

Community Social Services tentative agreement Frequently asked questions

Q) What happens if the vote is No and the tentative agreement does not ratify?

A) We do not have an agreement - the current collective agreement remains in place. It's highly unlikely anything will happen right away because of the Provincial election. Then if there is a new government they will have financial audits to do first, and other sectors will be looking to get collective agreements; meaning we may not be able to return to the bargaining table until later in the year. All of the gains made at the bargaining table are also at risk, because if there is a no vote, the members have rejected the tentative agreement in its entirety.

Q) Why didn't the bargaining committee wait until after the Provincial election to settle a tentative agreement? Wouldn't we get a better deal with an NDP government?

A) The general election isn't until May 14. That would mean members would be waiting even longer before they would see any money. Besides, there are no guarantees a new government will be able to provide a different bargaining mandate to our members. Incoming governments tend to maintain the same budget the former government passed while the new government assesses the real financial situation. One of the first things an NDP government would have to do is have a third party audit the province's finances.

Many of our members will remember that in 1999 we endured an 11 week strike with a NDP government.

Q) Why isn't there any retroactive pay?

A) Most of the collective agreements negotiated under the government's so-called "co-operative gains" mandate did not receive any retroactive pay. In our case the government again refused to agree to any retroactive pay. The membership had always made it clear that their number one priority was a general wage increase and for the bargaining committee to minimize any losses to our members by fighting off any major concessions.

Q) Why is the wage increase broken apart?

A) Going on strike took some time to get the government's attention, but when it did, we wanted to get as much money in the membership's hands in the remaining year of the agreement. If we had settled for a single wage increase on April 1, 2013, the overall increase of 3% would have been less. In order to get a full 3% which will assist with wage increases into the future, we staggered the increases to 1.5% effective April 1, 2013 and 1.5% effective January 1, 2014.

Q) Is this real money added to the Agreement?

A) Yes, your bargaining committee was able to find several savings that will reduce employer's costs, and some of the money for monetary increases will come from those savings. Other money negotiated that is to be used for wage increases will be funded.

Q) What did we use to “pay” for the increases?

A) Under the government's “cooperative gains” mandate we, like all other sectors, had to identify immediate savings and some long term savings. It's true in the end we had to keep within the government's “cooperative gains” mandate or no Agreement would ever be achievable. However, we fought Employer concessions that would have been harmful to the membership and in order to get the Agreement, agreed to very few changes.

Q) I am a casual employee, why does my percentage for vacations and holidays go down?

A) One of the hardest decisions we were forced to make dealt with us having to find immediate savings in the Collective Agreement. In order to get an Agreement under the government's “cooperative gains” mandate, we reluctantly agreed to see the amount casuals are paid in lieu of vacations and stats reduced to 9.8%. As a comparative, in Community Health, the casuals saw their pay in lieu drop to 9.6%.

Q) Why was there no increase in sick leave days or sick leave pay?

A) Your bargaining committee refused to withdraw proposals on increases to sick leave benefits until the very end. It was a high priority for our members, but in the end, any increases to sick leave benefits would have to come directly from the amount of money identified for wages. Because an increase to sick leave pay by just 1% (from 80% to 81%) was just under \$100,000, any reasonable increase from 80% would have meant that all members would get less wages. As the number one priority from the membership was a general wage increase, we focused on that goal.

Q) Why did we get less than everyone else?

A) We didn't get less. Your bargaining committee gave very little under the government's “co-operative gains” mandate, plus we found savings in a number of creative ways to gain increases and minimize trade-offs.

Q) Why didn't we get the same mileage rate as other sectors?

A) It is true that our rates are lower than other sectors, but we couldn't do a complete catch-up to other sectors under the government's “cooperative gains” mandate. We did, however, increase our amount by 4 cents whereas all other sector increases were limited to 2 cents.

Q) What is a Labour Market Adjustment?

A) CSSEA and the CSSBA have recognized there are labour market pressures on the CSS sector. We agreed to address these pressures by putting some extra money aside for Labour Market Adjustments. The Unions will play a role in the administration of the funds with emphasis on recruitment, retention and those classifications with the greatest labour market pressures.

Q) When does the new Collective Agreement take effect?

A) On the date of Ratification.

Q) We won't be done ratification voting till after April 1. When will we see our increases?

A) If the Agreement is ratified, as soon as the money is released, plus it will be retroactive from April 1, 2013. We anticipate the release of the wages to be no later than the second pay period of May.