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BARGAINING UPDATE

October 14, 2022

Bargaining Update from the Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions.

The bargaining process

There are two levels of bargaining taking place simultaneously, “provincial” and “local”. CUPE’s education locals, known collectively as the Nova Scotia School Board Council of Unions (NSSBCU), represents members working for all seven Regional Centres for Education and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP).

Your CUPE provincial bargaining team is made up of the presidents of eight locals and the CUPE education sector coordinator, and with the assistance of the CUPE Atlantic regional director. The employer’s provincial bargaining team is made up of a human resources representative from each of the eight Regional Centres for Education, as well as one government representative, and one legal counsel (who is also their chief spokesperson).

In January, the parties signed a “memorandum of conditions” for CUPE common table (provincial) bargaining. Any items not agreed to can be addressed in “local” bargaining, but not both.

We have had 2 days of bargaining in January, 2 days in February, 2 days in May, and 2 days in July. We expect to have further bargaining sessions in the fall. Talks are progressing slowly, but we are making progress.

Agreed items

Your provincial bargaining team and the employer’s bargaining team have reached agreements on several items, including health and safety. We conducted a health and safety survey earlier this year. The survey results indicated a strong need for substantial protections and measures at our workplaces. Health and safety were an important priority in this round of bargaining.

We have also won increased protection for employees who are reclassified, more robust training and professional development programming, and the recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a holiday.



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Outstanding Items

Your provincial bargaining team and the employer's bargaining team will be meeting later this fall to bargain on the following items:

A) Wages

Earlier this year, we surveyed you to better understand your opinion and experience of your compensation.

We found that the majority of NSSBCU members earn below Nova Scotia's median wage of \$35,000 per year.

Members' wages have fallen significantly behind inflation: a member earning \$38,000 in 2012 would earn \$43,510 today in 2022. However, if wages had kept up with inflation, the member should be earning \$46,930—that is \$3,420 per year that the member is losing out on.

More than half of our members have had to take other jobs to make ends meet. Ninety-one percent of our members find that wage increases since 2015 have not met their financial needs.

"We are an asset to the schools and families, but we are not provided enough credit or income to live off and be above poverty lines."

"I have a plan to live in a tent behind our school next winter because I can't afford rent anymore."

"I live pay cheque to pay cheque. I am a single mother and still can't afford to buy everything my children need to get through. My bills are behind every month just so I can afford gas to get to and from work. As well, I go without food so my children can eat."

These survey results are worrisome, outrageous and unacceptable. Your provincial bargaining team has proposed a general wage increase for all classifications, as well as an additional wage adjustment for minimum wage and trades classifications.



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B) Employment equity

Employers have a responsibility to ensure that workplaces are inclusive and free from discrimination. Your bargaining team will ensure that the employer incorporates employment equity into the workplace, so that our workplaces are open to everyone in our communities, including groups that have historically been marginalized in the labour market.

C) Snow days

Your provincial bargaining team hopes to ensure that no member suffers a loss of salary if a workplace is closed due to poor weather.

Our greatest strength comes when we move forward together.

We need our locals to keep it up. It's important that bargaining at our local tables keeps pace with what's happening at the provincial bargaining table, so that we can pressure employers on local issues too.

Next bargaining dates

NSSBCU members and CUPE staff are set to return to the provincial table with government representatives later this fall, and each of the eight locals will continue to bargain locally.

Questions?

If you have any questions, please contact your local president for more information.

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