



Dear Members,

The NSHA and IWK are stalling Health Care bargaining, frustrating your bargaining committee's ability to reach an agreement on your behalf. As well, the NSHA and IWK have proposed a number of significant clawbacks that will have serious negative impacts on health care members.

The employers are proposing a number of clawbacks including the following:

- NSHA and IWK want to expand the distance that people who work outside HRM can be forced to be re-assigned from 75 kilometers to 125 kilometers;
- NSHA and IWK want to reduce the overtime premium for short-notice shift change from 48 hours to 24 hours. So rather than the employer incurring overtime if they give less than two days notice, they would incur overtime if they give less than one day's notice of a shift change;
- NSHA and IWK are trying to limit when they pay overtime for any short-notice shift change by proposing language that says in order to get overtime, your manager would have to change **both** the start and end time of your shift. You currently get overtime if your manager changes **either** the start or end time of a shift with less than 48-hours notice;
- NSHA and IWK want to give employees the right to opt out of overtime premiums that arise from short-notice shift change. This would allow some managers to pressure staff to agree not to take overtime premiums;
- The IWK has proposed language that would significantly weaken the current classification language. This language has been in place for decades at the IWK and has been used by employees whose jobs are substantially altered, or changed in any significant way, to seek an independent assessment of whether the employees should receive a corresponding pay increase;
- NSHA and IWK want to create new restricted postings which would force new hires to stay in a job for up to two years;
- NSHA and IWK want to create new multi-site postings which would require new hires to work at more than one work area and that those work areas could be up to 50 kilometers apart in HRM and up to 125 kilometers apart in the rest of the province;
- NSHA and IWK want to give management the right to determine whether to allow casuals the right to be unavailable for work for a specific period of time;
- IWK wants to reduce pay for its EIBI Clinical Interventionists SLP and PIO current employees at their current rate. That means existing employees would keep their current rate and all new hires would be reduced;
- NSHA and IWK want to eliminate the current right of women on pregnancy leave to earn limited amounts of service that can go toward vacation accrual.

Your bargaining committee **cannot** agree to these types of proposals as they would clearly erode significant rights that you currently have. In addition, the employers have refused to provide bargaining dates to replace those cancelled due to the third wave of the pandemic.

Background

The employers (NSHA and the IWK) and the Council of Unions (consisting of NSGEU, CUPE and Unifor members from across Nova Scotia) exchanged proposals on April 15th and then had a day of bargaining on April 21st.

Due to the pandemic, the employers cancelled seven days of bargaining in April and May. While the Council of Unions understood the need to postpone dates, it argued the employers should set new

dates which could be postponed if required. After waiting two weeks for the employers to provide dates, the Council decided to refer stalled bargaining to conciliation.

A Conciliation Officer, an independent person appointed by the Province to assist the parties in bargaining, held a meeting with employer and council representatives in mid-May. The Conciliation Officer set dates for conciliation (June 28th, 29th and 30th). He also asked the parties to identify other dates earlier in June for the continuation of normal bargaining.

Despite repeated efforts over three weeks by the Council to set dates, the employers have simply refused to provide further dates.

By continuing to refuse to confirm bargaining dates, the employer has completely stalled the process. And while wage discussions have taken place, neither side has yet tabled their wage proposal. The only opportunity for the Council to advance bargaining now appears to be during the conciliation dates set for late June.

The Health Care Bargaining Council represents more than 7,000 health care workers across Nova Scotia. The Council of Unions is asking the employers to recognize your outstanding public service and personal sacrifice over the past year-and-a-half by getting back to the table and negotiating.

The Council has also informed the employers that due to seven years of wage austerity from the provincial Liberal government, wages for health care workers have fallen below where they should in comparison to other provinces. Historically, when arbitrators have considered wage increases for health care workers in this province, they have ruled that you should generally have the highest wages in Atlantic Canada. This tends to also place our wages in the middle of the Canadian “pack.”

However, recent wage settlements in other provinces have left the vast majority of the wages for Nova Scotia health care workers below either Newfoundland or PEI, and sometimes below both. **By extension, this means for many of you, your wages have fallen to among the lowest in the country.**

Your bargaining committee is eager to get back to the table to negotiate a fair rate for health care workers that recognizes your significant contributions.

As we head into conciliation and the next steps of bargaining, the bargaining committee may approach the membership and ask for a strike vote

If you have any questions or concerns about the bargaining process, please contact a member of your bargaining committee:

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