

BARGAINING UPDATE

TOWN OF PONOKA

LOCAL: 118
CHAPTER: 004

ALL EMPLOYEES
(except those on IBEW certifications)

JANUARY 19, 2021

APPLICATION FOR MEDIATION

Your bargaining committee has decided to apply for mediation, after the Employer rejected our offer for settlement.

Our offer, provided to the Town on September 25, 2020, identified our key priority areas:

- Improvements to benefits and parity with out of scope staff for the Health Spending Account (\$1,000 up from \$500)
- Parity with out of scope staff for personal days – increase from 4 to 5
- General wage increases: 2020 – 0%, 2021 – 1.5%, 2022 – 1.5%
- Increasing premiums for shift workers: Evening/night - \$1.50 - \$2.50; Weekend - \$1.50 - \$2.75
- Recognition for long-serving employees – Increase vacation after 30 years in line with the Government of Alberta employees (35 days after 30 years of service)

After numerous delays, we received a written response from the Employer on January 5, 2021, which we discussed through virtual bargaining on January 15, 2021. The Town's response maintains their position from last spring that they will not consider any significant monetary improvements. The only monetary improvement they are willing to make is to reimburse \$200 annually (instead of every two years) for employees required to wear safety footwear.

We were also concerned that the Town expressed in their written response that they could not make improvements to the collective agreement without considering layoffs:

"I can tell you that the Town, at this point in time, is not considering layoffs of any type and will strive to continue with that approach. In reality there is no way that the Town could even consider taking this approach if we were to accept the Union's package proposal as is."

Although we clearly communicated numerous times that we have room for movement from our September 25 proposal, we cannot accept the Town's assertion that they cannot make any significant monetary improvements. It is clear that our Employer believes we should just be satisfied to continue to remain employed.

We were also concerned that their written response used the pandemic as a blanket excuse to hold off on any increases to staff compensation:

"We don't know, however, what the provincial or municipal landscape will look like at the end of this pandemic, nor do we have any idea how long it will last. For these reasons we must be particularly cognizant of how we administer our residents' resources as well as how we appear in their eyes, given the situation many of them find themselves in."

Framing their choice as one between making monetary improvements and laying off staff (or raising rates for that matter), is a strawman argument that does not respect the dedicated service of Town employees, many of whom are also residents. The Town has not provided financial documentation to demonstrate that these are the only choices available. They make choices all the time about how to allocate resources, and modest monetary improvements for staff is a choice that is within their power to make.

As a result, bargaining has reached an impasse, so we have decided to enlist the support of a neutral third-party mediator. AUPE is currently in the process of applying for mediation, and we will be sure to keep you updated on our progress.

If you would like any more information, or to share any questions, concerns or feedback you may have, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your bargaining committee or AUPE resource staff.

(Please see page 2 for contact information)



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