

UPO: NEB MINORITY REPORT

Sisters and Brothers :

At the outset of this report I want to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and personal sacrifices put forward by all members of our negotiations committee and since I did not have the chance to do so in person, take this opportunity to thank each of them personally for their efforts.

For the following reasons I am recommending members of the Urban Operations Bargaining Unit vote NO to accepting the recommendation of the majority of the National Executive Board (NEB) on the tentative agreement for the Urban Operations bargaining unit:

In CUPW’s *Perspective* “Uniting for Progress” (September 2015), the Union outlined the program of demands for the current round of bargaining for both the Urban Operations and Rural and Suburban bargaining units. In his opening message the National President, on behalf of the National Executive Board, stated “this year” was the time to negotiate improvements and bring an end to concessions; a sentiment shared by the entire membership. The *Perspective* went on to announce to urban members that CUPW intended to recover rights and benefits that had been “taken from us” and at the same time negotiate important protections for the future.

Prior to the employer being served with the notice to bargain, the NEB set four (4) major objectives to achieve in this round of bargaining. The Board’s speaker notes for demand ratification votes stated:

1. *We intend to unite all operational postal workers in one collective agreement.*
2. *We intend to improve the wages, benefits and working conditions of all postal workers.*
3. *We intend to achieve real equality between urban and rural postal workers. And we intend to do this while at the same time protecting the existing seniority rights of members in both the RSMC and Urban groups.*
4. *And finally we plan to reach an agreement in which Canada Post agrees to expand and improve postal services to the public, including the restoration of home mail delivery, expansion of work at the retail counters, and an end to cutbacks and closures. In many ways these negotiations are extremely important because we are not only negotiating for ourselves, we are negotiating for all of our society.*

By an overwhelming majority, members agreed with these major objectives and our demands for this round of bargaining.

But while our negotiators, and a majority of the NEB were able to stop the employer’s rollbacks by agreeing to this tentative agreement, absolutely none of our “taken away” rights or benefits have been “taken back” and many important, if not vital demands for protecting our future and the future of our public postal service were left on the bargaining table.

What happened to these demands?

Demand # 11

All employees to be placed under the wage scales in effect for employees hired prior to February 1, 2013 and reduce the number of years required to reach the maximum wage rate. Eliminate the wage charts that apply to workers who start employment on February 1, 2013 or later.

As in the previous contract, this tentative agreement has newer workers hired on or after February 1, 2013 starting at approximately 75% of the maximum rate of each classification versus more senior workers who start at approximately 97% of the top rate. This 2 tier system also takes new workers years longer to reach their maximum pay rate once they are hired permanently. For newer workers in Group 1 it takes 7 years to reach the maximum pay rate instead of 2 years and in Group 2, its 7 years for new hires versus 5 years for pre-February 1, 2013 hires.

Such a 2-tier wage system does not belong in our collective agreement. It sells out future workers, and divides our work floors. It was wrong before and is wrong now.

Demand # 20

Reinstate Article 20 while ensuring no financial hardship to employees.

We remember the last round of bargaining when we agreed to give away our sick leave due to an unconstitutional law imposed by Stephen Harper hanging over our heads. In the 2015-2016 National Program of Demands, the message was clear that we wanted our sick leave back.

Achieving this demand would ensure workers were paid 100% of their wage when they were off work due to illness and not the 70% that the STD pays. Let’s be clear: the STD was never a demand of the membership and sick time worked for workers. Instead of having to prove you were sick and having to divulge confidential medical information to the employer, one only had to provide a doctor’s note in order to maintain their pay.

When it comes to claims due to mental health issues, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to prove depression, stress or anxiety. Members with mental health issues are often very vulnerable and our previous sick leave provisions provided them better protections.

As with any round of collective bargaining with Canada Post the Union is never able to achieve every one of our demands and so many times important issues are often left unresolved. But not achieving every one of your demands is vastly different than not achieving most of your demands. Sadly the latter is the case with this tentative agreement. When you compare our program of demands with the changes made to this tentative agreement, you will clearly see how few demands were actually achieved.

Among those demands left on the table, in addition to those listed previously in this report (Demands 11 and 20) are:

1. Our demands for full job security for all Regular employees (Demand #1).
 - With the failure to adjust the date in 53.01 to the date of signing, new hires without the 5 years or more of continuous service will be left without full job protections.
2. Demands for most of the improvements for Temporary employees (Demand #25) .
 - Like in an increase to payment in lieu of benefits, entitlement to night workers leave and pay increments under Appendix “A”.
3. Demands which would strengthen Appendix “P” and other Group 1 staffing protections (Demands 59, 60 and 61).
 - These demands would compel the employer to create jobs, when the need is proven, instead of constantly deleting them.
4. A demand for access to vitally important software, programs and systems used by the employer during Group 2 restructures (Demand #54).
 - Without access to this information, the employer is able to unfairly manipulate restructures to increase workloads and slash routes.
5. Demands which would address the problem of forced overtime (Demand #69)
 - Our demands would restrict forced overtime and allow a better quality of work and home life balance.

It is clear that despite a majority of the NEB accepting a unanimous recommendation from the negotiations committee, that the four major objectives set out by the Board at the start of these negotiations, objectives which were based on the demands submitted from the membership, have largely not been met with this agreement.

Postal workers know full well that this employer has never given us anything but disrespect and hardship. The wages, benefits and protections we enjoy today were only achieved through the collective determination and strength of the membership who came before us. We should not be under any illusion that any improvements we want going forward will be achieved through any other way.

Sisters and brothers, this is the time, with no more Harper government, a favourable court decision on Bill C-6, massive public support across the country, and overwhelming support of the members for their demands, to make real progress. By voting No we are sending a strong and emphatic message to Canada Post and the government that we are prepared to use our collective strength to achieve more than just the status quo.

In Solidarity,

Jeff Callaghan
National Director, Atlantic Region