

# BARGAINING UPDATE



## LIVING WATERS CATHOLIC SCHOOLS LOCAL 071 CHAPTER 012 - ALL STAFF EXCEPT TEACHERS

### Employer tables aggressive final offer

#### Two tier wages and health spending account cut

Following our last bargaining update in June, your negotiating team and the employer continued mediation on November 30 and December 1, 2022, the first dates the employer made themselves available.

As was the case in June, all the employer wanted to talk about was implementing two tiered-wages, something we've been clear all along we will not agree to. The employer has mischaracterized our refusal to agree to two-tier wages as "delaying" or "pausing" and are now falsely asserting that they had "no choice" but to table a Final Offer.

Living Waters' approach to bargaining - starting with the hardest part - left many areas of the collective agreement that we could have negotiated up in the air. And while the employers' "our way or the highway" Final Offer is itself a definite escalation, its contents make it doubly offensive.

Some examples:

- Where the Union proposed converting Health Spending Accounts (currently set at \$950/year) to Wellness Spending Accounts (with a greater range of

expenses eligible for reimbursement), the employer wants to reduce the total amount by \$200 (to \$750/yr). While Living Waters is calling this cut an "enhancement," members with expensive prescriptions and other health needs who currently use the full amount will not likely see it that way!

- It imposes lower wages for uncertified Educational Assistants (i.e. those who do not hold a Teacher Assistant/Educational Assistant certificate from a certified post-secondary educational institution) hired in the future, and it leaves sole discretion with the employer to determine past experience for the purposes of determining the step level. The employer told us that current employees would not have our wages frozen, however the language in their Final Offer is very confusing on that vital point.
- It is full of errors and misleading or confusing information. For example, the Final Offer states that "If continuous employment is not maintained any non-

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certified educational assistant *retired* by the employer will be placed on the non-certified educational assistant grid” (emphasis added). Do they mean *rehired*? And what about current employees who are not already at the top of the grid moving up? That is equally unclear. The document states, “No changes in the grids or placement for Educational Assistants shall result in a loss of pay for current employees.” But what about movement *up* the grid?

- It introduces new language at the last minute that could prove harmful to members. For example, it says the employer can determine the schedule by which you are paid. This kind of practice (new and/or escalating proposals) is prohibited under the Labour Code because it is an example of “bargaining in bad faith.”

The only positive aspect of the Final Offer the employer tabled is small wages increases (1.25% in June 2023, 1.5% February 2024, and a possible 0.5% retroactive to February 2024), instead of the zeros and other cuts they had been insisting on previously. They have, for example, abandoned their demands for drastic cuts to sick leave, and cuts to callback pay for maintenance members, etc.

The above highlights just a few of the reasons your negotiating team could not accept this offer. We did agree to present the information to all members so that you can make up your own minds. Members will have to ask yourselves: ***Can I accept a cut in benefits and a divisive, arbitrary and unfair wage structure?***

(Click here to download the full Final Offer.)

We will be following up in the coming weeks with more detailed information about how our employer’s actions and their offer would affect you as well as providing opportunities for members to have a say about our next steps.

Please stay tuned, make sure your contact info is up to date, and reach out to a member of your negotiating team with any questions, concerns, or feedback you may have.