



TableTalk *update*

The latest bargaining and mobilizing news for OPS members

December 24, 2008

Central/Unified: **We did it!**

At 3:45 a.m. on Dec. 24, the Central and Unified Bargaining Teams did what many said couldn't be done: They signed a tentative agreement for a new collective agreement. And they did it without a strike vote, and before the current contract expired. The bargaining teams are unanimously recommending that their members accept the deal.

For OPSEU, this is an historic and ground-breaking achievement.

"We have made huge strides in OPS bargaining," said Eric Morin, Chair of the Central/Unified teams. "From the beginning, we told the employer and our members that all we wanted was a fair and reasonable offer. We believe that we have it, and are happy to recommend our members accept it.

Highlights of the four-year agreement include:

- A wage increase of 1.75 per cent in the first year, and 2 percent per year in the remaining three years
- Increases for special cases for Conservation Officers, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Physical Laboratory Technologists, Nurses, Geoscientists, Safety Instruction Officers, Senior Marine Engineers, Vessel Masters and Waste and Water Project Operators
- Increases to shift premiums, on-call rates and meal allowances
- Max + merit now converted to step on the wage grid
- A new wage level for Systems Officers
- The creation of 230 new Information and Information Technology positions
- Improvements for unclassified employees on seniority provisions and bereavement leave
- Unclassifieds to move through wage grid based on actual hours worked
- Unclassifieds to receive 4.6 per cent holiday pay in recognition of Family Day

- Reduction of the dental deductible to \$50 per year
- Improvements to dental benefits, including pit and fissure coverage and major restorative
- New coverage for vaccines, and having the cost of eye exams not included in the \$340 allowance.
- Employer to pay 100 per cent of the premiums on vision and hearing aids
- Improvements for court reporters with respect to garment replacements
- RPTs and seasonal employees have access to posted jobs
- Wage increases for student employees

Big takeaways staved off

Major progress was made on the employer's big three takeaways, Termination Pay Accrual, Surplus Factor 80 and Reasonable Efforts.

The loss of accrual for Termination Pay only applies to employees who resign – those who retire still receive their full entitlement of one week of pay for every year of service to a maximum of 26 weeks. Surplus Factor 80 still applies to all members, but it is now the last option after bumping and redeployment. These two provisions were to assist the government in retaining their senior experienced people.

As for the loss of "reasonable efforts" language, the employer removed that proposal from the bargaining table.

Everyone deserves credit

This historic agreement would not have happened without the incredible work of some very dedicated people.

"First, I want to thank our teams," said Eric Morin. "They worked very hard and made a lot of sacrifices to get to this agreement. We also had

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amazing support from OPSEU staff negotiators and Head Office staff who kept us on track. Then there are our member mobilizers: The work they did to spread the word and get the members excited about bargaining was phenomenal. Never in the history of OPS bargaining have more members been engaged and interested in their contract.”

But the biggest salute, Morin says, goes to the members themselves.

“It was our members who made the difference. They gave us their trust and support, and, when the time came, showed their strength and solidarity in the workplace. So much so, the employer voiced their concerns about it at the bargaining table. That is what really brought everything together.”

Watch for the agreements in early January

The full agreements, along with a more detailed analysis of the offer, will be posted in early January. On Jan. 17, OPS Local Presidents will meet in Toronto to hear from the bargaining teams. Voting on the tentative agreements will take place from Jan. 27-29.

Details times and locations of the OPS president’s meeting and the vote times and locations will be available in the New Year.

Corrections stands firm

Late Monday night, the Corrections team asked the employer for a final offer after failing to get the employer to stop their attack on sick time.

The Corrections Team persisted throughout Tuesday to get the employer to respond, but the employer didn’t respond until late Tuesday night. Unfortunately, the removal of Correctional Officers and Youth Workers from the OPS sick plan remained in the employer’s offer.

“We have vowed to stand firm on this issue,” said David Kerr, Chair of the Corrections Team. “The employer is determined to punish our members for what is basically the employer’s negligence in allowing our institutions to deteriorate. They refuse to correct the problems, and want to blame our members for suffering the effects.”

The employer’s offer contains the same wage increase as the Unified bargaining unit along with a special adjustment for Correctional Officers and

Youth Workers only, as well as slight improvements to meal allowance and on-call pay. Schedule 6 Probation and Probation and Parole Officers would receive time and one-half pay for working overtime on weekends and holidays, but only if pre-authorized by the employer. The employer also wants to create only 10 (ten) PO3 positions province-wide, which would be filled by competition. The employer has also offered a 50/30 pension option, which would allow Correctional Officers and Youth Workers to retire if they are both 50 years old AND have 30 years service (this currently affects less than 400 members). But all of this hinges on the acceptance of the employer’s punitive sick time plan.

“Our team will meet again on January 5 to consider and determine our next steps,” Kerr said. “Until then we ask our members to continue to show solidarity in the workplace.”

What now?

All members are asked to rest up and have a great holiday. No further information will be available until January 5, 2009. Thanks to all for your support and hard work. See you in the New Year!

Authorized for distribution:



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