higher and more secure retirement income for all Canadian workers, while reducing pressure on DB workplace plans; and

Approved at AGM 2014
Reviewed Jan 2018
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA will support a living wage for all Albertans, including a minimum wage that enables workers to live above the poverty line and a social welfare policy free of 'poverty trap' claw backs.

We will support the activities of anti-poverty organizations that seek to pressure governments to ensure that workers directly employed, or contracted/subcontracted, or are employees of a partner organization, or are suppliers of goods and services to government will be paid a living wage.

Rationale:

Too many Albertans do not have access to employment which would pay sufficient wage and benefits to constitute a living wage, causing them to live in poverty.

The strength and solidarity of our communities depends on all citizens having access to a reasonable level of income from whatever combination of sources.

Poverty is not inevitable and can be partly addressed by municipal and higher levels of government adopting living wage policies to raise income levels.

A Living Wage is the amount of income an individual or family needs to meet basic needs, to maintain a safe, decent standard of living in their community and to save for future needs and goals. The amount of a Living Wage varies depending on the method used to measure the local cost of living in a particular community." – Excerpted from Vibrant Communities Calgary November 2006 newsletter

Amended 2014 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will:

Continue well-funded efforts to organize workers who are without a union and who would have a natural home in HSAA.

Prioritize public-sector hospital paramedical technical and professional employees, ambulance and emergency service workers, who remain unorganized or shielded from true union organization by employer-dominated associations.

Identify and develop longer-term organization objectives.

Be open to and available to assist our affiliates in the greater house of labour with their organizing efforts.

Not engage in raiding.

Rationale:

HSAA organizers have developed considerable momentum and experience through major campaigns and organizing drives.

Organizing the unorganized is an act of solidarity, a way to give back and build strength within the Union and our affiliates.

Through being organized in the Union, individual workers are able to assert their collective right to negotiate the terms and conditions of their employment.

Through collective actions, members of HSAA join a movement for social and economic justice.

Labour rights are human rights.

Approved 2007 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will:

Oppose any cuts to public education because research by allied organizations like Public Interest Alberta's Task Force on Post-Secondary Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association has shown that cuts to education funding threaten the very foundation of our children's futures.

Rationale:

When education funding is cut, class sizes increase, programs suffer, fewer new teachers are hired, infrastructure repairs are shelved and support staff and services are reduced.

When P3s (public-private partnerships) are used to build schools, experience across Canada has shown that P3 projects ultimately result in greater costs than if traditional design and build methods are used – resulting in a siphoning of public money from direct education spending.

Investing in Alberta's schools, public universities, colleges and technical institutes is essential for creating the "green" knowledge-based economy of the future and for building productive, healthy and diverse communities.

By increasing – not decreasing – the support for our public educational institutions, government will not only help stimulate Alberta's short-term economic recovery but will also be laying the foundation for Alberta's long-term prosperous future.

Raising tuition for people entering paramedical technical and professional programs will result in unsupportable student debt for individual graduates and more severe healthcare labour shortages in the near future, due to young people turning away from expensive post-secondary experience.

Approved 2010 AGM
Amended May 2018 convention

HSAA will:

Promote quality public services and tax fairness as key ways to reduce income inequality and achieve greater prosperity, opportunity and living standards for Canadians and raise awareness about the large and growing income inequality gap in Canada and the social and economic problems associated with this trend.

Rationale:

Income inequality in Canada (the gap between the richest and poorest Canadians) has been dramatically growing over the last two decades, while the incomes of most Canadians have stagnated; and

This trend is contributing to economic instability, damaging the social fabric of our country and diminishing the quality of life for Canadians; and

Reduced government spending, tax cuts favouring the wealthiest Canadians, and tax cuts for profitable corporations have accelerated the growing income gap.

Approved AGM 2011
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA will:

Adopt the recommendations of the Alberta Federation of Labour's Report on Temporary Foreign Workers in Alberta (December 2010).

Advocate that workers who are invited into Canada to meet labour demands be offered Permanent Resident status.

Advocate for all articles of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly as it addresses the rights of all workers, specifically articles 4, 15, 21, 23 and 24.

Rationale:

Labour rights are human rights.

Temporary Foreign Workers have historically been exploited by employers, labour brokers and recruiters due to lax government standards, laws and enforcement.

Approved 2013 AGM
Amended May 2018 convention

HSAA will work with provincial and federal affiliates to oppose the use of omnibus budget bills by the federal government through lobbying and public education campaigns which expose the potential dangers.

Rationale:

Omnibus budget bills have been used to make legislated changes that have nothing to do with the budget.

Omnibus bills deprive Canadians of the right to hear their elected representative debate important legislative changes, and debate is a key element in keeping our democracy transparent.

Omnibus bills are an attack on Canadian values and undermine faith in democracy.

Approved at 2013 AGM
Amended May 2018 Convention

HSAA encourages members to be vaccinated to contribute to public health initiatives to prevent the spread of seasonal influenza. HSAA recognizes that its members should have a right to make their own health-care decisions and are entitled to the privacy of that choice. HSAA will support members in making their choice. Where that choice impacts their work HSAA will support members in seeking “accommodation”.

Approved AGM 2013
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA Believes that no work-related injury is acceptable and that members, staff and agents of HSAA have a right to leave work free from injury or disease, either mental or physical, caused by their job or their workplace.

HSAA believes that Patient safety and patient outcomes are closely linked to worker safety. Thus, our members and their employers have a strong mutual interest and professional and moral obligation to work together to establish a strong safety culture and infrastructure to improve the lives of all Albertans.

Workplace factors have a significant impact on the overall health both physical and mental of a worker thus HSAA believes that Health and Wellness programs are a fundamental part of Workplace Health and Safety.

As Healthcare is one of the most dangerous industries in Alberta HSAA will strive to be a leader in the labour movement when it comes to advocating for health and safety in Alberta Workplaces, and will seek to develop a strong safety culture amongst our members, leaders and staff. HSAA will seek to reduce the level of injury and occupational disease amongst our membership by working to hold employers accountable for the high rates of injury and occupational illness in the Healthcare industry.

HSAA will work with government, labour organizations, and other safety advocates to improve health and safety legislation and standards in the healthcare industry.

HSAA will seek to build a strong safety culture amongst the membership by providing Education, resources and advocacy regarding health and safety rights and responsibilities.

HSAA will lead by example when it comes to Health and Safety by having robust internal health and safety processes embedded within the culture of our union.

HSAA will support our members who are members of Joint Management Labour Health and Safety Committees. This support will include, print resources, formal education and expert guidance to members of joint committees and the membership at large.

HSAA's Health, Safety and Wellness Committee (standing committee) shall act as a conduit to provide feedback on how HSAA can better support the membership regarding workplace health safety and wellness matters.

HSAA will seek out partnerships with safety organizations that are working on health and safety issues of importance to our members, recommendations for these partnerships will come from the membership at large or the board Health Safety and Wellness Committee and be approved by the board of directors.

HSAA will strategically advocate for improvements to health and safety legislation, recognizing that Alberta has some of the least worker-friendly health and safety legislation in Canada.

HSAA will apply best practices and sufficient resources to provide a safe working environment for staff, members, and elected leadership when they are engaged in activities on behalf of HSAA.

HSAA will work with the Employee Management Health and Safety committee to ensure that proactive solutions to health and safety issues at HSAA worksites can be found, and implemented.

HSAA will strive to lead by example when it comes to worker participation in establishing a healthy and safe workplace.

HSAA will implement an independently audited health and safety management system to ensure the organization continues to meet best practice regarding health and safety because HSAA recognizes that independent inspections/audits are fundamental to safety improvement and maintaining health and safety in any workplace.

HSAA will strive to ensure that Safety and Health is embraced by all members and staff when they are acting on behalf of HSAA and have control of or influence over activities that affect safety and health. Members and staff are to ensure their own safety and the safety of others in accordance with HSAA policy.

Rationale:

Supporting and improving health, safety and wellness in the workplaces of our members and Alberta workplaces at large is a fundamental aspect of HSAA's mission statement.

Approved AGM May 2016
Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAAs will:

Work to ensure that dangerous trade deals are not adopted by Canada through lobbying of our provincial and federal political representatives.

Ensure that our members are informed of the negative impacts of such trade deals.

Demand that all current and future trade agreements undergo a full and transparent evaluation of the social, environmental and labour impact of the proposed agreement prior to negotiations.

Insist that the federal and provincial governments ensure trade agreements do not interfere with the right of governments to regulate in the public interest, protect existing public services or create new social programs.

Demand that trade agreements not force federal, provincial or municipal governments to open public procurement to foreign companies.

Rationale:

These agreements that are generally referred to as “free trade deals” only accord freedoms to corporations bent on maximizing profits, and they are generally negotiated in secret and remove the freedom of citizens to pass laws in their own countries that protect industrial development, human rights and the environment.

The consequences of these deals are suppressed wages, deteriorating working conditions, rising carbon emissions that exacerbate climate change and the erosion of public services.

Approved AGM May 2016
Reviewed May 2018

- My union is built on our members. The strength, understanding and unity of the membership determine my union's course and its advancements.
- The members who make up my union and pay its dues are the ones to determine the right path for my union in our own interests, the interests of our union and in the interests of all the people.
- An informed and alert membership gives my union its power. My participation in the organization, negotiations, strikes, contract enforcement, local executive, education (formal and informal), member engagement and every other aspect of union life is indispensable to union solidarity.
- The strength of my union is built on setting aside internal differences and issues to combine for the common cause of advancing the interests of the membership. No union can successfully fulfill its purpose if it allows itself to be distracted by any issue which causes division and undermines the unity which all labour must have in the face of the employer.
- My union believes that workers are indivisible. My union celebrates our diversity which include age, race, colour, creed, ancestry, religious or political belief, gender, ability, family status or sexual orientation. Any division among the membership that pits worker against worker interferes with the power of my union.
- My union helps any member in times of distress. My union is more than my contract. This is a daily guide in the life of my union and its individual members.
- Conditions of work, security of employment and benefits for members and their families are of equal importance as wages.
- It is important for my union to organize the unorganized, in the interest of our memberships and of working people everywhere.
- My basic aspirations and desires are the same as any worker in the world. Inter-union and international union solidarity are crucial in sharing union research, education and actions of solidarity and affiliation with each other.
- My union looks beyond self-interest in the social and economic conditions of the communities in which we live. My union must support efforts that make communities and society a better place and promote change for the overall benefit of humanity.

Reviewed May 2018 Convention

HSAA will strive to improve provincial law protecting all workers from workplace violence; and

HSAA will engage in elevating the broader education of workers and the general population on the issues related to violence in the workplace; and

HSAA will monitor the implementation of federal Bill C-65, *An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence)*, the *Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act* and the *Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1*; and

HSAA will support the campaign to secure a new, legally binding, International Labour Organization Convention to end violence and harassment at work; and

HSAA will press the federal government to support this ILO Convention and the ratification of an anticipated progressive convention in the future.

HSAA will continue to work to develop collective bargaining language that insists that employers keep our members safe.

Rationale:

HSAA is committed to the right of every worker to enjoy a safe workplace, free from violence.

Some workers are put at risk of violence needlessly. Statistics Canada estimates there are about 350,000 cases of workplace violence each year in Canada.

Often employers do not take the necessary steps to prevent violence in the workplace and there needs to be more work done to campaign for better protection for workers.

Even the definition of violence in the workplace is sometimes a problem. Workplace violence is not limited to physical assaults. Any act where a worker is subjected to abuse, threats, intimidation, bullying, harassment, or actual assault should be considered an act of workplace violence.

Employers need to assess their workplace for possible risk factors for violence. They must also broadly interpret the workplace to include the space beyond the traditional workplace if employees are mobile and doing work-related activities offsite, or while they are in transit for work.

Assessing workplaces for increased risk of violence includes assessing the types of work that put workers at increased risk, including working under stressful conditions, working with unstable or volatile people, carrying out enforcement or inspection services, handling prescription drugs or money, or serving alcohol.

The risk of violence in the workplace can also be increased if the worker is alone when work is done late in the evening, or in the early morning, or if a host of mitigating factors exist, such as dealing with an at-risk population.

It is also very clear that gender is an issue in workplace violence, and that domestic violence can also impact the workplace, increasing risk.

Employers, beyond doing a risk assessment, also need to implement procedures to deal with workplace violence. This includes being able to do initial investigative reports if necessary and to have properly trained personnel to deal with complaints. In fact, all workers should have violence prevention and awareness training.

Workplaces also need to be able to deal with violence should the preventative steps fail. This means having contingencies on how to deal with violent perpetrators and ensuring workers are briefed on what to do in the event of a violent incident.

Approved June 2019

HSAA will:

Ensure that all HSAA representatives on any external committee will be appointed by an appropriate governing body of the union

Seek to include strong language ensuring this union right in all collective agreements.

Rationale:

HSAA believes that in order for a member to represent the union's position, they must be engaged in their union and be given authority to represent their union by a body that has been democratically elected by the membership.

HSAA believes that no individual understands the work of our members better than our members themselves. As front-line workers, our members are in the best position to suggest best practices and to identify issues as they arise.

HSAA also believes that HSAA members should participate and represent their union in certain undertakings by labour organizations, community groups and our social justice partners.

HSAA encourages our members' employers to consult our members as they develop and implement workplace policies and best practices.

HSAA recognizes that, when appropriate, staff may be assigned as representatives of members.

HSAA also believes that HSAA members and staff be compliant with our Mission Statement and Strategic Plans and Goals whenever they are representing HSAA.

Approved May 2018
Amended May 2021

HSAА WILL:

Advocate for adequate paid sick days for all working Albertans. These days are guaranteed, accessible, and at their regular rate of pay.

Because (rationale):

Many workers in Alberta do not have access to paid sick days including HSAА members who are employed in casual positions.

Paid sick days ensure workers can prioritize health without comprising financial stability.

Paid sick days allow the individual to seek early treatment for illness while also protecting colleagues and the public from communicable illnesses.

Working while unwell can lead to more severe health outcomes for the individual and increase the impact on the health system.

- **Paid:** Fully paid at the regular rate of pay to ensure workers can protect themselves and their colleagues without impacting their finances.
- **Universal:** Available to all workers regardless of workplace size, employment status, type of work, or immigration status. Legislated, with no exemptions.
- **Adequate:** 12 paid sick days guaranteed on a permanent and annual basis.
- **Accessible:** No worker must jump through unnecessary hoops with employers to take a sick day, including physical and mental health.

Approved May 2023 Convention

HSAA will:

Consider the impact of the workplace and working conditions on the overall physical and mental health of workers when negotiating collective agreements and in other advocacy efforts with employers; and

Work to advance total worker health initiatives by advocating for changes to employment standards, WCB and OHS legislation that recognize the link between workplace factors and worker illness.

Rationale:

Work is a social determinant of health; job-related factors such as wages, hours of work, workload and stress levels, interactions with coworkers, access to leave and healthful workplaces all can have an important impact on the well-being of workers, their families and their communities and

Scientific evidence shows that risk factors in the workplace can contribute to health problems previously considered unrelated to work including obesity, sleep disorders, cardiovascular disease, mental health and other health conditions and

The total worker health approach focuses on how environmental workplace factors can both mitigate and enhance overall worker health beyond traditional workplace health and safety concerns.

Approved 2021 Convention

HSAA will insist that, as a first step, all levels of government fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action with particular attention on monitoring, promoting, and supporting the immediate completion to those dealing with child welfare, education, health, and justice; and

HSAA will demand that federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments immediately begin working to ensure every Indigenous community has reliable access to safe drinking water; and

HSAA will continue to support the work of the Native Women's Association of Canada on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) to facilitate healing and end violence against Indigenous women; and

HSAA will encourage governments to engage in meaningful dialogue and take purposeful action to revisit Treaty relationships, letting the spirit and intent of international relations that First Nations originally entered into these contracts become the foundation of restoring fairness and equitability through sharing land and resources between Indigenous and settler peoples.

Rationale:

Since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released their findings in December 2015 and 94 Calls to Action regarding reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples of Canada; and

For Canadians of all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together and that there can be no truth without discussing Treaty and land; and

True reconciliation goes beyond recognizing the abuses inflicted by the residential school system and healing survivor trauma; it acknowledges the ongoing nature and impact of colonialism and actively works to remove it; and

Intergenerational trauma caused by colonialism, current policies, and the residential school system is continuing to affect Indigenous people; and

Canadians must commit to an ongoing process of reconciliation that include conversations about Treaty obligations and responsibilities; and

Only with all of us working together will we be able to restore, repair, and move forward in the healing process.

Board Approved June 2019
Amended May 2021

HSAA will commit to fighting for a living wage for all Albertan's including advocating for a living wage for young workers.

HSAA will be public in declaring our opposition to precarious employment and other forms of exploitive labour practices.

HSAA will continue to advocate on behalf of young workers to establish acceptable health and safety standards within the workplace.

Rationale:

Young workers are the future and should be empowered to continue the advocacy of the union with support from union leadership at all levels.

HSAA's mission statement says that we will enhance the quality of life of its members and society.

Each day in Canada, multiple Young Workers are injured on the job. Statistics have shown that new workers have a higher rate of injury across multiple occupations, especially during the first six months of employment.

Amended, May 2021 Convention

Precarious Work: Non-standard or temporary employment that may be poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and unable to support a household.

HSAA will continue to lobby for improved public services.

HSAA will educate our members and Albertans on the critical role that public services play in our economy and in communities.

Rationale:

Public services are integral in a healthy and fair society.

Public services provide essential services when Albertans need them most.

An effective public service strengthens the economy and empowers government to make positive changes in society.

Privatization of public services leads to higher costs, inequitable and ineffectively triaged services for the public.

Privatization takes money out of communities making those funds unavailable for use to improve public services and jeopardizes workers' wages and benefits.

Approved May 2019
Amended May 2023 Convention

HSAA will actively campaign and advocate to ensure proper funding of healthcare and that every healthcare dollar is directed to patient care through public services.

HSAA will educate our members and Albertans on the benefits of public delivery of health care and the effect of for-profit care on our healthcare system and healthcare professionals.

Rationale:

Properly funded universal public healthcare delivery improves the lives of both patients and health-care workers.

Public Healthcare delivery allows for equal access to services and improved health outcomes for patients creating a more just and equitable society.

Healthcare workers are provided with increased job security, improved safety, more opportunities for growth, and they benefit from public accountability of healthcare policy.

No one should profit from someone being sick.

The need to generate profit increases the cost of healthcare delivery, and our members will not benefit. Instead of investing in our healthcare workers, improving working conditions and paying them fairly, public money is directed to the profits of shareholders.

For-profit healthcare will exasperate the staffing shortages in healthcare by spreading resources even further.

We all deserve access to top-quality care regardless of how much money we have in our bank account. When profit is the bottom line, user-fees and queue-jumping fees create inequalities in our healthcare system.

Approved May 2023 Convention

HSAA WILL advocate for the inclusion of dental coverage in the Canadian public health care system.

Rationale:

Almost half of all Canadians without dental insurance – commonly, new Canadians, the elderly, people working in insecure jobs and for low wages, and their children – avoid visiting a dentist due to costs.

High costs lead up to six million Canadians not receiving dental care every year.

Canadians with difficulty accessing dental care end up with the highest levels of gum disease, which in turn can increase their risk for general health problems, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Lack of preventative dental care leads to increased visits to already crowded emergency rooms and physician offices, and causes people to miss work, school and other activities.

Canada actually provides less publicly funded dental care than the United States, and

Amongst developed nations, Canada is among the lowest funders of dental health care programs.

Approved May 2019

HSA will support and advocate for the investment in and expansion of Canada's Medicare umbrella to include a national, comprehensive, single payer pharmacare program.

Rationale:

All Canadians should have equitable access to medically necessary prescription drugs and no Canadian should be financially disadvantaged by their health needs.

One in ten Canadians do not take their medicines as prescribed because of costs, affecting nearly one in four Canadian households.

Prescription drug costs are one of the fastest growing costs for Canadians and for our provincial health budgets.

By helping reduce problems of medicine underuse, overuse, and misuse, universal pharmacare could dramatically improve patient health while saving the health care system billions per year.

Approved May 2019

HSAA WILL strongly oppose any attempt to bring American style Right-to-Work legislation to Alberta.

Rationale:

Right-to-Work laws undermine a worker's rights to have proper representation when it comes to collective bargaining and impair working people from having a good standard of living; and

Right-to-Work laws restrict a unions ability to fulfill their legislative responsibility of representing all workers in a bargaining unit; and

American states with Right-to-Work laws have seen large increases in inequality and a decline in good jobs

Right-to-work legislation is not about choice for working people, its about undermining the voices of labour and political opposition

Approved May 2019

HSAA will support the work of the Workplace Health, Safety and Wellness committee and staff in their work to achieve improvements in provincial health and safety legislation related to PTSD and other mental injuries; and

HSAA will support the efforts of our member representatives on their joint worksite health & safety committees to improve worksite safety and prevention policies; and

HSAA will lobby for enhanced mental injury services delivery and develop workplace supports and training in the areas of mental health and mental injury.

HSAA will ensure that all Collective Bargaining Committees will advance the implementation of contract language that addresses the need to prevent workplace mental injury and supports workers who suffer from workplace mental injury; and

HSAA will challenge the stigma around mental health issues by supporting efforts to educate members and the public about mental health injury and the need to protect and support workers who are at risk.

Rationale:

Any worker can face a situation that leaves them suffering from mental injury, and this can lead to mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

Prevention and support for workers experiencing mental injury are critical, much in the same way as we ensure that workers physically injured on the job are cared for and supported; and

It is important that comprehensive presumptive legislation is passed so that all workers who have suffered a mental injury are not placed in a situation where they face an undue burden; and

It is also important that all workers are covered and that it is recognized that the mental injury can be both cumulative or from a single traumatic incident; and

The stigma associated with mental health issues often prevents workers from accessing the treatment they require. It is important that we provide education and assistance to fight the stigma and better facilitate the supports workers need to access appropriate assistance when they have experienced a mental injury.

Approved May 2019

HSAA will coordinate training for stewards, health and safety representatives, and staff on domestic and intimate partner violence at work and

HSAA will continue to work to develop collective bargaining language for dedicated paid domestic and intimate partner violence leave, workplace supports and training and workplace safety policies and

HSAA will provide support to organizations that assist people escaping domestic and intimate partner violence.

HSAA will continue to lobby all levels of government to provide services and funding to ensure shelters and transition houses have appropriate funding, and that affordable housing and community supports are available for people escaping domestic and intimate partner violence.

Rationale:

We do not yet have enough members and staff trained at a level to appropriately provide assistance to and advocate on behalf of members experiencing domestic violence at work; and

The leave currently offered for workers escaping domestic violence is unpaid, making it inaccessible to many; and

Domestic violence continues to threaten tens of thousands of Albertans each year, primarily women and children; and

Thousands of women and children continue to be turned away from emergency shelter every year due to a lack of capacity.

Approved May 2019

HSAA WILL call on the provincial and federal governments to legislate a comprehensive ban on any payments blood-products; and

HSAA WILL support the passage of Senate Bill S-252, the *Voluntary Blood Donation Act*, which would ban payments for blood and blood products; and

HSAA WILL support the expansion of plasma collection by the public, voluntary blood donation system that is managed by Canadian Blood Services on behalf of all Canadians.

Rationale:

The clearest conclusions of the Krever Inquiry into the tainted-blood scandal in Canada was that the best way to protect Canadians is a non-profit, volunteer-based blood system and the World Health Organization has come to the same conclusion; and

For-profit corporations have been granted licenses to operate by Health Canada in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, which undermines the voluntary public blood systems in those provinces; and

Because of Bill 204, *Voluntary Blood Donations Repeal Act* brought forward by the UCP government MLA Tany Yao which repealed Alberta Bill 3, *Voluntary Blood Donations Act*; and

Until we have federal legislation banning paid plasma across Canada, the potential threats to our public system and the health of Canadians, identified by the Krever Inquiry, remain serious.

Approved June 2020
Amended May 2021

HSAA acknowledges systemic racism exists and societal change is needed.

HSAA condemns and opposes racism in any form.

HSAA condemns and opposes all actions undertaken, and statements made, that further or normalize racism.

HSAA advocates for inclusive communities, workplaces, and terms and conditions of employment.

HSAA will ensure its structures and policies promote inclusion and diversity.

RATIONALE:

All people should be able to live in any community without discrimination based on race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, or shared culture.

Systemic racism is entrenched in our society. Acknowledgement of systemic racism is the first step towards ending it.

Approved May 2021