

HSAS Membership Survey 2011

In an effort to determine the views of HSAS members, an online survey was conducted between October 19 and October 31, 2011. Approximately 1000 HSAS members opened, and 546 members completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 16.3% of all members. This participation rate led to a margin of error of +/- 3.8% to a 90% confidence level.

Satisfaction of Overall Representation

32.4 % of HSAS respondents rated their satisfaction level at high (8 – 10), 49.8 % rated their satisfaction level at medium (4-7), and 17.4% rated their satisfaction level at low (1-3).

Dissatisfaction with overall representation focused on a perceived lack of two-way communication between leadership and membership, dissatisfaction with the length of the last contract negotiations and the lack of regular updates, especially early in the process. Many requested that regular updates be provided even if there was nothing new to report.

Some dissatisfaction in contract outcomes was expressed in comparisons with fellow members, not with professionals represented by other unions. These members concluded that their profession was not well represented on the Negotiating Committee. Other members suggested that electronic communication needs to bolster personal communication, not replace it and suggested that face-to-face meetings were still required.

With respect to the strike itself, there was some dissatisfaction with the nature of the strike (i.e. rotating strikes as opposed to an all-out general strike).

Members did not feel that they understood the HSAS strategy and that they were not a part of developing the strategy. Many respondents indicated they did not understand the realities of job action under *Essential Services* legislation. Members who were designated as “essential” felt out of the loop, as they were not involved in job action meetings.

Internal Communications

On the subject of Internal Communications, 55.5% of the members had a satisfaction level of high (8-10) while 33.5% expressed a medium (4-7) satisfaction level, with 10.3% having a low (1-3) satisfaction level.

Member comments noted that during job action it is critical to keep all members equally informed including those deemed “essential”. This included inviting all members to job action meetings so that they could understand who would be on the picket line and why. They requested that all members be informed by home email, website, and Facebook prior to informing the news media.

Although many members see improved communication via email, website and Facebook as additions to personal communication, they believe it should never be a replacement for face-to-face communications.

External Communications

With respect to this category, 40.1 % of the members rated satisfaction at high (8-10), 49.6% rate their satisfaction level at medium (4-7), and 9 % at low (1-3).

Many members spoke about creating an increased profile for HSAS consisting of:

1. More TV advertising; more newspaper and billboard advertising
2. More public statements and news conferences
3. Highlighting of more of the unions 30+ professions
4. Improving external communication via an ongoing effort that is focused on service and not just on collective bargaining

Satisfaction with Government Relationship

18.3% responded as don't know or did not answer this question. In this category, 13.4 % of members rated satisfaction at high (8-10), 48.9% rated satisfaction at medium (4-7), and 19.4 %rated their satisfaction with the relationship between HSAS and the government at low (1-3).

In this area, members blame government for the current relationship difficulty. They believe that the Government doesn't realize or understand the importance of the specialized health care professionals represented by HSAS. Although some argued for HSAS to "get along", the majority argued for a "tougher stand" on health care issues. The overall belief is that HSAS needs to increase its standing with the public in order to put increased pressure on the government. Some members called for Health Sciences to publicly urge an early start to the next round of contract negotiations and to set a public goal to complete a new contract before the expiry of the current contract.

Satisfaction with Labour Relations Officers (LRO)

In the satisfaction with Labour Relations Officers (LRO) category, 28.2% of the respondents rated their satisfaction at high (8-10), 29.1% rated satisfaction at medium (8-10), while 14.8% rated satisfaction at low (1-3). 27.9% were in the "Don't know/Refused" group.

Importance of Labour Relations Service

In terms of the Importance of the Labour Relations Service, an 80% majority of the members rated service importance at high (8-10), 9.3% rated it at medium (4-7) and 0.1% rated the importance of service at low (1-3), while 10.6% didn't know or did not answer this question.

Comments from the membership revealed that some members did not know that this service was available or did not know their LRO. Additional questions determined that one third could not name their LRO. There were a number of complaints about slow response to phone calls or emails. Some members argue that the LROs are "too close to management", while other find the LROs to be "too confrontational".

Members raised questions such as:

1. How often are members informed about the LROs and the services that can be expected as a HSAS member?
2. What training do the LROs have and what is the continuing education plan for LROs?
3. How often are LROs required to visit each workplace to meet with members?
4. In the absence of shop stewards, what is the ideal level of LRO coverage?

There was a strong correlation between members' overall satisfaction with Health Sciences and members' satisfaction with the LRO function. The survey findings confirmed that members take the labour relations service seriously and that their perception of its performance is critical to their overall rating of the union.

Satisfaction with Support Staff

The respondents rating for satisfaction with Regina Support Staff was 30.6% at high (8-10), 15.4% at medium (4-7) and 1.6% at low (1-3). 52.4% of those who responded either did not know or did not respond to these questions.

The satisfaction with Saskatoon Support Staff rating was similar with 30.6% at high (8-10), 10.3% at medium (4-7), and 1.5% at low (1-3). 57.6% of the respondents either did not know or did not answer the questions in this category.

Importance of Effective Support Staff

64.3% rated the Importance of Effective Support Staff as high (8-10), 20.5% at medium (4-7), with 2% at a low (1-3) rating, while 13.2% of respondents were in the "Don't know/Refused" section.

More than half of the respondents chose not to provide an opinion on either Regina or Saskatoon Support staff; eight in ten could not name the support staff they are most often in contact with. Some respondents identified the difficulty in reaching Regina office support staff in the months prior to the October survey. Overall, the membership indicated they want to deal with a real person, and not leave voice messages. 64% rated efficient support staff as very high.

Satisfaction with Website

58.8% of the respondents rated their satisfaction with the website at high (8-10), 33.5% at medium (4-7), and 2.9% at low (1-3).

Frequency of Website Visits

The survey results show that 42.5% of the respondents visit the website monthly, 20.7% weekly, 1.5% daily, and 28.7% answered "Other", while 1.5% don't know or did not answer these questions.

Importance of Effective Website

Respondents rated the importance of an effective website high, with 73.8% rating it (8-10), 20.1% at medium (4-7), and 3.5% at Low (1-3).

Satisfaction with Dispatches Newsletter

The respondents also rated their satisfaction the Dispatches Newsletter with the result that 37% rated satisfaction at high (8-10), 31.1% at medium (4-7), and 6.6% at low (1-3). The “Don’t know/Refused” group represented 25.3% of the respondents.

Importance of Online Newsletter

In this category of the survey 48.8% rated the importance of the newsletter as high (8-10), 34.2% rated it at medium (4-7), and 8.4% at low (1-3).

Membership comments included complaints that the website was not updated often enough during the contract dispute. Some respondents complained about hearing their job action information from the media before being informed by the union via email, website or Facebook. Some members would like to have a members-only section on the website.

The majority of the respondents accepted the need to increase and improve website communications. Although nearly one third visited the website often during negotiations, they see no need to do so now. Nearly three quarters rate the importance of an effective website highly.

The respondents would like to see the Dispatches Newsletter replaced by regular updates on the website and Facebook page. Some were critical of the Dispatches content with some finding it too “political” and some looking for more “professional” information. In general it was found to be outdated by the time it was published and some said the union should “stop mailing the newsletter”.

Satisfaction with Executive Officers

The membership satisfaction with Executive Officers was rated high (8-10) by 44.5% of the respondents, medium (4-7) by 29.9% of the respondents and low (1-3) by 9% of the respondents; 16.6% responded that they didn’t know or refuse to answer this question.

Comments included the perception that there was a lack of face-to-face communications between Executive Officers and the membership. The membership asked for more regular “reports” from Executive Officers to the member of the work of the executive. Members asked for more meetings where Executive Officers would “listen” to workplace concerns, especially in non-bargaining years.

Satisfaction with Executive Council

The survey results in this category were high (8-10) at 39.6%, medium (4-7) at 27.5%, and low (1-3) at 7.1%, with 25.8% in the “Don’t know/Refused” group.

Membership comments included complaints that they don’t know what their elected representative is doing on Executive Council because of a lack of regular reports from their representative on the work of the Council, and how that work relates to them. They would like their representative to meet with the members of their profession during the year and want opportunities for two-way communication.

Regional Council Membership

The HSAS has 5 Regional Councils and when asked to identify the regional council to which the respondents belong 41.2% said they didn’t know or refused to answer this question, 22.2% said they did not belong to a Regional Council and 12.6% answered “Other” as their Regional Council.

Satisfaction with Regional Council

Satisfaction was rated as high (8-10) by 37%, medium (4-7) by 25.5%, and low (1-3) by 5.5%. The “Don’t know/Refused” group represented 32% of respondents.

More than 1 of every 4 respondents could not name their Regional Council. Members would like to see better communication to the membership of the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Councils, and said that Regional Council meetings need to be better advertised, with meaningful agendas, in order for members to want to travel long distances to attend.

Satisfaction with Negotiating Committee

The satisfaction with the Negotiating Committee rating was generally strong with 41.9% at high (8-10), 37.2% at medium (4-7), and 17.2% at low (1-3).

Many felt that the job action was largely ineffective and many expressed unhappiness with their workplace wage relationships with other members of Health Sciences. There was a desire for more face-to-face communications before and during negotiations, in addition to the increased electronic communications.

It was requested that Committee membership be expanded to include representation from more professional groups. If this was not possible or workable, members want to know how to ensure that these groups feel well-represented and heard. Respondents requested face-to-face meetings with membership in advance of the next round in addition to surveys on important issues and membership meetings during the next round of bargaining as a tool to update members.

Conclusion and Initiatives

In an effort to determine the views of HSAS members, an online survey was conducted between October 19 and October 31, 2011. Your Health Sciences Executive Council authorized this survey in order to assess how you, as Health Sciences members, feel about the service provided to you.

The survey touched on many more areas than just negotiations. It provided your Council with information that can be tracked annually and measured. Your Council's goal is to provide better communications, assistance and representation for all Health Sciences members. I

Better, more frequent communication was one of the major concerns identified by members as being important. As a result, HSAS is excited to announce that we will be hosting 2 major communication events this year:

- "Town Hall" Meetings province-wide this Spring to give all members a chance to attend, speak, and bring forward your thoughts.
- Bargaining Conference this Fall

A second initiative already underway to address our communications was the addition of a Labour Relations Officer out of the Saskatoon office. Russell Dixon started work on January 30, 2012. Kate Robinson, whose files will be taken over by Russell, will continue to represent Nipawin EMS, as they work towards a new contract, and will assist the Negotiating Committee and Communications Committee to respond more fully to the challenges of the upcoming year.

More details regarding these initiatives will be communicated in the coming months.

Health Sciences Executive Council