

Shubhneet Ark

From: Shubhneet Ark
Sent: Thursday, November 06, 2003 11:24 AM
To: Shubhneet Ark
Subject: FW: November PSEC E-Newsletter

-----Original Message-----

From: Barbara Wilson
Sent: November 6, 2003 11:15 AM
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November 2003

CURRENT BARGAINING

Unionized workers at ICBC Issue Strike Notice

On October 27, 2003, ICBC was given 72-hour strike notice by the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU). The notice placed the union in a legal strike position as of October 30. The union have acted upon the notice by issuing an overtime ban. This action keeps their strike mandate alive as it was set to expire on November 8 if no action was taken. ICBC responded to OPEIU's strike notice with a lockout notice, but as of this date it has not been acted upon by ICBC.

ICBC has comprehensive plans in place in the event that the union chooses to withdraw services from customers. Service information will be available to the public in the event of any disruption.

ICBC's most recent offer is consistent with the PSEC mandate. It would provide a net zero general wage increase and a performance-based pay program in return for reduced time off days. The performance based pay program would replace a gainsharing program and would be similar in

replace a gainsharing program and would be similar in approach to a performance based pay program that was recently implemented for management employees. ICBC's offer also includes changes to schedules and shift premiums that would provide flexibility to better serve customers and to contain costs.

Colleges Support Staff

Colleges are continuing to bargain 14 support staff collective agreements that expired in 2002, and another 2 that expired in 2003.

K-12 Education Support Staff

The support staff common agreement (44 School Districts with 46 agreements) expired June 30, 2003. An additional 20 other school district support staff agreements have also expired. No bargaining dates are scheduled at this time.

CSSEA Bargaining

Bargaining began mid September and is progressing for the renewal of collective agreements for approximately 215 employers which expired March 31, 2003. The bargaining is being conducted according to legislation passed this spring that changed the sector bargaining structures, including the creation of a single Association of Unions and 3 bargaining units. By far the largest of the 13 unions in the association of unions is the BCGEU. Bargaining continues with dates scheduled throughout November.

BCGEU and the BC Public Service Agency Tentative Deal Ratification Vote November 21

The BCGEU and the BC Public Service Agency have a tentative agreement to extend the 13th Master agreement by 2 years. The contract extension is consistent with the PSEC mandate of net zero. Other highlights include movement from a 3 to 5 step grid and some employment security protection. The employment security clause is effective April 1, 2004 after government's restructuring program is completed. The restructuring program is expected to reduce the size of the public service by approximately 11,000 employees. The agreement also provides government with flexibility to implement proposed alternative service delivery projects, which would be covered by an expedited workforce adjustment program. The extension will maintain the existing salary structure for current Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) employees, whereas new employees will have a significantly lower salary structure. LDB will also have improved flexibility in scheduling auxiliary recall.

Details of the agreement are available on the British

Columbia Public Service Agency website at
<http://www.bcpublicservice.ca>

The vote on extending the master agreement will be conducted through BCGEU shop stewards at worksites following a series of regional meetings. Voting will close Wednesday, Nov. 19 and will be counted at BCGEU headquarters on Nov. 21.

BC Rail Negotiations

BC Rail and Council of 7 Unions reached a tentative agreement on a new contract. The terms of the collective agreement include: Three year agreement with no wage increases expiring on December 31, 2005; a bonus plan for unionized employees that is based upon net profit as opposed to the previous gainsharing plan that was based upon production goals not related to profitability. Other changes include the ability to implement significant operational flexibility plans.

Labour Relations Developments

New CEO Appointed to HEABC

On October 15th the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC) announced the appointment of Louise Simard as the new chief executive officer of HEABC. Ms. Simard has been the President and CEO of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) since April 2000, is currently the president of the Medical Council of Canada, and is a former member of the Canadian Nurses Association Board of Directors.

Further details on Louise Simard are available from the HEABC website at <http://www.heabc.bc.ca>.

BC Ferries Contract Negotiations

BC Ferries Service Inc. and the BC Ferry and Marine Workers Union contract expired October 30, 2003. Negotiations for a new contract are underway. Meanwhile, the union have received a strong strike mandate from their membership. Both parties are currently before the LRB to determine essential service levels.

K-12 Essential Services Designation

63 collective agreements for support staff in K-12 education expired June 30, 2003. The Minister of Skills Development and Labour has directed the LRB to begin working with BCPSEA, BCTF, and CUPE to arrive at essential service levels for support staff and teachers. The process will continue through the month of December.

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Coastal Forestry Talks Face Final Offer Vote

On October 9, 2003, the IWA presented a final offer to Forest Industrial Relations Limited (FIR) and requested that the LRB hold a vote of the companies that are part of the bargaining association on that offer. The vote will be conducted early November. The IWA offer is in line with the interior forestry agreements, including a six-year contract with wage increases of 11%, and annual bonus payments based on industry return on capital employed. The offer also includes improvements to severance pay, seniority retention and contributions into the pension plan to deal with the short-term solvency problem as well as provide increased benefits to members during the term of the agreement. With regard to the coast-specific issues, the union has proposed a moratorium on contracting out phases of operations, the ability for companies to implement flexible shifts and a commitment to work together to reduce unit costs at the operational level.

Alberta's Commission on Learning Makes Recommendations On Education Bargaining

The Report of Alberta's Commission on Learning has made a number of broad based recommendations regarding education in general. The recommendations pertaining specifically to labour relations include legislating an employer's bargaining association; maintenance of the Alberta Teachers Association as a single organization responsible for professional services and collective bargaining for teachers; limiting the scope of collective bargaining; and expanding teachers' professional responsibilities but maintaining their right to strike. The Commissions' website includes a link to the full report <http://www.learningcommission.gov.ab.ca/>

Provincial Health Authorities of Alberta and the United Nurses of Alberta Still Without a Contract

The United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) members rejected a mediator's recommendations for a new contract in the province-wide vote held September 15 by 98.8%. All of the 146 UNA locals rejected the plan. The UNA then responded with a revised proposal that was rejected by the Health Authorities who applied to the provincial government to have the contract settled through binding arbitration. The UNA responded by taking the Health Authorities to the labour relations board claiming the PHAA were refusing to negotiate. The Labour Board directed the parties to continue negotiations. The ruling stated "... there remains an ongoing duty to bargain in good faith until a new agreement is reached or awarded..." and "... we direct the parties to set up additional bargaining

... we direct the parties to set up additional bargaining dates and to continue to bargain in good faith."

Government BC and Other Provinces

Don Wright To Develop Terms of Reference

Don Wright, a former senior civil servant with both the British Columbia and Saskatchewan provincial governments was appointed on September 8 to assist in developing terms of reference for the review of collective bargaining structures in education. Mr. Wright will report to the Minister of Labour in early November.

Lower CPP and EI Rates

In the past year there have been important developments in both Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance. The media profile given to these changes in Federal statutory benefits has been modest. As a result some employers may not be aware of the impact upon their compensation costs.

Since 1996 CPP rates, which are paid equally by employers and employees, increased from 5.6% to 9.9% on January 1, 2003. The maximum pensionable earnings for 2004 increases from \$39,900 to \$40,500; the increase reflects the growth in average weekly wages and salaries in Canada. The rate increases were part of a broader plan initiated by the federal and provincial governments 7 years ago to put the CPP plan on a stable footing. Subsequent to the last hike, a federal-provincial review of CPP found that the retirement fund will be able to fulfill its long-term commitments to Canadians and that the most recent CPP premium hikes will be the final increase for the foreseeable future. When governments began reviewing the plan, it was expected rates would rise to 14.2 per cent by 2030.

As of January 1, 2003 EI rates were lowered by 10 cents for every \$100 earned, falling to \$2.10 per every \$100 of an employee's earnings. For employees with the highest insurable earnings -- anything over \$39,000 a year -- the cut amounts to 75 cents a week, or about \$40 a year. The EI rate that employers must pay also fell. It's calculated by multiplying the employee rate by 1.4, so the employer rate fell 14 cents for each \$100 in insurable earnings, a drop to \$2.94 from \$3.08. In the 2003 budget the Federal Minister of Finance announced that the government would be consulting premium-payers on a new EI rate-setting regime to be in place by 2005. Also included in that announcement was the planned EI rate of \$1.98 for employees and \$2.77 for employers for 2004.

Other News

BCPSEA Labour Relations Symposium

The BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) held its second annual Labour Relations Symposium in Vancouver on October 23-24. Over 200 school district trustees and staff from throughout the province came together to participate in a professional development forum for the exchange of ideas, strategies and insights concerning the critical labour relations issues of the day.

Participant feedback was enthusiastic and the symposium has proved to be an effective opportunity to provide both the governors and practitioners in the K-12 public education sector with information and resources to assist them in managing their districts' human resources in a time of great change. BCPSEA's third Symposium is scheduled for the fall of 2004.

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