

Our Team was given five (5) days to present our demands to the Conciliation Board. The hearings were held in Ottawa on September 12th, 13th, 14th ...then the 18th and 19th.

The Conciliation Board (made up of a Chairperson, a union sidesperson and an employer sidesperson) is an extension of the Collective Bargaining process as was the participation of a Conciliation Officer during the 10 days of talks with the employer that took place last March.

The Chairperson acknowledged that the employer has not negotiated with us since the start of this process last September, so chose to mediate between the parties for the first 3 days in an effort to reach agreement on some issues or arrive at a package of demands that was smaller, and one that could be reasonably articulated to the Board to have them make a report on.

As has been the case every time we met with the employer, any hopes that they were there to enter into meaningful negotiations were dashed the minute they entered the room. Negotiation is supposed to be about give and take, on BOTH sides of the table. Your employer doesn't understand this, or more to the point, doesn't care.

Tough to reconcile the Prime Ministers public comments about the value of the public service and his hope that we can come to an agreement at the table when the Treasury Board's written brief to the Board contains the phrase "the employer has no intention of introducing the above proposal into our collective agreement" over and over again.

There were a small number of non-contentious demands that both sides came to agreement on principal on, but there was absolutely no movement from the employer on any of our demands.

Pay

In an effort to generate true negotiations we made an amended position to the employer on 13 September:

Effective June 21, 2003: an increment; plus a 4% general economic increase;

Effective June 21, 2004: a 3.5% general economic increase;

Effective June 21, 2005: a 3.5% general economic increase;

Effective June 21, 2006: a 2.25% general economic increase with the 3.5 year collective agreement expiring on December 31, 2006.

Our amended pay proposal reduces the economic increase in each period, and removes the increment in the second year of the agreement. The Team felt that this amended position was realistic, and at the same time showed that we were bargaining in good faith by moving towards the employer's response that we received in March to our original proposal.

Counting each individual demand on the table, the Chairperson indicated that we had 97 individual proposals and that if that many remained, we weren't going to like the report that he issued. We worked well into the evening each day reviewing the demands that were outstanding to focus our formal presentation on those items we believe are important to the members and for which we would take job action.

Our Team made the formal presentation on a reduced package of 50 individual demands on September 18th.

Following the formal presentation of our demands the employer tabled an amended pay proposal to the Team:

Effective June 21, 2003: a 2.25% general economic increase;
Effective June 21, 2004: a 1.75% general economic increase;
Effective June 21, 2005: a 1.75% general economic increase.

From an original offer that would have provided for a total economic increase of 4.25 the employer barely moved with this offer which would provided for a total economic increase of 5.75% over 3 years. However, the increase of 2.25% in the first year applies to all Table 1 members, but the increase of 1.75% in the second and third years would only be given to Customs employee's as a lump sum payment so these 7700 members of Table 1 would not achieve any salary increase which means no change in their overtime rates or in the value of these years of service for pension accumulation.

Not only does our employer continue to insult us with a wage increase below the rate of inflation, but now in a step back from their original pay proposal, now they say that our members who came over from CCRA last December only get part of the salary increase.

The Team is there to negotiate a collective agreement, and to demonstrate clearly to the Conciliation Board that intent, we tabled a new pay proposal to the employer at the conclusion of the board hearings on September 19th:

Effective June 21, 2003: an increment; plus a 3.5% general economic increase;
Effective June 21, 2004: a 3.25% general economic increase;
Effective June 21, 2005: a 3.25% general economic increase;
Effective June 21, 2006: a 2.0% general economic increase.

Leaving the request for an increment aside for a moment, we were originally 10.75% apart. We are now 4.25% apart and the employer's owes us a move next. We moved to be realistic and are still in a good position with the demand for an increment on the table. But the employer hasn't moved much at all.

You've seen the figures and the employer's performance. While the government is reporting greater surplus's than expected we're still being offered economic increases that don't keep pace with inflation.

Sick Leave Pay Out

Your Team also presented a significant amended proposal dealing with cash out of sick leave credits on retirement. The original proposal called for the pay out of all unused credits. The amended proposal moves away from a cash payout and instead to a credit of 50% of unused sick leave up to a maximum of 6 months to be applied to our length of service for pension benefits, so that an employee with sufficient unused sick leave credits would in effect be able to retire 6 months early.

They can't even move on the less contentious or lesser-cost items such as:

- Turning the sexual harassment clause in your collective agreement into an all-encompassing general harassment clause;
- Getting the 4 weeks vacation earlier than your 8th year of employment;
- An additional day of Family Related Responsibilities leave;
- Changes that would improve the Maternity Related Re-assignment clause, Maternity Leave clause and the Parental Leave clause;
- Improvements for Customs Officers and recognition of their duties and needs as impacted by Bill C-18.
- Creating an Enforcement Duties allowance for those who have powers to arrest and detain;
- Incorporating Health & Safety language into the collective agreement;
- A stronger Job Security and no contracting-out clause along with improvement to the Workforce Adjustment Directive - after all, if we don't have a job, none of this matters;
- Extension of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods allowance to members at Table 1 who are required to be certified and doing those duties.
- Whistle-blowing protection.
- Despite being bound by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to do something about it and solve it - they won't go anywhere near extending marriage leave to same sex public commitment ceremonies or those jurisdictions where same sex marriages are occurring. They're actually more interested in elimination our provision for 5-days marriage leave all together, and replacing it with an additional 3 days annual leave to be granted after the 2nd year of service and used only once. This is a rollback from our current rights under the collective agreement.
- Improvements to Term Employment
- Expanding the definition of family.

We know your commitment to collective bargaining when you expressed it in giving a strike mandate of 73%. We will await the Conciliation Board's recommendations to use as a basis for negotiations but only if the employer is willing to negotiate. But after a year of stall tactics and a lack of mandate, we don't expect to see any change in the next few weeks and would expect to be joining our brothers and sisters at Parks, CRA and Table 2 after October 4th.

In solidarity