



**Health Care Bargaining Unit Update
Essential Services and Bargaining**

Dear CUPE member,

The Council of Health Care Unions and Nova Scotia Health have tried unsuccessfully since October of 2023 to conclude an essential services agreement. The Council has now referred all remaining matters related to the staffing component of the plan to the Labour Board.

A completed essential services plan is required before the Health Care bargaining unit can participate in a legal strike.

“The parties began negotiation of the staffing plan on October 27, 2023,” states the Council of Unions’ letter of referral to the Labour Board. “The Council and the Health Authority met virtually on 11 occasions between November 22, 2023, and June 25, 2024, to review the Employer’s staffing proposals. As well, the parties exchanged documents before and after their meetings. Finally, on August 14 and 15, 2024, the Council and The Health Authority met with Conciliators from the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration to discuss the staffing proposals of the Health Authority. Despite all of this effort, the Council and the Health Authority have been unable to conclude in an agreement on the essential services staffing plan. Approximately 44 percent of the staffing proposal of the Employer remains in dispute.”

The Council of Unions’ application states further that the remaining disputes “can be generally grouped into two areas; disagreements over whether a staffing proposal is necessary to meet the requirements of the Act and disagreements over the data put forward by the Employer to support an essential staffing proposal. In many instances, the methodology employed by the Health Authority to gather staffing data has inflated the regular employee complement resulting in essential staffing proposals that are higher than can be justified by actual staffing levels in the workplace.”

Under legislation, the Labour Board has 30 days to conclude the staffing plan for the parties unless both parties agree to an extension.

The Council and the Health Authority agreed that their Essential Services Agreement would have five components. They are:

1. A Framework document setting out the rules of a strike including a dispute settlement mechanism;
2. Schedule A, identifying the work functions of Employees that constitute essential health or community services;
3. Schedule B, listing the staffing plan for Employees required to perform essential health or community services;
4. Schedule C, providing the method by which Employees will be assigned to perform essential health or community services;
5. Schedule D, regarding the application of Collective Agreement provisions to Employees required to perform essential health or community services.

The parties did agree on most of the five items, but, again, were unable to conclude Schedule B, the staffing plans.

Thursday, August 29th is the last scheduled date for bargaining conciliation between the Council of Unions, the NSH, and the IWK.

Please continue to watch your email for further updates. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Area VP.