



News on BARGAINING



| PLEASE POST |

Date: May 6, 2022

To: All Public Service Members

Re: Public Service Strike vote called by BCGEU Public Service Bargaining Committee

Since the start of negotiations in February, your bargaining committee has been focused on achieving a new collective agreement that includes cost of living protection (COLA) for your wage increases. From day one our objective has been to get a deal at the bargaining table and that hasn't changed. But we are at a point where a strike vote from the bargaining unit is the best path to getting a deal at the table.

How did we get here? COLA protection for wages was the top priority you identified throughout the bargaining preparation process that started last fall. From the proposals submitted by your components to the thousands of responses to bargaining surveys and external polling your message has been clear—COLA protection for wages is the key to a deal this round.

Your bargaining committee took your message to your employer and what we got in response was extremely disappointing. In the three months we spent at the table your employer tabled two wage proposals—neither of which came anywhere close to meeting your needs.

That is why your committee declared impasse and that is why we are conducting a strike vote.

Your bargaining committee is unanimous in the belief that a strong strike vote from you will confirm that your priorities haven't changed, that you stand behind your proposals and that you are willing to fight for what you deserve. A strong strike vote will be a powerful incentive for your employer to come back to the table with a wage proposal that meets your needs so we can get a deal you will ratify.

Your bargaining committee has set a strike vote as follows:

1. **Strike vote starts – Monday May 16**
2. **Deadline for the return of ballots – Friday June 17**
3. **Count and announcement – Wednesday June 22**

The strike vote will be conducted by worksite stewards and contacts. Every worksite will have a contact or a steward available to conduct the strike vote. Strike vote packages with instructions and ballots are being mailed to all stewards and contacts next week. More details to come on this.

Remember, a strong strike vote does not mean that we will go on strike. In fact, the stronger the vote, the less likely we will have to use it. It is important to remember that we are your elected bargaining committee, but this is **YOUR** collective agreement, and you are making the decisions that drive what we do on your behalf.

Essential Services Negotiations Continue

Essential service negotiations take significant time to complete because of the size and complexity of your bargaining unit (33,000 members). Section 72(2) of the *Labour Relations Code* defines essential services as “facilities, productions and services” that are “necessary or essential to prevent immediate and serious danger to the health, safety or welfare of the residents of British Columbia.” It is important to understand that essential services negotiated under the *Labour Relations Code* for the purposes of job action are not the same as the essential services designated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of last week, the employer has provided us with their proposed essential services levels for the entire public service. We are currently reviewing each Ministry/Agency proposal to determine which essential services we agree with, and which ones we will challenge. When a union and an employer disagree on essential services levels, the Labour Relations Board settles the dispute. Because the finalization of an essential services order in advance of the strike vote is of the utmost importance to your union, we have already applied (jointly with your employer) to seek the Board’s assistance in negotiating essential services and adjudicating any disputes.

It is our goal to have essential service levels set by the time we complete the strike vote.

Webinars and telephone town hall

This week we held three webinars attended by nearly 3000 members. As well we held a well-attended telephone town hall last night with approximately 6000 attendees. This means that we’ve engaged with almost 10,000 members of the bargaining unit this week. We will continue to provide opportunities to update you on events as we proceed with the strike vote.

You can view the webinar – complete with indexed questions – here:

[0:00](#) - Introductory Comments

[8:56](#) - Why are we taking a strike vote?

[12:00](#) - When will the strike vote happen?

[14:46](#) - Why is it important to vote in favour of a strike? Does that mean we will for sure go on strike?

[17:53](#) - What could strike action look like?

[20:54](#) - What about essential services negotiations?

[24:24](#) - How much is strike pay? How is that determined?

[27:55](#) - What if I am on STIPP or working remotely during the strike vote? What if I am on vacation or on STIIP during the strike?

[31:18](#) - Where do we go to get further information?



Questions?

Bargaining microsite: Please visit our [Bargaining BC](http://www.bargainingbc.ca) website for regular updates and important bargaining information: www.bargainingbc.ca

Member Portal: Please remember that it is imperative that our union has up-to-date contact information of our members. This includes personal email, home address and personal cell phone number. Please encourage your coworkers to [log in to the member portal](#) to ensure they receive important information throughout the bargaining process.

As well we have set up the following where you can direct specific questions:

Email Publicservice2022@bcgeu.ca

Phone 1-888-984-1632

Thanks again for your ongoing support—the importance of your support of the strike vote cannot be overstated. A strong strike mandate is vital to our ability to get the deal that you deserve.

In solidarity,

Your BCGEU Public Service Bargaining Committee

Stephanie Smith, President
Paul Finch, Treasurer
Judy Phipps, Executive Vice President
Dean Purdy, Vice President - Component 1
Kusam Doal, Vice President - Component 5
Judy Fox-McGuire, Vice President - Component 6
Cynthia Mephram-Egli, Component 6 Acting First Vice-Chairperson
Maria Middlemiss, Vice President - Component 12
Matt Damario, Component 12 First Vice-Chairperson
Robert Davis, Vice President - Component 20
Michael Eso, Secretary and Lead Negotiator
Lisa Lane, Support Staff

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