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Negotiation Update

In the last update, just prior to Winter Break, we mentioned that we expected to apply for a mediator to be appointed by Alberta Employment and Immigration Mediation Services and we did so on Jan. 20th. To date we have not heard back but expect to within days. Once appointed, the mediator will arrange dates for the parties to meet and will work with them to try to finalize an agreement. They will ultimately either make (non-binding) recommendations for settlement or 'sign off' without recommendations. This is a mandatory step under the Labour Code that must occur before the parties are in a legal position to pursue any kind of 'pressure tactics' such as a lockout or strike. Certainly it is our hope that the process will facilitate reaching an agreement, which doesn't seem likely otherwise. If that's not the case, we'll be in a position to look at alternatives to the same end.

From our perspective we're really down to a couple of important issues – monetary (both agreements) and some parameters around changing weekly hours of work for Main body. While we've tentatively agreed on what those parameters could/would be, CBE is not prepared to go there unless they can barter it for expanding the 'regular' hours of the day (hours during which work can be scheduled without incurring a premium) and limiting the application of any such premium. Their primary thrust with PSS is to alter the fundamental basis of the agreement around some degree of self-management of hours to meet the needs of the clients to one of straight hourly based compensation with hours totally controlled by management.

With respect to salaries, there has been little willingness from CBE to consider anything other than their original offer from November and if this is going to change it seems unlikely it will be before the provincial deal with the teachers and provincial budget are known. While that may make some sense looking forward, it makes less with respect to our wages for last school year and the current school year. As you know, CBE's proposal for those **two** years is for **0%** increase in wages with a lump sum payment upon ratification of between \$285 and \$1,000, depending on your hours of work / FTE. The only rationale they've provided for such an approach relative to the AAWE that other major boards have agreed to for those two years is that you're being paid too much already compared to them! Of course the comparisons are selective at best and look just at hourly rates in the absence of what the work is, qualifications required and so forth. The only other rationale is the usual 'got no money'. Clearly an organization with an approximately \$1 Billion budget has resources – it's really a matter of priorities.

As we move forward with mediation and possibly beyond, it will be increasingly important to be able to communicate quickly and effectively with the membership. We are looking into venues in each quadrant of the city to have a series of meetings open to all members to discuss negotiations and to both share information with and receive input from you. Watch for more on this in the near future. Also, if you have not yet created your profile through our 'Member Log-in' on our website, please take a few minutes to do so. We hope to be able to send information directly to you by e-mail as well, but that requires us to have your (non-CBE) address.

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