

BARGAINING UPDATE

**County of
Northern Lights**

**LOCAL: 118
CHAPTER: 010**

ALL STAFF

JANUARY 19, 2022

Bargaining is going well, so far

We've addressed workplace culture and fear of retaliation. Work remains on monetary items.

Bargaining at the County of Northern Lights is moving ahead, and your negotiations team is happy to announce that they are running relatively smoothly so far.

Your negotiations team met with the employer for three days, on Jan. 12, 13, and 14. Our main goal in this round of negotiations was to address workplace culture at the County, heavily based on the "satisfaction survey" that the employer sent out last year. The results of the survey, and one that your negotiations team conducted, showed us a number of problems that we hope to address in bargaining. We were happy to see that the employer also appeared to be taking worker dissatisfaction seriously.

The employer proposed a number of changes to the collective agreement that we agreed with, including flexibility in taken leave. The employer also accepted a number of your negotiations team's non-monetary proposals.

You told your negotiations team that you wanted to address, head-on, serious issues with workplace culture at the County. You told us that your co-workers were afraid of using the grievance system for fear of retaliation, and that you wanted to make sure that everyone felt safe going through the official channels. You brought up examples of how management has targeted people in the past for speaking up. We brought those concerns directly to the negotiating table.

Your negotiations team is happy to say that the employer responded well to those concerns. We were given verbal assurances that any staff member at the County will be free to raise concerns, through the channels established in the collective agreement, without fear of reprisal. The employer tells us that they are serious about improving the workplace culture at the County of Northern Lights.

Your negotiations team knows that assurances does not necessarily translate to changes in behaviours—which is why we encourage you to assert yourselves at work using the strong anti-bullying and harassment clauses in your collective agreement. We are happy that management appears to be turning over a new leaf, but we want to know they are serious. Building a better workplace culture takes more than a few days at the bargaining table—and it's up to us to assert our rights, using the means that our collective agreement provides us.

Lastly, we began a discussion about monetary items. This is where we had the most conflict with the employer. The employer proposal was not in alignment with the current economic conditions in the province and the current inflation numbers we are seeing. We know that living in northern Alberta comes with unique challenges, and that the cost of everything is higher here. That's why we need a fair salary agreement. We are hopeful the employer heard our response and will table a monetary offer we can present to the membership for ratification.

If that is not the case, we are preparing for the possibility that we'll end up in mediation over the monetary items. Your negotiations team is preparing for any eventuality, and will work to secure a fair deal for our co-workers.

Your support through this process is essential. By uniting behind our negotiations team, we show the employer our strongest power—solidarity. Through solidarity, we can achieve a strong contract that builds a better workplace at the County of Northern Lights.

Don't hesitate to reach out to your negotiations team with and questions, comments, or feedback.

(Contact info on page 2)

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

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