



Administrative Professionals' Deal Collective Agreement Reached for HAP

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THE NO-ON STAND

A PUBLICATION OF THE N.S. GOVERNMENT & GENERAL EMPLOYEES UNION

FALL 2023

Dear members,

As we head towards the end of 2023, I've started to reflect on the tremendous challenges we have faced – both as individuals and as a collective – throughout the past year.

As we shakily emerged from the isolation and uncertainty of the pandemic, we immediately headed into a period of unprecedented inflationary pressures, adding an enormous amount of stress onto the shoulders of all citizens. I would say none moreso than working people, our members included. I am hearing first-hand from NSGEU members – many of whom have had to take on second jobs to try and make ends meet – that they simply cannot afford to live. They worry about buying groceries, or affording rent, or losing their home because of interest rate increases.



This economic stress has had an interesting consequence: it has caused more working people to speak up and demand more from their employers. People are finally paying attention to the impact that income inequality is having on their day-to-day lives and are speaking out for fairness, which is something the labour movement in Canada – the NSGEU included – has been talking about for a very long time.

The financial pressures we are under are forcing us to mobilize and fight for better deals at the bargaining table. Over the past 12 months alone, we have had two groups of members – our school support members in the Valley and the South Shore, and our administrative professionals at Nova Scotia Health and IWK – reject deals and vote decisively to take strike action to achieve more. And we are already gearing up to bargain for many more groups of members in the coming months.

We hear you, and we will be there with you, doing our part to hold governments and employers to account in an effort to ensure we can achieve fair contracts that recognize the importance of the services you deliver, and the economic situation we are in.

At the same time, many of us are also struggling to access health care, thanks to the erosion of our public health care system at the hands of successive governments who have been single-mindedly fixated on

creating the illusion of balanced budgets, rather than building capacity within the system. As much as I am certain there is no one magic-bullet solution to repairing our beleaguered system, I am equally confident that the best way forward is not to allow government to continue to hive off and further privatize health care in Canada. We must continue our advocacy together to protect our public health care system.

Finally, we are being assailed with images of the unspeakable horrors of war, conflict and loss, and closer to home, have acutely felt the impact of the climate crisis in the form of wildfires and flooding. Our national union – the National Union of Public and General Employees – is speaking out and mobilizing to address these crises on the larger world stage.

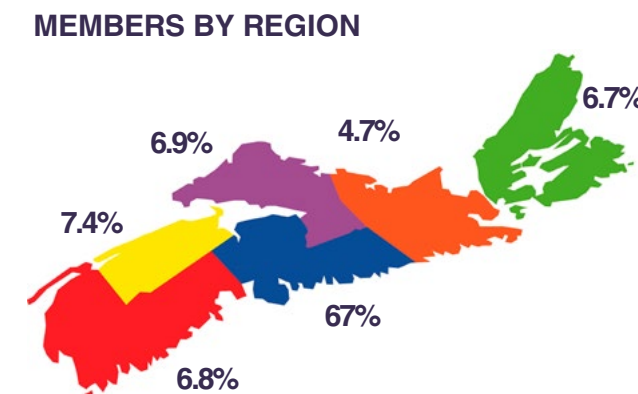
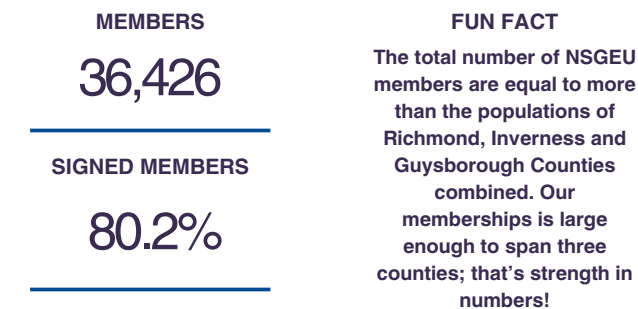
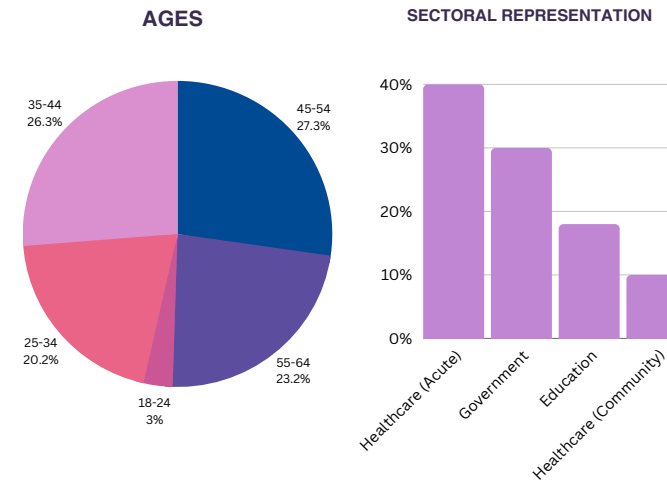
All told, these are heavy times. The only way through them is with the strength of solidarity. Our Board and committees are working to try and make life better: they're making charitable donations to groups like Feed Nova Scotia, organizing our annual Sock it to Poverty campaign, and partnering on projects like the North American Indigenous Games.

Please join us in this work. Get involved in your union in whatever way you are able: joining a local meeting, completing your bargaining surveys, participating in union education, even just visiting our website and following us on social media.

In solidarity,

Sandra Mullen
President, NSGEU

YOUR UNION AT A GLANCE



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NSGEU TWEETS

@Unifor Sept 25
Unifor, @cupenovascotia and @NSGEU held rallies outside 11 hospitals across #novascotia to demand a fair deal for health care administrative professionals, without whom the system could not function.
@TimHoustonNS @nshealth @IWKHealth
- it's time for wage increases!
#nspoli
@ChenderClaudia Sept 25
I was so glad to be able to join the Nova Scotia Health Care Professionals Day of Action today outside of the CB Regional Hospital today with @KCoombesCBCTWP
These workers keep healthcare running in this province and they deserve a fair deal! #nspoli
@TVeinotteShow Sept 21
Listen live: <http://player.halifax.citynews.ca>
#thetoddveinotteshow
@NSGEU

CONNECT WITH US!

We want to hear from our members. If you have thoughts on this issue of The Stand, or ongoing union issues, send us your feedback! You can email us at inquiry@nsgeu.ca or connect with us:

- facebook.com/NSGEU
- @NSGEU

THE STAND

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Administrative Professionals' Deal

Throughout Nova Scotia, there are thousands of administrative professionals toiling away in our hospitals and community care settings. While they often don't get the accolades and attention that other health care professionals do – typically because their work is more behind-the-scenes than hands-on patient care – they are every bit as integral to keeping our health care system functioning, especially in these chaotic times.

Last October, the NSGEU headed to the bargaining table along with CUPE and Unifor to begin negotiations for a new contract for the more than 5,000 Health Administrative Professionals (HAP) working for Nova Scotia Health and IWK whom we collectively represent in this sector.

These professionals are the first point of contact with patients; manage registrations; control the switchboard and communications; ensure test labels are accurate; assign beds; share lab results with clinical staff; book appointments, transfers and admissions; order and receive supplies; manage payroll; and much more. Without these professionals and their labour, health care just doesn't work.

We bargain for this group – as well as for health support services, nursing, and health care – as part of a Council of Unions, because of legislation passed by Stephen McNeil's government, with CUPE designated as lead at the HAP table.

Due in large part to delays on the part of the employers, as well as COVID restrictions slowing down negotiations for the other Council tables who had been designated to go ahead of the HAP group, by the time HAP got to the bargaining table in October 2022, their contract was already two years expired.

Another important factor to note with regard to timing is inflation: a wage pattern for the public sector had already been established by the health care table prior to inflation taking off in 2022. That meant that the annual wage increases agreed upon by other groups now did not keep pace with the soaring rates of inflation (which averaged 6.8 per cent for 2022).

With some members of the bargaining unit earning as little as \$18 per hour, pattern economic adjustments totaling 6.5% over the life of the agreement were seen by many as unacceptable, especially in the face of the unprecedented inflationary pressures we



NSGEU President Sandra Mullen gives an interview during an Administrative Professional's rally in Halifax in September.

were now facing. What the government was offering these workers now essentially amounted to a wage cut. By April 2023, after many days at the bargaining table with the employers, the committee brought back a final offer from the employer with the recommendation to accept, as they believed it was the best they were able to achieve at the table.

Members ultimately rejected that agreement by a very narrow margin, but fewer than half of the members of the bargaining unit voted on the agreement. Ratification votes and strike votes are calculated in different ways: ratification votes are based on the number of ballots cast, whereas strike votes are calculated based on the total number of members in the bargaining unit. So, it was imperative to increase membership engagement. We needed to send a clear message to government and employers that health admin members were prepared to walk if they didn't improve their offer.

The unions immediately got to work: members were taken off the job to begin phone banking, calling their fellow members to talk to them about why a strong strike mandate was critical, and answering questions about what a strike in their workplace would look like. A series of meetings were held with the members, leadership traveled to work sites throughout the province to talk to the members, and [radio ads began to run](#) throughout Nova Scotia. By June, the unions had an 81.5 per cent strike mandate in place.

At the same time as this strike vote work was taking

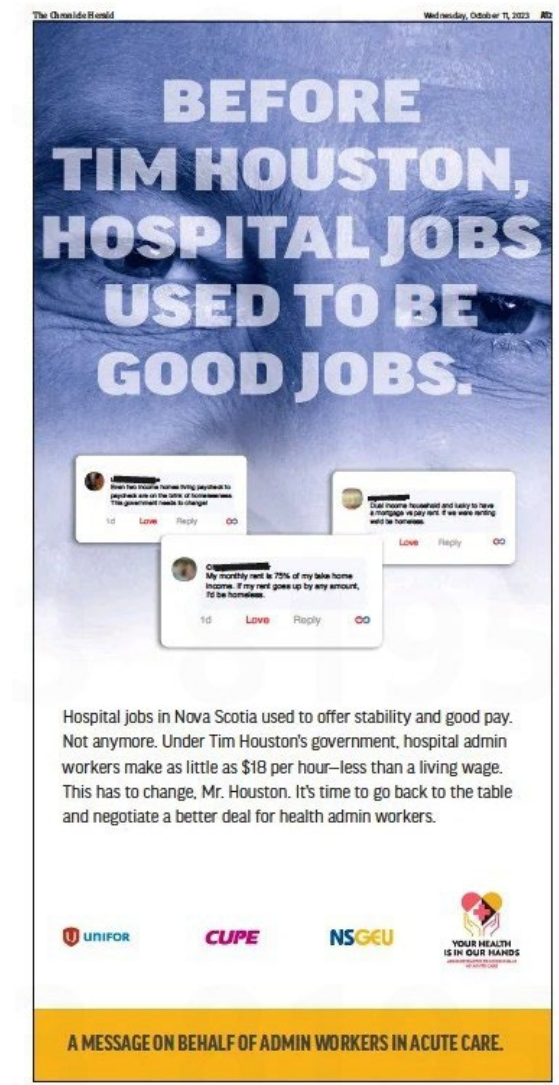
place, the unions were pushing the employers to provide an essential services plan.

You see, the McNeil government had also passed another piece of legislation, the Essential Health and Community Service Act, which requires unions and employers to negotiate an essential services' staffing plan prior to taking legal strike action. The employers had been dragging their feet on the essential service process, essentially hiding behind this anti-union legislation in an attempt to prevent job action.

As the unions and their legal team attempted to pressure the employers to engage in the essential services process in a meaningful way, the employer also refused to return to the table with the unions: a clear sign that they were in no rush to conclude a collective agreement, or take this group seriously. It was time to increase the pressure.

We launched a series of e-actions, asking members and their supporters to send messages to elected officials to start taking their profession and their negotiations seriously. Members were encouraged to set up meetings with the MLAs and show up at their community events to discuss the matter. The unions began an onslaught of media releases calling out government for

their refusal to bargain a fair collective agreement for these members – 85 per cent of whom are women – launched [new province-wide radio ads](#), and took out full-page ads in newspapers to ask why Premier Tim Houston didn't respect low wages work.



In early September, the unions held a province-wide Day of Action in front of 11 hospitals. Members wore red to show how angry they were with employers and government for how they were being treated in the bargaining process – and encouraged their colleagues to do the same. People turned out in droves for the lunch-time action, with all major media outlets turning up to cover the event:

- The Chronicle Herald: [‘Need a good pay increase’ to stay afloat: Health admin workers rally across N.S.](#)
- Cape Breton Post: [Administrative health-care workers in Cape Breton accuse province of disrespect](#)
- CBC 6 o’clock news (6:16 mark): <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2266909763717>



- Canadian Press/CityNews: [N.S. hospital administrative staff hold rallies across province for higher wages](#)
- Global Halifax: [N.S. hospital administrative staff hold rallies across province for higher wages](#)
- CTV Atlantic: [Health Care administrators picket in NS](#)
- Halifax Examiner: [Health care administrative professionals rally across Nova Scotia demanding better pay](#)

Government and the employers were sufficiently – and rightfully – embarrassed. We quickly received a request to return back to the bargaining table on October 11th, and after one final long day at the table with employers, the bargaining committee was able to bring back an improved offer to the membership, with a recommendation to accept.

The offer that was brought forward was a five-year

deal which included cumulative wage increases totaling between 15.15 to 22.75 per cent within the life of the agreement. Specifically, the contract includes pattern economic adjustments totaling 6.5% over the first three years of the agreement (Nov. 1st, 2020 to October 31st, 2023) PLUS new economic adjustments as follows:

- All classifications with a top rate of less than \$20 per hour as of October 31st, 2022 will receive an extra \$1 per hour increase at each step prior to the 3.0% increase effective November 1st, 2022;
- All classifications will receive an extra \$0.80 per hour increase, effective November 1st, 2023, prior to the 3% general economic increase on November 1st, 2023.
- Increase of 3.0% to all pay grades on

November 1st, 2023;

- Increase of 2.0% to all pay grades on November 1st, 2024

The contract also includes significantly increased shift and weekend premiums, as well as substantive improvements in various leave provisions.

Members of the Health Administrative Professionals bargaining unit voted to accept the improved tentative agreement by 77 per cent.

While we are pleased to have concluded this lengthy round of bargaining and to have achieved a much-improved collective agreement for our HAP members, it’s important to note that even with the significant financial gains achieved here, there are members of this bargaining unit who will still be earning less than what is considered to be a living wage, and we will be looking to rectify that during the next round of bargaining. ■



Administrative Professional’s rally in support of higher wages in Halifax in September.

Political Update

The Fall 2023 session of the Nova Scotia Legislature wrapped up on the evening of November 9th. It was a short, four-week session marked by the passage of significant (and sometimes contentious) legislation.

If the Fall session's legislative agenda were to have a theme, it would have been the lack of consultation by the Houston government with key stakeholders. The current government seems driven to amalgamate as much power within the hands of the Premier and cabinet ministers, while reducing the important role the legislature and all of its elected members should have in governing the province.

The key pieces of legislation were:

Bill 323 (Regulated Health Professions Act):

The government claimed that this bill would streamline health-care professional regulations and reduce red tape and attract more professionals to the province. This bill will impact many occupations represented by the NSGEU already government by their own Acts. The bill was passed and the NSGEU will be monitoring the government's implementation carefully.

Bill 329 (HRM Charter and Housing Act):

This controversial bill grants the housing minister broad powers to make decisions on development in Halifax without consulting the municipality or residents. While the government used expediency as their excuse, it was

an outright power grab, with the provincial government inserting itself into municipal planning and decision making.

Bill 334 (Health Services and Insurance Act)

The objective of this legislation is a good one, to provide universal mental health and addictions care to people in need. But like a lot of recent legislation from this government, it lacked any kind of consultation or outreach to those it most impacts.

The bill gives the Minister broad powers to contract out mental health and addictions services and removes the requirement to seek the approval of Cabinet before doing so. Nova Scotians have called for more scrutiny of these kinds of agreements. This bill hands all decision making to the Minister of Mental Health and

Addictions.

With the passage of this bill we will all have to remain vigilant as government will try to increase the use of private sector resources in health care and possibly open the flood gates to Public Private Partnerships in mental health and addictions services.

Your union will be actively monitoring this.

Bill 339 (Financial Measures Act)

The Financial Measures Act was an omnibus bill, a bill that normally deals with numerous small changes in a variety of Acts. However, Bill 339 included a significant change to the Public Service Superannuation Act which

governs the PSSP pension plan. Bill 339 changed the Public Service Superannuation Act to allow private sector employers to be admitted to the PSSP.

The NSGEU supports the governments direction to increase private sector participation in the Public Service Superannuation Plan (PSSP) however with such a significant change, the NSGEU felt that other needed changes were neglected. For example, the PSSP is not providing cost-of-living increases also known as indexing for its retirees, thereby reducing retiree incomes year after year. Especially in these times of runaway inflation.

The NSGEU asked government to consider changes to the formula used to determine cost of living increases that would move the plan from a five review to having a review in any calendar year where the Consumer Price Index exceeds 3% and the plan funding exceeds 105%.

The Fall session was a mere four weeks and illustrated how eager government can be to avoid consultation and public input. However, following the rancorous debates and the use of traditional delaying tactics and actions that further reduced decorum on the floor of the legislature, there were commitments by all three party leaders to work together to find a way to improve how our Legislature works.

Nova Scotians deserve a system that is driven to get results to improve the lives of Nova Scotians and less focused on the acrimony and theatre that can consume debate on the floor of our Legislature.



Municipal officials decry 'autocratic intrusion' of Bill 329 to law amendments committee

Bill would give N.S. housing minister sweeping powers over HRM

CBC News · Posted: Oct 16, 2023 5:14 PM ADT | Last Updated: October 16

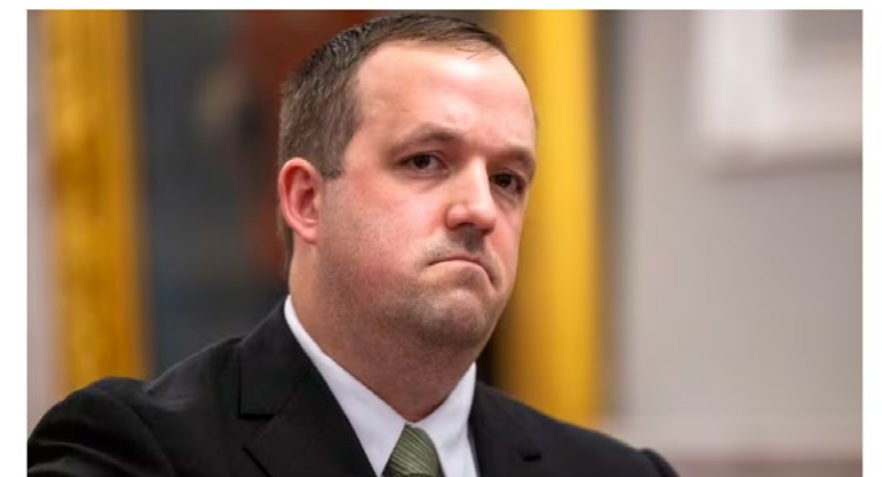


Halifax Regional Municipality Mayor Mike Savage appears at the law amendments committee on Monday. (Jean Laroche/CBC)

N.S. government takes step toward public access to private mental health, addiction care

Amended legislation would allow for publicly funded services using private providers

Michael Gorman · CBC News · Posted: Oct 13, 2023 4:32 PM ADT | Last Updated: October 13



Brian Comer is Nova Scotia's minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions. (Robert Short/CBC)

Board Highlights

The NSGEU Board of Directors has met twice since the last issue of The Stand came out! Here are highlights from both of those meetings:

September

- The Board passed an updated strategic plan for the union. They reviewed the five goals that will guide the decision-making process for the union over the remainder of the term. Those five goals are: Goal #1 - Collective bargaining – better contracts – improving the lives of members; Goal #2 - Strengthening leadership and communication with members; Goal #3 – Education & Technology; Goal #4 - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; and Goal #5 - Public Perception & Community Relations;
- They met with Danny Cavanagh as he prepared to reoffer as President for the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour in November;
- They determined a lead table bargaining plan;
- An Anti-Privatization Ad-Hoc Committee was struck to combat privatization throughout the public sector. Members of the committee were elected from Canadian Blood Services, Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation, Civil Service, Corrections, and Health Support Services.

November

- The Board approved the budget for 2024, after lengthy budgetary preparations from committees and extensive work on behalf of the Financial Director;
- The approved budget includes an expanded education program, including a new winter Labour School;
- Planning is currently underway for a Leadership Engagement Day and Diversity Summit in early 2024.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for December 1st and 2nd. ■



NSGEU Member Bursary Awards

The following have been selected by the NSGEU Education Committee and ratified by the NSGEU Board of Directors to receive awards.

- \$1000 Bill Herbert Memorial- Rebecca White, Local 470E
- \$1000 Carmen Williams Memorial- Foeoozan Keshavarzi, Local 1246
- \$1000 Kathleen Morrison Memorial- Lazshell Martell, Local 119
- \$1000 Christena MacMillan, Local 267D
- \$1000 Chelsie Wiseman, Local 1246
- \$1000 Kaleigh Rand, Local 8
- \$1000 Jagdeep Kaler, Local 101
- \$1000 Kourtney Crosby, Local 1246
- \$1000 Cheryl Pace, Local 119
- \$1000 Jennifer Cottreau, Local 100
- \$1000 Sylvia McCulloch, Local 2
- \$1000 Aprill Susin, Local 101
- \$1000 Amy Richard, Local 119
- \$1000 Mallory Daly, Local 8
- \$1000 Amanda Sabeau, Local 101

NSGEU Member Dependent Bursary Winners

The following have been selected by the NSGEU Education Committee and ratified by the NSGEU Board of Directors to receive awards:

- \$1,000 Julia Prager, member Jennifer Prager, Local 1246
- \$1,000 Celty Biggins, member Tricia Biggins, Local 77
- \$1000 Evan Brannen, member Joanne Brannen, Local 16
- \$1000 Keely McKay, member Erin McKay, Local 2
- \$1000 Libby Wilcox, member Catherine Wilcox, Local 4
- \$1000 Sophie Ernst, member Tracy Miller, Local 100
- \$1000 Gabrielle Frosst, member Melvin Frosst, Local 17
- \$1000 Benjamin Anthony, member Tahnee Anthony, Local 104
- \$1000 Brona Higginbotham, member Karen Higginbotha, Local 222
- \$1000 Tom Barry, member David Barry, Local 480F
- \$1000 Chase Deviller, member Brad Deviller, Local 267B
- \$1000 Alec Howie, member Kelly Nicholson, Local 122
- \$1000 Peyton Notman, member Tracey Notman, Local 101
- \$1000 Jenna Hire, member Shlley Hire, Local 2671
- \$1000 Jordan MacIsaac, member Natalie MacIsaac, Local 1

Scholarship & Bursary Winners

NSGEU is pleased to provide financial assistance to members in good standing and their dependents who are pursuing higher education. There are bursaries for NSGEU members and a range of scholarships, bursaries, and awards for members' dependents.



Member Dependant Scholarship Winners:

- \$1500 Isaac Sawa, member Michele Brake, Local 122, David Peters Award
- \$2500 Adelaide Scott, member Gregory Scott, Local 470B, Adrian Timmons Memorial Award
- \$1500 Meghan Strickland, member Darnise Strickland, Local 4, Greg Blanchard Award
- \$1500 Karl Karam, member Katia Fathallah, Local 72, Alex Buchanan Memorial Award
- \$1500 Taylor MacIsaac, member Natalie MacIsaac, Local , Aubrey Stevens Memorial Award

Nova Scotia Must Say No to Pay-For-Plasma

A pay-for-plasma private clinic, Canadian Plasma Resources, is opening in Halifax – just down the street from the site of a new hospital near Bayers Lake. In the U.S., Corporations make billions from primarily poor peoples’ blood. With rents that have doubled and grocery prices rising... Quebec, BC and Ontario have banned private plasma blood clinics. Why hasn’t Premier Tim Houston?

On September 19, Mary Otto, President of Local 43, Canadian Blood Services, NSGEU Board member, and NS Health Coalition Board member, attended a small but mighty demonstration and gave a moving and inspired speech about the importance of investing in our public blood supply system and the risks associated with the privatization of it as laid out in the Krever report in 1997. Here is the link to a short video we did. https://youtu.be/PXAriw04QfY?si=P_gyUF43Z_F0vGHg

Below is Mary Otto’s speech:

As the President of Local 43, Canadian Blood Services, I represent workers who put forward a resolution to go to the NSGEU, as well as the Federation of Labour, to fight the practice of ‘pay-for-plasma’ and to keep this system out of this province.

But my main motivation behind this is a very personal one. I was very aware from the time I was a child of the tainted blood scandal because I had family members affected by it. They were infected by tainted blood, and it was preventable. The Krever report found that the Red Cross knew that there was infected blood - and it was about spending money for testing.

Money should never, ever, be involved in making decisions over health care because this is what can

happen when you put money first. Tragedy happens. The cost of life is the price that we pay.

People will say the tainted blood scandal was 25 years ago - a long time ago. Well, fractionation was around 25 years ago when Justice Krever made came out with recommendations for our Canadian blood system - that no one should ever be paid for blood. It is also not 25 years ago to the people who are still living with infections from tainted blood.

At the beginning of COVID, our fridges at CBS were emptier than I had ever seen them. The Prime Minister came out saying, “please donate blood, we need it”. Alberta overturned the Voluntary Blood Donations Act which banned money for blood and opened the doors to ‘paid plasma’ in their province. While this was happening, I had a family member die of cancer that was 100% caused by tainted blood. It actually was in his obituary. So, it’s not a 25 year ago issue to anyone who has been affected by tainted blood. They and their families are still living with the consequences. I also have to say the workers of Canadian Blood Services care deeply about the people who are receiving the blood.

Personally, I think about it every day. At least once a week, I think

about my Uncle David who died as a result of tainted blood, or my father, who did not trust the blood system after the tainted blood scandal. A number of years ago, my father had to have several blood transfusions. And afterwards, he said to me, “please thank your coworkers, because I know that I am not going to get an infection and die.” He said, “I don’t have to worry about the blood that I’m receiving because I know that it’s a voluntary system. I know you. I know the processes that are in place.”



President of Local 43, and NSGEU Board member Mary Otto speaks at say no to pay for plasma rally.

So, we need to understand that patients want and need blood, but they don’t want it from the paid donors. ‘Pay-for-plasma’ is terrifying to people in my family who need blood products.

And the ‘pay-for-plasma’ companies say we are already dependent on a paid blood product. [We already buy it.] This is something that we should be looking at as Canadians. Why are we increasing our reliance on a product that exploits vulnerable people? [‘Pay-for-plasma’ companies are concentrated in poor neighborhoods in cities across the US preying on vulnerable people.] Shameful. It is shameful. We have the capability to increase our voluntary system. We should not be partnering with paid plasma companies to undermine and pull donors out of the voluntary system.

All we need to look at is Quebec. Quebec has their own blood system. They’ve come out and said, this [pay-for-plasma] is not happening in Quebec. They have managed to increase their plasma collections. They are so far ahead of where we are. We can do this same thing with a voluntary system.

All it takes is the political will to invest in public plasma clinics that are already being opened across the country by Canadian Blood Services. Why would we pay this private company to collect plasma on our behalf? It makes absolutely no sense.

They say that the reason people don’t donate is because they’re not asked. So, I’m going to make an ask. I’m going to ask all of you to please consider coming out donating and supporting our voluntary system. And please, please, please write to your politicians, and let them know you don’t want pay-for-plasma here. I can tell you this is a conversation I’ve had with Tim Houston many times. He said, it makes sense.

Funding for Canadian Blood Services comes from the territories and provinces. We do not need to allow this. We do not need to have people selling their literal blood to feed their children or put a roof over their house. ■



The new pay for plasma private clinic in Bayers Lake.

NSGEU Women’s Committee visits Feed NS



NSGEU’s Women’s Committee has a special connection with Feed Nova Scotia, as years ago, they asked our Board of Directors to contribute to breakfast programs throughout the province, which is ultimately why we now donate \$14,000 annually to this worthy organization. This was the committee’s first post-pandemic visit, so it was interesting to hear the different ways the organization helped people who struggled during the height of the pandemic, and how they have now adapted to assist Nova Scotia’s growing unhoused population. ■



Trade Unionist of the Year: Hugh Gillis



Our very own 1st Vice President Hugh Gillis was awarded the Trade Unionist of the Year Award for 2023 from the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour at their 52nd Convention last week.

Hugh was recognized for his outstanding lifelong commitment to the trade union movement and the workers of Nova Scotia. Through his dedication and commitment, Nova Scotia is a better place to live and work! Congratulations, Hugh, and thank you for the work you do! ■

Experienced firefighters led the response to wildfires that raged in regions of Nova Scotia this spring and summer. Many of these firefighters, and many of them NSGEU members, were honoured at the legislature on October 12th. Scott Tingley, Dave Rockwood, Dave Steeves, James MacKinnon, Paul Schnurr, Jim Rudderham.

NSGEU President Mullen and 1st Vice-President Gillis were at Province House for the opening of the legislative session and were able to meet with and thank the firefighters on behalf of the membership. ■



Family Fun Day: Riverbreeze Corn Maze



NSFL Convention

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour met for their convention on Nov 5th, 6th and 7th. Resolutions were passed, NSGEU President Sandra Mullen, 1st VP Hugh Gillis, along with 60 delegates from NSGEU were in attendance. Hugh Gillis received the Trade Unionist of the Year award for 2023, and past President Jason MacLean received the award for 2021.



Celebrating our Members

During the Fall, we celebrate and show appreciation for a variety of professions represented by the NSGEU:

Allied Health Care Week (Nov. 1st to 8th)

Allied Healthcare Professionals are an incredibly diverse grouping of workers who play an integral role in our health care system. They are found in basically every area of acute health care: diagnostic services, laboratory services, hearing and speech, orthopaedic services, physical and mental health care services, prosthetics, anaesthetic services, paramedic, and rehabilitation services, and many other areas.

The NSGEU is proud to represent 4,558 Allied Healthcare Professionals, providing services throughout this province. To celebrate the work they do, NSGEU leadership have been touring worksites, and we have created a [podcast](#) and a [video](#) to draw attention to the importance of their work.

NEW Healthcare Support Services Recognition Week

This year, at the request of the NSGEU, Premier Tim Houston proclaimed the third week of October as Health Care Support Services Recognition Week, in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The proclamation reads: "Whereas Hundreds of health care support service employees work every day across our provincial hospitals and clinics performing vital roles that impact patient care and the smooth operation of

our healthcare facilities; and,

Whereas These employees manage building maintenance, laundry and housekeeping services, porter services or food services; and,

Whereas These employees all deserve our public recognition and appreciation for their important impact on the health and wellbeing of Nova Scotians; and, I, Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby declare this third week of October, Health Care Support Services Recognition Week, in the Province of Nova Scotia."

We are proud to represent 1,881 members working in Healthcare Support Services. Union leadership celebrated this week by visiting multiple worksites throughout the province and creating a series of videos to shine a light on the critical work being done by the members in this sector:

Video #1: Interview with Luke, Power Engineer; Maxine, Supply Aide; Cindy, Utility Worker.

Video #2: Interview with Kelly, Journeyman Cook; Shehera, Ward Aide; Raymond, Housekeeping.

Video #3: Interview with Shelley, Housekeeping; Matthew, Electrician; Donna, Environmental Services;

Video #4: Interview with Shawn, Short Order Cook; Sandy, Porter; Noreen & Maia, Food & Nutrition

Continuing Care Assistant Month & Week (Oct. 9th to 16th)

October is Continuing Care Month in Nova Scotia, with



CCA Week celebrated from October 9th to 16th this year.

The people who work in this sector make an incredible difference in the lives of people of all ages who need care and support in their homes and communities, and even within the acute care setting, where they work as Care Team Assistants (CTAs). These professionals all consistently go above and beyond to meet the unique needs of their clients and ensure the highest quality of care. NSGEU represents approximately 1,158 CCAs who work in home care, long term care and acute care settings throughout Nova Scotia.

To mark this month and week, President Sandra Mullen, Audrey McCabe, Local 28, Middle Musquodoboit and Madison Johnstone, Local 56, Wolfville, star in [this short tribute](#) to the amazing people who work as CCAs in Nova Scotia.

Thank you all for the important work that you do! ■



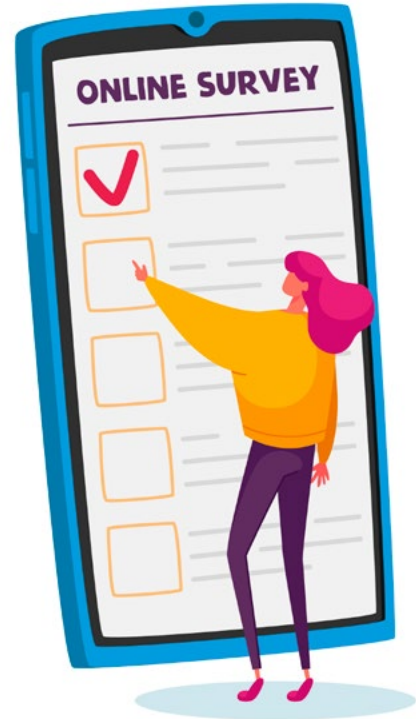
Communications Survey

Have your say on union communications and be entered to win movie passes!

We are always looking for better ways to reach our members about important union issues and events. We use a variety of tools to communicate with our members, and we would like to know what works best for you and what you'd like to see change or improve.

You should have already received an email with a link to our communications survey, which is open until Nov. 30th. Anyone who completes the survey will be entered into a draw to win one of two prize packs of four movie tickets (each member can only enter once). The draw will be end shortly after the survey has closed.

We appreciate your feedback on our communications, as it will help us continue to share important information with you into the future! Thank you! ■



Contest Winner



Congratulations to Jane Newton from Local 8, the winner of our SWAG Photo Contest. Jane took a photo at the Washington Monument proudly wearing her NSGEU t-shirt. She was one of many members who submitted a photo to our NSGEU SWAG contest this summer. Jane received her prize of a NSGEU gift basket from NSGEU 1st Vice-President Hugh Gillis this fall. ■

Together, we can help "Sock It To Poverty"

Every year, the NSGEU Human Rights Committee organizes a campaign called "Sock It To Poverty". They collect and purchase new winter items like socks, gloves, mitts, and scarves to be distributed to those in need across the province. Items collected or funds raised are distributed within the region from which the donation was made.

Until January 12th, 2024, we are asking all NSGEU members, if able, to do one or the other or both of the following:

- Attend your next Local meeting and make a motion/request that your local consider a financial donation to the campaign.
- Set up a donation site at your workplace to collect any NEW socks, mittens, and hats.

If you are setting up a donation site, you can download a poster for your donation site here. You can post the poster on bulletin boards or decorate the donation box with these posters. You can download a tally sheet for what you collect here. Once you have collected your donations, please contact your Local President or your Regional Chair.

Our Regional Councils plan to distribute the items shortly after the donation deadline of January 12th.

You can also drop items off at any NSGEU office (in Dartmouth, Yarmouth, Truro and Cape Breton). Our head office has regular office hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. However, you must make arrangements with the local regional chairpersons to use the other offices as the hours are not consistent.

If you take any photos of your Sock It To Poverty Donation Site, please forward them to the NSGEU Communications Officer at dslve@nsgeu.ca.

If you have any questions please contact Lynette Hayward-Byrd at hcommittee@nsgeu.ca (Human Rights Committee Chair.)

Thank you for your time and your energy on this important community campaign. ■



Should I Sign a Union Card?

Who doesn't want to be a member in good standing?

Sending us your membership application form is a great thing to do!

Signing and sending us your NSGEU membership application form is the way you become a member in good standing and the way you fully participate in your union. When we receive and process your application, we will send you back your union card.



- Have direct input into the bargaining priorities of your local by filling out a "bargaining input survey";
- Receive information from your local about meetings and events as well as local bargaining updates when you are in negotiations;
- Attend NSGEU [Education courses](#);
- Attend [Pre-retirement Seminars](#) to learn about retirement planning;
- Get email invitations to union-wide social events such as our Annual Free Family Day Picnic or our Annual Fall Family Fun Day;
- Access to NSGEU's Discount List, which offers savings from stores and services around the province including Marks Work Wearhouse and a variety of hotels and car rental agencies. (For the Discount List, see nsgeu.ca or contact us at 902-424-4063, 1-877-556-7438, or inquiry@nsgeu.ca);
- Access to MHCSI Preferred Pharmacy Provider Program (aka Lawton's Card). (For more information, see nsgeu.ca or contact us at 902-424-4063, 1-877-556-7438, or inquiry@nsgeu.ca);

Applying for membership provides the union with your current up-to-date contact information, including a personal email, if possible. This is important because the information we get from your employer may not be correct and/or it may not be the best way to reach you. A signed and accepted union card application means you are part of the NSGEU community and can participate fully in all the democratic aspects of it.

When you send us your application form and receive your union card it means you are a member in good standing which means you can:

- Participate fully in your local by having the right to vote for your local executive and other representatives like Regional & Occupational Councillors, as well as your health & safety representation, just to name a few;
- Participate in all votes during negotiations including whether to accept or reject a tentative agreement reached by your bargaining committee;

inquiry@nsgeu.ca);

- Apply for NSGEU scholarships, bursaries, or awards for yourself or your dependents;

If you have not yet received your membership package in the mail or if you would like to apply for membership, please contact us (902-424-4063, toll-free 877-556-7438, or inquiry@nsgeu.ca) and an application will be mailed to you with a postage-paid return envelope. Just fill it out, send it in, and you will be mailed your NSGEU membership card. We have a strict privacy policy;

your personal information will not be shared. If you have misplaced your NSGEU membership card, contact us and we'll send you a replacement.

What happens if I don't want to send in my membership application form and get a union card?

When you are hired into a position which is a unionized position and the union has received a signed payroll authorization card for deduction of dues, you are eligible to become a member of the union. Once your dues have been accepted, automatically, you enjoy all the bargaining gains achieved up until the time you were hired and any negotiated gains made in the future as long as you are a member. You have the right to be represented by your union should you encounter any problems with your employer, and you have the right to vote on whether to go on strike or not (if your workplace is under the Trade Union Act). Being part of unionized workplace means you

benefit from these basic things if you are a member in good standing or not. However, without signing a union application form and receiving a union card, our constitution states that you are not a member in good standing and cannot participate fully in union activities. The constitution was created by the membership and is maintained and upheld by the membership with a variety of objectives, including:



"1.3.5. To direct the structure of the Union towards providing participation of the membership so as to ensure that the Union always acts in the best interests of the membership." ■

Unions make a difference in our lives.

Unions fought for many of the benefits workers enjoy today: Sick leave, maternity & paternity leave, vacation, minimum wage, paid breaks, overtime, workplace safety standards and regulations, collective bargaining rights, and much more.

Do you know of a group of non-unionized workers who might be interested in joining the NSGEU? Please contact:

Lori Smith, Organizing Officer

902-456-6531 or 1877-556-7438 or lsmith@nsgeu.ca



Steward Profile: Toni Stewart- Local 267, NSCC

How long have you been a steward?

Two and a half years.

What made you want to become a steward?

I ran for Chief Steward (won by acclamation,) for two main reasons. First, I wanted to cement my relationship within the union itself, as I was having issues with my manager. It worked for me to do this. Second, many years ago, I was working as a Victim Services Team Lead for the Langley, BC, RCMP and I realized that standing up for members and being there to hear and empower them was very similar the skill set I developed when helping clients in my role. I find helping in this way to be fulfilling.



What issues do you typically deal with in your workplace as a Steward?

Bullying, harassment, re-classification, work tasks that are overlapped and out of the job description. Holiday, vacation, & wellness day issues in booking time. During the worst part of Covid, safety in the workplace issues

Have you faced any discrimination in the workplace by stepping forward to become a Steward?

Not that I am aware of.

What kind of skills has being a Steward given you?

The skills that I had from five years of being a Victim Services Team Lead, were reinforced and awakened with the training for being a steward. Listening, empathy, empowering, taking good notes, reaching out to our ERO for help when needed. The skills that have been taught in workshops by NSGEU and attending Labour School have been very helpful and informative, such as Domestic Abuse and the Workplace, issues within the trans-gendered community, going through case examples and role-playing have all helped.

New NSGEU Staff Recent staffing changes at NSGEU

Chana was previously a member of local 6, employed by Province of Nova Scotia, working as a Judicial Assistant for 14 years, and then as a Planning Technician with the Department of Natural Resources. Her favorite thing about working at NSGEU is that she gets to speak with a diverse membership everyday and help resolve issues and concerns that improve the working conditions of the members.

Chana Williams
Resource Centre



Leah is an Servicing Administrative Assistant at NSGEU. She previously worked at Nova Scotia Health, where she was a team lead in the Emergency Department. During that time, her passion was helping Local 1246 members as a Steward, and then VP for the Halifax Infirmary site. Leah says the best part about working at NSGEU is continuing to work with the members. She mentions this is the first time she has felt comfortable and supported being her authentic self at work, and says she feels valued and proud to bring all her uniqueness, everyday.

Leah Day (she/her)
Administrative Assistant



Before working at NSGEU, Sherry worked in Health Information Services with the NHS at the Abbie J. Lane Memorial Building and was a member of Local 1246. She says she really appreciated the friendly welcome she received when she started working at the NSGEU. Sherry says everyone is so knowledgeable and willing to help whenever they can, and make you feel like you are part of the team. She says she likes that her days are never boring or the same, and she gets to meet members from various locals from all over Nova Scotia.

Sherry Piccott
Receptionist/Typist
extended term



Happy Holidays

Warmest wishes from the leadership and staff at the NSGEU. Hope your holiday season is filled with happiness and joy!

Please see nsgeu.ca for our holiday office schedule.



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