

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

# BARGAINING UPDATE

MARCH 10, 2021

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES BARGAINING COMMITTEE

LOCALS: 001, 002, 003,  
004, 005, 006, 009, 012

ALL EMPLOYEES

## DIRECT TALKS WITH EMPLOYER END, NOW IT'S ON TO MEDIATION IMPASSE REACHED AT BARGAINING TABLE, BUT MUCH WORK STILL TO BE DONE

Your negotiating team met with the employer on March 4 and 5, where it became clear that the two sides could not reach agreement on a number of outstanding items, including wages. You can download a list of outstanding items in a GSBC bargaining update on our website at [www.aupe.org](http://www.aupe.org).

Looking at just the issue of wages, the government's has proposed a four-per-cent cut followed by three years of zero increases.

The damage to members is much worse than four per cent, though. If annual inflation is factored in at two per cent, and accounting for the last three years bringing two zeroes and a one-per-cent raise, members could be looking at reduction in their standard of living of up to 17 per cent compared to 2017. It's more when you add the planned cuts to shift differentials and other cuts to monetary items.

Meanwhile, some members facing classification reviews could see combined cuts of up to 24 per cent.

That means that an independent third party, a mediator, must be brought in to see if more progress can be made.

### What happens next?

Before the union and employer's negotiating teams can go to mediation, they have to sign off on an Essential Services Agreement (ESA).

This agreement determines the minimum number of unionized employees in each department required to continue working to deliver services designated as "essential" by labour law in the case of a strike by workers or lockout by the employer.

There cannot be a legal strike or a lockout until mediation has taken place.

Negotiations to establish the ESA have been going on for some time, but the focus now switches to completing that process. We anticipate the ESA will be in place some time in May.

Once the employer and union have an ESA, the two sides go to mediation to see if that third party can help bridge the gap on the outstanding items and try to bring the two parties to agreement.

It is only after mediation and a 14-day cooling down period that a union can conduct a strike vote. The vote is supervised by the Alberta Labour Relations Board.

The union can then serve the employer with strike notice or the employer can serve the union with a lockout notice. Each side must give the other 72 hours' notice.

In the event of a lockout or strike, the ESA comes into effect. The employer and the union are legally required to abide by that agreement. That means both sides will only allow those "essential" workers to continue working.

The union is responsible for scheduling which workers continue to go to work to provide essential services.

To be clear, if the employer locks out workers, it will stop you from going to work unless you have been identified as being one of those providing essential work as defined in the legislation.

The same applies if there is a legal strike after a vote of the members. Unless you have been identified as being one of those providing essential work as defined in the legislation, you will be

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reporting to the picket line, and not to work.

If there is a lockout or strike, it is possible the government could pass legislation to try to force a contract on workers.

In the meantime, workers should continue to prepare and to show solidarity. There may be direct actions to show how strongly members feel and to increase pressure on the employer to agree to a fair deal.

### **What can we do in the workplace?**

With an intransigent government that has publicly attacked public-sector workers at every opportunity, mediation might not be enough to reach a deal on a fair collective-bargaining agreement.

That is why it's vital to show the employer we are strong and we are determined. The stronger and more united we are now, the more likely it is the employer will feel pressure to agree to a deal that works for you and your fellow workers.

Your negotiating team is still active as we head towards mediation. Meanwhile, AUPE organizers are working with members to prepare for the road that lies ahead.

Members are organizing fanout trees in worksites across the province to pass on critical bargaining updates and have important conversations about how to fight for a fair contract. Each member of the fanout tree is responsible for connecting with 10 fellow members.

This is a fast and effective way of getting information to people.

So far, GOA workers have started to build fanout trees in 36 worksites across the province. More than 100 workers have been through 90-minute virtual fanout tree trainings.

However, we need to expand this project, so if you want to help, please contact organizers Madelaine Sommers at [m.sommers@aupe.org](mailto:m.sommers@aupe.org) or Trevor Zimmerman at [t.zimmerman@aupe.org](mailto:t.zimmerman@aupe.org).

### **Stay tuned for updates**

For those who have stayed engaged and informed throughout these negotiations, you realize that, unfortunately, we predicted the current situation of reaching an impasse in negotiations, moving towards mediation, and preparing for a strike or lockout.

This is a critical time. It means you need to stay informed more than ever and talk to your colleagues and co-workers about this situation.

Your negotiating team and organizers will be reaching out to you in a number of ways, so check your home emails and the AUPE website at [www.aupe.org](http://www.aupe.org).

We are also planning to hold telephone town halls in the near future to explain what's happened and what is about to happen and to hear from as many members as possible about your ideas, concerns and to answer your questions. We will be in touch soon with more details.

In the meantime, you don't have to wait to be contacted or to get more involved. You can email your representative on the bargaining committee or AUPE organizers (contact information is at the bottom of this message).

### **Thank you, thank you very much!**

Your bargaining committee would like to express their sincere thanks for the wonderful contributions that Local 006 representative Donna Smith has made to this round of bargaining – and for her many years of activism in this union and her advocacy for working Albertans.

Donna is due to retire from work on June 9, with some vacation time before then, but as is typical of her commitment, she will continue to be the contact for Local 006 members who have questions or concerns about bargaining.

We are all going to miss her.

## **GSBC NEGOTIATING TEAM MEMBERS:**

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