

January 17, 2019

To: All Members of the Nova Scotia Medical Communications Local

RE: Status of Negotiations

Dear Members:

In April 2019, following the expiry of the current collective agreement with Emergency Medical Care Inc., the Union and employer met to start bargaining a new contract. Although the previous agreement included a provision for wage increases in 2017 and 2018, due to the implementation of Bill 148 by the MacNeil government, those increases did not occur.

The Negotiations Committee took the demands package ratified by the membership and made it clear to the employer that members had suffered under Bill 148, and long standing issues, such as skyrocketing LTD premiums paid by the members, must finally be addressed.

After nearly nine months of largely unproductive talks, on January 15, 2020, the Union presented a global offer to the employer. The offer, made on a without prejudice basis, included the issues discussed at the previous GMMs, such as wage increases in the years after Bill 148 that would see Communications Officers back on par with the wages of an ACP; an increase to annual leave entitlements; payout of unused Education Allowance; introduction of a Temporary Employee Supplement; addressing the unilateral change made by the employer to the designation of SCOs and the payment of the responsibility premium; and, finally, addressing the LTD premiums by joining the HANS LTD plan.

Despite knowledgeable and well-reasoned explanations provided by all members of the Bargaining Committee, the response from the employer's side to all solutions remained largely unchanged; NO!

Given the employer's intransigence at the bargaining table and the constraints placed on us under Bill 37, the Essential Health and Community Services Act, the Negotiations Committee unanimously recommended the Union apply for conciliation. This afternoon, the Union formally requested conciliation.

Under the Nova Scotia Trade Union Act, either party to a negotiation may request the Minister of Labour to appoint a Conciliation Officer to assist in reaching a new contract. It is a mandatory step prior to either interest arbitration or achieving the right to strike or lock-out. After the Conciliator has met with the parties, they shall provide a report to the Minister within 14 days. In the event the parties do not reach an agreement, the Minister will appoint a mediator.

We cannot simply sit by and let the employer play their waiting game. Every day that goes by, staff shortages continue, conditions worsen, and morale lessens. Every day without a new contract brings us closer to the release of the Fitch Report, which will not benefit the workers at the Communications Centre, nor Nova Scotians in general.

In the coming days, the Union will be initiating a campaign that will help shine a light on the reality at EMC. The solutions we brought to the bargaining table were not only meant to improve the working conditions of our membership, but, more importantly, to make the system work better for the people we serve. Unfortunately, we have an employer who only looks at how improvements will impact their bottom line. Members are asked to stay tuned and stay updated.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Callaghan', written over the printed name and title.

Jeff Callaghan
Chief Negotiator

nj/cope 225