



News on BARGAINING



| PLEASE POST |

Date: April 22, 2022

To: All Public Service Members

Re: Weekly update: Member Education, Essential Service Negotiations and more

As reported to you last week, negotiations with your employer remain at impasse. Your bargaining committee is ready to get back to the table the minute that your employer presents us with a revised wage offer that addresses your key issue of cost of living.

Inflation

You may have seen the news yesterday that [Canada's inflation rate has now reached a new 31-year high of 6.7 per cent](#). The B.C. rate of inflation is at 6 per cent. Experts predict that inflation will continue to rise in the coming months and that the Bank of Canada will respond with further, and possibly steeper, increases to interest rates. This is why COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) protections for your wages are a top priority this round of bargaining.

[You can see the BC Stats summary of inflation rates for this month here.](#)

Essential Services

As we wait for a revised offer from your employer, we continue to prepare for job action—that includes strike vote preparations and essential services negotiations.

As explained in previous bulletins, essential service negotiations will 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.

While the union and employer have been working diligently over the past month, the size and scope of B.C.'s Public Service makes negotiation of these essential services levels in each ministry a massive undertaking. By next week, the employer has indicated that they will be able to provide us with their proposed essential services levels for the entire public service. The union will then be in a position to determine which ones 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. We understand this is a time sensitive matter and believe it requires immediate Board assistance.

Member education: over 1/3 of you are new to the bargaining process

Did you know that more than 1/3 of the 33,000 members of the public service bargaining unit have never been through a round of bargaining before? Or that even more have never experienced reaching impasse or taking job action?

We did. And we know that means many of you have questions about topics like strike pay, the balloting procedure, the different types of job action and more.

That's why member education is a priority for your committee. In addition to these weekly bulletins, which keep you up to date on what is happening with your bargaining process, we are preparing to offer you a range of ways to connect with your committee and get the information you need.

Save these dates:

Tuesday, May 3: Zoom webinars

Thursday, May 5: telephone town hall

Keep an eye on your inbox for more details and make sure your friends in the bargaining unit are getting these emails so they don't miss out.

In the news

Stephanie Smith – BCGEU President and chairperson of your bargaining committee – [spoke with CFAX Radio's Ryan Price this week about where things stand for you and the other 33,000 members in contract talks with government.](#)

Have you watched our video yet?

We shared a video with you last week featuring your bargaining committee explaining the steps involved now that we've reached impasse. [We encourage you to check it out if you haven't already.](#) If you would like to read any of our previous bulletins or media releases, [you can access them here.](#)

Member Portal

Remember to review and update your contact information in order to receive important bargaining updates: [Log into the Member Portal](#) and click "Manage Contact Info". Make sure your personal email and cell phone number are on file.

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

HR/MM
MoveUP
FA-614