

Resolution 24 from the 2013 HSA Annual Convention instructed the union to investigate the possibility of health science professionals in non-union workplaces to join HSA and report back. The Resolutions Committee had made a recommendation of non-concurrence with the resolution. The resolution was not debated at convention because of a lack of time, and referred to the Board of Directors for decision. The Board of Directors defeated the motion of non-concurrence, and the resolution passed.

This paper explores some strategies in place in a variety of jurisdictions. It does not make any recommendations.

Resolution 24:

Whereas: There are health science professionals (HSPs) who work in non-union workplaces and recognize the importance and value of unions; and

Whereas: The labour movement places a high priority on organizing unorganized workers; and

Whereas: The new Canadian Auto Workers-Communication, Energy Paperworkers (CAW-CEP) merged union is exploring new ways of organizing so that individuals can join a union.

Therefore be it resolved: That the Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) investigate allowing health science professionals in non-union workplaces to join HSA and report back to the membership prior to the deadline for resolutions to the 2013 HSA Convention.

HSA - Organizing practice

HSA's practice when we receive enquiries of interest in joining HSA from non-union workers at a worksite is to meet with them, gauge the level of interest and support at the worksite, and conduct an organizing campaign. Through an organizing campaign, HSA provides information and advice to members about the benefits of working with the protections a collective agreement provides. Members who are successfully organized do not pay dues until a first collective agreement is in place. If they are varied into an existing collective agreement, then dues are paid from the time they are covered by the collective agreement.

Calls from workers interested in unionizing are referred by agreement among the BC Federation of Labour affiliates to the most appropriate union for that group.

Workers who seek to join HSA for access to collective benefits may be referred to the NUPGE associate membership program.

NUPGE – Associate membership

HSA's national union, NUPGE, has an associated membership program.

Traditional workplaces are becoming harder and harder to come by. More and more people are working serial contracts, are self-employed or don't see an office building once a month let alone every day. This doesn't even take into account the thousands of women and men who are on leave from work, retired or struggling to find a new job.

Not only are people feeling isolated or disconnected from the workplace but many are missing out on some of the benefits that others still enjoy. Group health plans, networking and professional advice are a few of the benefits missing from their lives.

The National Union of Public and General Employees designed the Associate Member Program to help people access many of these missing benefits. The program allows you to become or remain part of a shared community of interest, access to research resources, and receive many benefits people might otherwise have access to in a traditional workplace.

There is currently no cost to join, as the usual membership fee of \$25 is currently being waived. Benefits available are travel insurance, including medical insurance, home and auto insurance, collective purchasing, and public policy research.

UNIFOR – Community Chapters

When the new union, UNIFOR, was formed in September 2013, delegates approved a discussion paper at the founding convention, and endorsed the principle of Community Chapters, "a new form of union membership that aims to reach out to groups of workers that are generally excluded from union membership."

There are three basic criteria for determining if a group is eligible to create a UNIFOR Community Chapter.

- **Critical mass:** The potential Community Chapter must show the commitment of a sufficient number of dedicated and active members.
- **Action plan:** The potential Community Chapter must submit a clear strategy for how they will use the collective power of the union to better their conditions and win victories from employers, governments, or other campaign targets.
- **Union principles:** The potential Community Chapter members must support the founding principles of UNIFOR and adhere to the UNIFOR Constitution.

Community Chapters must find a UNIFOR local union that is willing to open its membership by creating a Community Chapter. The local union must make bylaw changes to allow for the Community Chapter, and the Community Chapter must also constitute itself through the creation of a structure, bylaws, etc. There is a dues structure in place, and set by the National Executive Board of UNIFOR. Currently, the dues of unwaged members are set at \$5 per month, and waged members at \$10 per month. Dues are collected through a centralized infrastructure organized and operated by the national union. At the

outset, as the Community Chapters project develops, and new structures for their participation in the broader union are developed, each Community Chapter will receive back 100% of the dues collected.

At the time of writing, there are two Community Chapters of UNIFOR that HSA is aware of: a freelance media workers union, and Unifaith, a group of Toronto-area United Church ministers, who have been working for many years to form a collective group to advocate for ministers around issues of safety and job security, including protection from workplace violence and harassment.

The Canadian Freelance Union was affiliated to the CEP before the formation of UNIFOR. Annual dues are \$125, and the core services the union provides to members (unsalaried freelance media workers) are: press cards, access to a benefits plan, contract advice, and grievance support (CFU will intervene with clients and provide advice and support around taking legal action, or broader collective action against a client).

BC Federation of Labour – Support for non-union workers

For the past decade, the BC Federation of Labour has done considerable outreach and organizing among non-union workers, making important gains for working people. As an affiliate, HSA has supported this important and continuing commitment to working people who are not union members.

The BC Fed's Employee Action and Rights Network (EARN) actively campaigns on issues, and provides support to unorganized workers.

Some highlights of the BC Fed's continuing work includes Grant's Law for protections for people who work alone, the long-fought for increase to the minimum wage, and the "Bad Boss" contest, which highlights the practices of poor employers. Grant's Law has since been weakened by the Liberal government, and EARN continues to campaign for changes.

BCGEU – Associate membership

The BCGEU has a special associate membership program for child care workers. This is a program to involve non-union child care workers in a broader movement to speak out on child care issues, and offers benefits to members:

- Breaks on Vancity Credit Union services
- Savings at Park 'N Fly locations across the country
- WE Travel discounts
- WE Insurance Services discounts, including on home and auto insurance, life insurance, group benefits, and commercial insurance
- WE Tax Services - union-owned,
- Dueck on Marine - Vehicle lease or purchase incentive program, and
- BCGEU Mastercard - preferred credit card offer

Working America: AFL-CIO – American Federation of Labour – Congress of Independent Organizations (USA)

Working America is a program on the AFL CIO aimed at bringing working people together. It is designed to bring working people together to fight for needs with strength in numbers, having a bigger impact on important decisions.

“That’s what Working America does every day. We talk to thousands of people every week and find out what matters to working people. We educate, engage and mobilize our members to get involved and make a difference. Things are tough, but we’re making progress: Working America has helped raise the minimum wage, save schools from privatization and keep laws that take away workers’ rights from passing. Together, we win victories that help real people lead better lives.

As a member of Working America, you also have access to research, tools and assistance to help you get ahead, as well as benefits like a prepaid debit card, credit and budget counseling, and discounts on things like car rentals, cell phone service and auto insurance through our Union Plus benefits program.

When you’re part of Working America, you’re part of the fastest-growing organization for working people in the country, and you’re helping to restore the balance.”

- Source: <http://workingamerica.org/membership/benefits>

The information provided above is intended to inform members about the options for associate membership based on the experience of other unions and to better understand the potential cost and resources involved. The creation of associate memberships would require a motion passed by the Board of Directors or a resolution passed by delegates to Convention.