



Health Care Bargaining Unit Notice February 23, 2023

The Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions today reached an agreement with Nova Scotia Health and the IWK, which will see wages for members of the healthcare bargaining unit adjusted upward by one per cent to match more recent public sector settlements. This settlement was reached outside of normal bargaining. It will include retroactive pay as outlined below.

The agreement became necessary because the Health Care Council concluded its collective bargaining in 2021, before other public sector locals and before the full impact of inflation was known. Subsequent negotiations for other public sector groups addressed some of the impact from growing inflation. This resulted in higher pay increases than healthcare was able to achieve at the table. Today's new agreement fixes that difference.

Background

The Healthcare Council of Unions settled its collective agreement in June of 2021. That deal followed the NSTU pattern of a 1.5% economic adjustment in November 1, 2020 and 1.5% on November 1 of 2021. The Council was then able to negotiate a combined 2.5% economic adjustment for 2022. The first 1.5% applied November 1, 2022, the last 1% was to apply October 31, 2023.

Note; those health care bargaining unit members in public health, addictions services, and continuing care in the Eastern, Western, and Northern Zones of the NSH receive their adjustments on April 1, 2021 (1.5%), April 1, 2022 (1.5%), April 1, 2023 (1.5%) and March 31, 2024 (1%).

This deal was among the best settlements in Canada for healthcare at the time. However, it was made just as inflation was starting to show in month-over-month CPI statistics and inflation is notoriously difficult to predict.

As we all now know, inflation continued to grow throughout 2021. Even before the end of the year, it became clear that the 2.5% adjustment for Health Care for 2022 would not be enough to offset 2021 inflation.

In the spring of 2022, NSGEU decided to attempt to break the established public sector wage pattern and close the gap on inflation by taking its Civil Service bargaining unit to arbitration. At arbitration, the Union sought greater economic adjustments for Civil Service.

NSGEU hired Dalhousie Economist Dr. Casey Warman to demonstrate the effects of inflation on salaries. Dr. Warman showed that inflation in Nova Scotia was 4.1 % in 2021 and warranted a higher raise than the combined 2.5 % provided in the Health Care pattern.

On June 8, 2022, Arbitrator Susan Ashley's award changed the public sector pattern by increasing the amount in the third year of the Civil Service deal to 3% on the first day of the last year and 0.5% on the last day. The award kept the same 1.5% and 1.5% for the first two years.

Although the first two years of the wage pattern remained at 1.5% respectively, the third year saw an overall increase of 1% over the existing pattern.

Other public sector agreements in the province began to follow the new Civil Service pattern.

As a result, members in the health care bargaining unit fell short of what was later to become the new pattern.

The Lead Negotiator of The Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions held discussions with government about this problem over the last number of weeks. The Council is pleased to report that the provincial government, NSH and the IWK have now agreed that members in the Health Care bargaining unit will have their wages adjusted to match the Civil Service and Support Services pattern.

For healthcare, that means CUPE 8920 members at NSH in the health care bargaining unit will see an additional 1% added to their pay and will have 0.5% advanced forward by one year.

In addition, any classification whose top step hourly rate is below \$20 an hour before the application of the 3% adjustment, will receive an additional \$1 an hour at each step of the scale which is the piece The Council of Health Support Unions was successful in achieving.

This means the new corrected Healthcare wage pattern will look as follows:

CUPE 8920 Health Care Members at NSH:

- Replace the existing November 1, 2022 1.5% increase with a 3% increase effective the same date;
- Effective November 1, 2022, prior to the application of the 3% mentioned above, for any classification in which the top of the wage scale is less than \$20.00/hr, provide a \$1.00/hr increase to each step of the wage scale; and
- Replace the existing October 21, 2023 1% increase with a 0.5% increase effective the same date.

CUPE 8920 Health Care Members in Addictions:

- Replace the existing April 1, 2023 1.5% increase with a 3% increase effective the same date;
- Effective April 1, 2023, prior to the application of the 3% mentioned above, for any classification in which the top of the wage scale is less than \$20.00/hr, provide a \$1.00/hr increase to each step of the wage scale; and
- Replace the existing March 31, 2024 1% increase with a 0.5% increase effective the same date.

This increase helps address some of the impact inflation has had since the time that the original healthcare agreements were negotiated.

Dr. Warman is working on the inflation numbers for 2022 and an inflation prediction for 2023. The Healthcare Bargaining Council will use Dr. Warman's work to negotiate your next agreement where the Council's objective will be to achieve economic adjustments in the new agreement, that will offset inflation in 2022 and beyond.