



Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

### **Update on Healthcare Unions' Proposal to Government**

Nova Scotia's health care system is undergoing radical change by the provincial government. These changes include the government's decision to move from nine District Health Authorities to one provincial board and one board representing the IWK. As a part of this restructuring, the government plans to reduce the number of collective agreements it negotiates with health care unions by requiring bargaining in just four province-wide bargaining units.

Where health care restructuring has occurred elsewhere in the country, conflict has resulted as members have been forced to choose between unions or be placed into another union via legislation.

Nova Scotia's health care unions – NSGEU, Unifor, CUPE, and NSNU – have been working together to discuss how restructuring will impact our members, and how our members' rights can be best protected.

As a result of this planned restructuring, the unions responded with a formal proposal to government to develop a new bargaining system in which the unions join together to negotiate at one table for each of the province-wide bargaining units. In each of these units, the unions would form a Bargaining Association to negotiate with the new employers together, allowing members to stay with their current union.

#### **What is a Bargaining Association?**

A Bargaining Association represents members of more than one union for the purpose of collective bargaining. In an association, each union continues to speak on behalf of and represent their own members as they do today. So, all members would remain members of their current union, but the unions would bargain collective agreements together.

#### **Why do we want Bargaining Associations?**

While unions have been through the health care restructuring process before, there is more on the line for workers and Nova Scotians who rely on their care this time around. For this reason, the unions have come together at the request of the Minister of Health & Wellness, to find a solution that addresses government's request to streamline bargaining, creating just four bargaining tables.

Bargaining Associations are the safest way to ensure your rights and benefits are protected. Without these Associations, the government will either force unions into run-off votes to fight amongst themselves to represent you, or even designate you into a union of their choosing.

It's clear that the merger of the collective agreements will mean all rights and benefits will be on the table. Unions are better able to protect your rights and benefits if we work together. Bargaining Associations will give all workers a unified voice at the bargaining table, while allowing you to continue to deliver quality health care.

### What's next?

We've met with government and employers. We've addressed their key questions (see the attached Executive Summary on coloured paper for these details). The Minister will be briefed this week and Cabinet will review the proposal soon. We are waiting for their response. It's now up to them whether they accept, amend, or reject our proposal. The House of Assembly (Legislature) opens on September 25<sup>th</sup>, which means legislation regarding the healthcare restructuring and labour representation could be introduced any time after that date.

### What can you do?

Stay informed: watch your email and our website for updates! This decision will have a direct impact on you, and we may need your support.

### Who's at the Table?

Since sending our initial communication to the Premier back in February, leaders of the four unions have met steadily throughout the summer to develop the proposal for Bargaining Associations. Since June, they have met a total of seven times, spending hours trying to ensure all members' interests are represented throughout the healthcare restructuring process. Here is who has represented each of the unions at these meetings:

NSGEU	NSNU	Unifor	CUPE N.S.
Joan Jessome, President	Janet Hazelton, President	Lana Payne, Atlantic Director	Danny Cavanagh, President
Keiren Tompkins, Executive Director	Jean Candy, Executive Director	Susan Taylor, National Rep.	Jacque Bramwell, Director
Shawn Fuller, Director of Negotiations & Servicing		Linda MacNeil, National Rep.	Wayne Thomas, Acute Care Co-Ordinator
Robin MacLean, Director of Negotiations & Servicing			