



Bargaining Update – March 21, 2017

Yesterday, the Health Care Council of Unions, the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and the IWK Health Centre completed a round of mediation, at the request of the Labour Board, which has resulted in an agreement to re-start bargaining toward a new collective agreement.

The Council of Unions (made up of NSGEU, Unifor, CUPE and NSNU health care workers across the province) filed a complaint with the Labour Board in January because of the IWK and NSHA's failure to tell the unions what new sick leave plan they are proposing, as well as what new health and dental benefits plan they are proposing.

Prior to our complaint, the employers filed a complaint against the Council of Unions for failing to bargain. The Council of Unions took the position that it was always willing to bargain, but the employers were acting in bad faith by refusing to tell the Council what it proposed on these two key provisions.

The Council of Unions demonstrated its desire to bargain on Friday by immediately identifying and agreeing to 26 bargaining dates that begin on April 10 and continue through to November 16.

Prior to the mediation, the Labour Board chair left the Council with the clear impression that she could not force the employers to table the missing proposals. This left the Council with only the ability to persuade the employer's negotiators to table their proposals on two crucial benefits for members. The Council pointed out that it was very difficult to negotiate without knowing the employers' full proposals. The employers still refused.

However, during the complaint process the employer gave the Council of Unions key information about their sick leave proposal. The employers' left the unions to understand that the employer's sick leave proposal would be very badly received by our members, which is the reason why they did not intend to table it until the end of the process.

The employers also made it clear that they want complete control of the health and dental benefits plans, so they can make any unilateral changes to benefits that they wish.

This is a unique and challenging round of collective bargaining. The parties are in a new bargaining relationship that was imposed by legislation. A single collective agreement must be drafted to replace agreements for four different unions that are, in many instances, distinctly different.

We now know that the NSHA and IWK are attempting to use this round to seize unilateral control of the health and dental benefits for members and attack sick leave plans.

These attempted clawbacks of members' rights are on top of government legislation (Bill 148) that will freeze wages for two years, offer minimal increases after the two-year period, and freeze members retirement allowances back to April 2015.

The Council of Unions will be looking for the support from members across the province as we bargain with employers who are intent on attacking your key benefits. We will keep you updated as bargaining progresses.

The Health Care Council of Unions bargaining committee is made up of six members from NSGEU, three from CUPE and one from Unifor. The NSNU is also part of the Health Care Council.

For more bargaining updates and information about the health care bargaining council, please visit our website at 8920.cupe.ca/news.

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