



**NSGEU**



# Health Care Strike Vote

## Information Package



# A Message from Leadership

Your bargaining committee needs your support right now.

It is that simple.

The members of the Health Care Council negotiating committee have tried for months to get health care workers in this province a fair deal at the table.

At the end of June, after three days of Conciliation, the provincial government and the IWK and NSH tabled a wage offer that was less than the province gave to other public sector workers. An offer that was sure to keep you among the lowest paid health care workers in Canada.

That offer also insisted that the employer be allowed to create multi-site postings for some new hires, effectively allowing the NSH and IWK to avoid paying mileage for employees who would have to travel to different work sites.

The employer also insisted on paying healthcare workers less standby pay than they currently pay nurses.

Your bargaining committee said no way. Your committee responded with a counter-offer. The government and the employers then walked away from the table, effectively ending negotiations.

There is only one way now for your committee to get a fair deal. They need to show that they have the support of 7,500

health care workers across the province.

By voting to authorize the union to conduct a strike to back your demands, you are sending a message directly to the Premier that health care workers insist on being treated fairly.

After all you have done for Nova Scotians the past year-and-a-half, you deserve a fair and reasonable deal.

Starting Monday July 5<sup>th</sup>, if you are an NSGEU or Unifor, you will receive a ballot email with a personal PIN allowing you to vote electronically. If you are a CUPE member, you will be voting in person (see vote section for further details).

And remember, according to law, the total ballots cast in favour of a strike will be counted as a percentage of the entire membership. So, if you do not vote, it will essentially count as a no vote.

**Jason MacLean, President NSGEU**

**Les Duff, CUPE Acting President, Local 8920**

**Linda MacNeil, Unifor Atlantic Regional Director** ■

## Key Facts: Nova Scotia Councils of Unions

**The Four Councils were created following arbitration decisions by Jim Dorsey in 2015. Mr. Dorsey was appointed Arbitrator under the Health Authorities Act.**

**The Councils now conduct collective bargaining and essential services negotiations with the IWK and the Nova Scotia Health Authority on behalf 24,361 unionized health care workers. They are broken into four Councils: Nursing, Administrative Professionals, Support Services, and Health Care.**

**The Councils are governed by Constitutions filed with the Labour Board.**

**For the purposes of collective bargaining, the Health Care Council of Unions (which you are part of) is structured as follows:**

**Lead Union Negotiator – NSGEU, Deputy Lead Union Negotiator – CUPE**

- **Membership Total: 7,500 at the IWK and NSH**
- **NSGEU – approximately 4,500 total members (Bargaining Committee Members 6)**
- **CUPE – approximately 2,250 total members (Bargaining Committee Members 3)**
- **Unifor – approximately 1,000 total members (Bargaining Committee Members 1)**

# Why We Are Taking A Strike Vote

Bargaining broke down Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> between the Health Care Council of Unions and Nova Scotia Health (NSH), the IWK and the Province after the government and the employers failed to respond to a comprehensive settlement proposed by the unions.

At the beginning of the third and final day of conciliation on Wednesday, the Province and the employers tabled a comprehensive settlement that included a wage offer which was far less than wage settlements provided recently to other public sector workers, such as crown attorneys, teachers and paramedics with the IUOE.

**It was an offer sure to keep Nova Scotia health care workers among the lowest paid in Canada.**

The unions tabled a counter offer just before 3 p.m. Wednesday. The Province and the employers announced an hour later they would not have any further responses that day and did not know when or how they would respond in the future.

That effectively ended conciliation and left the unions with no choice but to pursue a strike vote.

**A strike vote is the only way to send a clear message to the employers and the province that 7,500 health care workers across Nova Scotia support their bargaining committees demands for a fair wage offer.**

Beginning July 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m., NSGEU and Unifor members will receive voter information to their work and personal emails with a PIN number which will allow them to vote electronically.

NSGEU members who do not receive their voter information by noon of that day should call the



NSGEU at 902-424-4063. Unifor members who do not receive their voter information by noon of that day should email Nelina Seymour at [nelinaunifor4600@gmail.com](mailto:nelinaunifor4600@gmail.com) with your first and last name and email address.

If anyone in your workplace does not receive their voter information, please urge them, to call us as soon as possible.

NSGEU and Unifor's strike vote will start Monday and will be held electronically. CUPE's vote starts Tuesday. We expect to have the results of that strike vote on July 9<sup>th</sup>, which could put health care workers in a legal strike position as early as the third week of July. ■

## KEY ISSUES

**Nova Scotia health care workers are among the lowest paid in Canada, government's offer would keep us there.**

**Government offered healthcare workers less than Crown Attorneys and Paramedics at IUOE.**

# A Recent History of Health Care Bargaining

Prior to September 2014, collective bargaining for health care workers in Nova Scotia had proceeded in the same way for decades.

Four unions, NSGEU, CUPE, NSNU and Unifor, each represented their own members in bargaining. Each union negotiated agreements that over time came to represent the priorities of their memberships.

In 2014/2015, the Provincial Liberal Government led by Stephen McNeil passed several pieces of legislation aimed at sharply reducing the bargaining power of the health care unions and their members. In March 2014, the government passed essential services legislation limiting the number of health care workers who could go on strike (see further information in the essential services section of this document).

In September 2014, the province introduced another new law: The Health Authorities Act created the NSH and the IWK.

This new law also initially attempted to force health care members into unions that were not of their choosing. After losing that fight, the Premier agreed to allow health care workers to stay with their union and instead created four Councils of Unions (Health Care, Support Services, Administrative Professionals, and Nursing).

Each Council was tasked with negotiating single collective agreements for their bargaining units at the IWK and the NSH. Each union would continue to administer the agreements for their own members between rounds of bargaining. This work involved having the unions combine 55 collective agreements into single agreements for each of the two new Employers. That work happened in the last round of bargaining which concluded in 2018.

## Essential Services

In March 2014, the province passed essential services legislation. That law was an attempt to weaken the unions' bargaining power by requiring a dramatic increase in the number of health care workers who would have to remain at work in the event of a strike.

It left the final numbers to be negotiated by the Council of Unions and the employers before a strike could take place. Essential services agreements take many months

to negotiate allowing the employers to almost ignore union proposals as there was no threat of imminent job action.

During this round of bargaining, the Council had already completed the essential services plan for the IWK in late 2020. Our efforts to conclude a plan with the NSH have been unsuccessful so far, largely as a result of the NSH's delays in providing an essential services plan. The unions asked for an essential services plan back in April 2020 and finally had to go to the Labour Board this spring in order to get the plan and dates for essential services negotiations from the NSH.

Earlier this week, after finally receiving a full essential services plan and responding to it, the unions referred the areas in dispute to the Labour Board. The Labour Board is required to help the parties resolve a plan within 30 days or sooner.

On Wednesday, June 30th, the NSH, in an effort to further stall the process, wrote the board and asked them to delay their involvement in resolving their essential services plan. The NSH argued the parties should continue bargaining on their own. Lawyers for the Council of Unions is responded to the NSH request for further delay on Friday July 2nd. The Council awaits the Board's decision.

## Wage Restraint Legislation

The provincial Liberal government's final piece of legislation attacking health care and other public sector workers came in December 2015, when Premier McNeil introduced a third new law. This law limited wage increases in the public sector to 0% in year one, 0% year two, 1% in the third year, and 1.5% in the fourth year, with an additional 0.5% on the last day of the fourth year. That law also froze the retirement allowance for all public sector employees effective April 2015.

That wage restraint legislation has led directly to Nova Scotia health care workers being among the lowest paid in Canada. The Liberal government's wage offer tabled on June 30th, 2021, ensures that will remain the case for years to come. That is why your committee is asking for your support in the form of a strike vote. ■

# A Chronology of the Current Round of Bargaining



**Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020** – the Healthcare Council collective agreement expires

**December 2020** – the Healthcare Council of Unions serve notice to bargain and asks for bargaining dates

**April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – the Council of Unions exchanges proposals with the NSH and the IWK

**April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021** – the parties hold a productive day of bargaining

**May & June 2021** – due to the third wave of the pandemic, the IWK and NSH cancel seven days of scheduled bargaining. The Council does not object

For several weeks in May and June, the Council attempts to secure other tentative bargaining dates but the Employers refuse

**May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – after attempting to secure bargaining dates for several weeks, the Council of Unions referred bargaining to conciliation

**May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – the parties held a meeting with the conciliation officer and set conciliation dates for June 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>. The conciliation officer also told the parties to arrange other bargaining dates earlier in June to continue to bargain

**May 14<sup>th</sup> to mid-June 2021** – the Council contacted the employers' chief negotiator for several consecutive weeks seeking other dates, but the employers refused

**June 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021** – the parties negotiated with the help of a conciliation officer.

- The provincial government and the Employers made a comprehensive offer mid-day, June 30<sup>th</sup>
- The unions responded with a comprehensive offer just before 3 p.m.
- The employers and the province left the table at about 4:30 p.m. saying they were not going to respond at that time
- The unions called for a strike vote to support their proposals
- July 2<sup>nd</sup>, unions receive call from Conciliation Officer at end of the day, advising government and employers have asked them to come back to the table. Parties agree to reconvene on Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup>.

# How Can I Vote?

If you are a Unifor or NSGEU member, on **Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.**, you will receive an email with voting instructions including a link and a PIN number. If you click on the link, you can use your PIN to vote yes to strike to support your committee's bargaining demands. Included in the voting instructions will be the option to vote by phone.

Electronic voting will be open until **5 p.m. on Friday, July 9<sup>th</sup>**.

NSGEU members who do not receive their voter information by noon of that day should call the NSGEU at 902-424-4063. Unifor members who do not receive their voting credentials by noon of that day should email Nelina Seymour at [nelinaunifor4600@gmail.com](mailto:nelinaunifor4600@gmail.com) with your first and last name and email address.

CUPE members will vote at one of the sessions outlined in the schedule to the right.

Please talk to your co-workers and ask them if they have received the voting instructions. If they haven't, you can remind them to check their junk mail folder, or ask them to please call their respective union.

All union members will vote on the same question and all votes will be counted together.

The result of the strike vote will be communicated on July 9<sup>th</sup>.

## Other Actions:

The most important thing you can do is support your bargaining committee and Council by voting to authorize your union to conduct a strike.

But there are other actions you can take to help put pressure on government to do the right thing and bargain fairly:

- Contact your MLA and any candidates who will be running in the upcoming Provincial election. Let them know that you are unhappy with how you are being treated. You can send election officials a message online easily using [our e-action tool](#) (you can also ask your friends and family to send a message to support you!);
- Even better than an email is a phone call: if you don't know who your MLA is, visit <https://enstools.electionsnovascotia.ca/edinfo2012/>. Then, find your MLA's contact information here: <https://nslegislature.ca/members/profiles/contact> and give them a call to let them know how you feel about this round of bargaining;
- Share campaign materials via your social media channels. ■



## CUPE Voting Schedule:

ZONE/AREA	DATE OF VOTE	TIME OF VOTE	LOCATION
<b>AREA 1:</b>			
Queens General Hospital	Tues., July 6	9 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Murray McMaster
South Shore Regional	Wed., July 7	7 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Lecture #1
Fishermans Memorial Hosp.	Thurs., July 8	9 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Legacy Room
<b>AREA 2:</b>			
Roseway Hospital	Wed., July 7	9 a.m. - 1 p.m.	TO BE DETERMINED
Yarmouth Regional	Thurs., July 8	8 a.m. - 8 p.m.	TO BE DETERMINED
Digby General	Fri., July 9	9 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Digby Country Club
<b>AREA 3:</b>			
Annapolis Comm. Health Centre	Tues., July 6	8 a.m. - 10 a.m.	Facility parking lot
Soldiers Memorial	Tues., July 6	11 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Western Kings Memorial	Tues., July 6	3 p.m. - 4 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Valley Regional	Wed., July 7	7 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Eastern Kings Memorial	Wed., July 7	2 p.m. - 3 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Chipman	Wed., July 7	3:30 - 4:30 p.m.	Facility parking lot
<b>AREA 4:</b>			
Colchester	Wed., July 7	9 a.m. - 8 p.m.	Best Western Glengarry
Lillian Fraser Memorial	Wed., July 7	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Lloyd E. Matheson Centre	Thurs., July 8	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot
<b>AREA 5:</b>			
Bayview	Tues., July 6	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot
South Cumberland	Tues., July 6	1 p.m. - 3 p.m.	Facility parking lot
North Cumberland	Wed., July 7	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot
All Saints Springhill	Wed., July 7	1 p.m. - 4 p.m.	TO BE DETERMINED
Cumberland Regional	Thurs., July 8 & Fri., July 9	8 a.m. - 4 p.m.	Super 8 Motel
<b>AREA 6:</b>			
Aberdeen Hospital	Tues., July 6 & Wed., July 7	6 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Tara Motel
Sutherland Harris	Tues., July 6 & Wed., July 7	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Tara Motel
<b>AREA 7:</b>			
St. Mary's Hospital	Tues., July 6	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot
St. Martha's	Wed., July 7	7 a.m. - 7 p.m.	Back parking lot
Guysborough Memorial	Thurs., July 8	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot
Eastern Memorial	Thurs., July 8	1 p.m. - 4 p.m.	Facility parking lot
Strait Richmond	Fri., July 9	10 a.m. - noon	Facility parking lot

# Health Care Strike Vote

Starting on July 5<sup>th</sup>

