

Frequently Asked Questions

Mediation Arbitration Proposal

How did we get here?

It has been more than three years since the Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions was formed. This Council is made up of Unifor, CUPE, NSNU and NSGEU. This Council is now responsible for bargaining collective agreements for all acute care hospital workers in Nova Scotia. In late 2017 the Council had experienced minimal progress and an almost complete shutdown at the bargaining table. A conciliator was then asked to intervene and yet still, no real progress was achieved. As a result of this, last week Health Care members gave their bargaining committee a 93% strike mandate.

After nearly 18 months of painfully slow progress at the bargaining table, the Unions are now endorsing a process that will conclude collective agreements for all four bargaining units by the end of the year.

An agreement for final, mediation and binding arbitration is now on the table for your consideration. All acute care employees (FT, PT, Casual) across the province are being asked to vote on this agreement.

What is mediation/arbitration?

The proposed agreement is a voluntary agreement for mediation / arbitration of issues outstanding after collective bargaining for each of the bargaining units. Even if this proposal is agreed to, bargaining will continue for a period of time. The appointed mediator will try to assist the parties to achieve agreement through mediation but will render a binding decision on the issues that are not resolved. If this agreement that the bargaining committees are recommending is ratified, the parties have agreed to use Kaplan as the arbitrator. Kaplan shall be the mediator for all four bargaining units.

Mediation/ arbitration is the alternative to the possibility of strikes in this round.

Will the bargaining committees still be required to negotiate?

Yes, each council will be going to the table, on an expedited schedule with deadlines to conclude each agreement by the end of the year. The mediator/arbitrator would make a final and binding award on all outstanding issues in dispute by the following dates:

- Health Care Unit - September 1, 2018
- Nursing Unit - October 31, 2018
- Health Administrative Professional Unit - November 30, 2018
- Health Support Unit - December 31, 2018

How will my voice be heard - does the membership have the final word?

All four negotiating committees recommend ratification of the agreement and the members of all four bargaining units will vote in a single vote on whether to accept the proposed agreement. Votes will not be recorded separately by unit but one vote-yes or no-will govern. The members of all four unions will decide together in one unified Council result.

Will there be a further voting process for collective agreements if we proceed with mediation /arbitration?

No. If ratified the agreed items become part of the arbitration award, and would therefore be binding.

What are the terms of the agreement?

Mediation / arbitration of issues not resolved in bargaining.

Increases pay rates over a 6-year term (the contract would expire October 31, 2020)

A schedule for completion of all four collective agreements by the end of 2018

What about pay increases?

- Increase of 1% on November 1,2016
- Increase of 1.5% on November 1,2017
- Increase of 0.5% on October 31,2018
- Increase of 1.5% on November 1,2018
- Increase of 0.5% on October 31,2019
- Increase o 1.5% on November 1,2019
- Increase of 0.5% on October 31,2020
- 5th Unit increases are all 5 months later

What about early retirement and sick pay?

Agreement includes option of early payout of retirement allowances accrued up to March 31, 2015 at salary in effect on October 31, 2017.

If there is no agreement on sick pay and retiree benefits through the bargaining process or mediation, the arbitrator must award status quo as in the expired agreements

How will the voting procedure work?

Voting will be done by the method decided by each union and each union will set the voting dates. Unifor members will vote with paper ballots at designated sites.

Conference Calls

Monday May 7, 2018 conference call town hall.

12:00 noon
dial 1-844-220-3459
use passcode 1068973#.

or

7:30 p.m.
dial 1-844-220-3459
use passcode 1233363#

Members will have the opportunity to listen to the information and ask questions. Lines may be muted until it is time to ask questions.