

15/02/2018

## Progress made in N.S. Health Care Bargaining

The Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions just completed six days of conciliation in January with the employers, the Nova Scotia Health Authority and IWK Hospital, and another 12 days of bargaining are scheduled for this spring.

Bargaining has produced some steady progress but the employers have also tabled several significant concessions. The employer is seeking concessions which the unions believe directly contradicts Premier Stephen McNeil's claim that health care workers would not lose benefits as a result of amalgamation.

The employer's proposals have not been accepted by the Council and are just the latest in the Liberal government's attack on workers after McNeil used legislation to freeze wages and retirement benefits, which leave most Nova Scotia health care workers among the lowest paid in the country.

Progress has been gained however as the parties have reached a tentative agreement on 22 of 46 complete articles in the NSHA agreement and 24 of 46 articles in the IWK agreement.

Since both the Council and the employers based all proposals on the current NSGEU local 42 collective agreement, the council estimates it is nearly 70 per cent of the way towards reaching a tentative agreement for IWK and NASHA. However, the most difficult and contentious issues such as: benefits, wages, job security, retirement allowance, job posting, hours of work, sick leave and re-assignment remain outstanding.

This complex set of negotiations has proven to be a long and challenging process but the Council is working collectively to make sure progress continues in the best interest of all members.

Bargaining will continue on February 26, 27, March 19, 20, 21, April 10, 11, 12, May 2, 3, 4. Other dates may be added if required.

In conjunction with bargaining, the Council also continues to work toward negotiating an essential services agreement (ESA) which would cover all 6,500 health care bargaining unit members.

Although the employers' essential services negotiators walked away from talks last summer, there was agreement to return to the table on March 6. Negotiating an ESA is now a requirement for the union as Bill 37, a new Liberal legislation, requires it to be in place before a strike or job action happen.

The committees representing administrative professionals, support and nursing are preparing to start their bargaining once an agreement is reached in health care.

For more information, please contact Unifor bargaining committee members:

Susan Gill, National Representative [susan.gill@unifor.org](mailto:susan.gill@unifor.org)