

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

BARGAINING UPDATE

AUGUST 26, 2021

NAIT

LOCAL: 038

SUPPORT STAFF

EMPLOYER PROPOSES 4% WAGE ROLLBACK BARGAINING COMMITTEE REMAINS COMMITTED TO FIGHTING ROLLBACKS

On July 20, 2021 your AUPE Local 038 negotiations committee met with the NAIT bargaining team for a round of negotiations. During that meeting, the employer gave your negotiations committee a presentation regarding NAIT's finances and the fiscal "realities" of the Government of Alberta. At the end of the presentation the employer provided us with the NAIT's salary proposal.

- A contract that covers July 1, 2020 until June 30, 2023.
- Minus four per cent in the first year of the collective agreement (which will not be retroactive) and then zero per cent for each year after.
- Wage adjustments for three job classifications.

Your bargaining team was not surprised by this proposal, despite being frustrated by it. We're not the only ones facing these proposals—across the province, the government has been proposing wage rollbacks as a top negotiating priority, and employers are proposing some version of those rollbacks at the majority of tables in the public sector.

The employer notes that 67 per cent of their budget is comprised of staff salaries and benefits. This should not be surprising as we are a service-based entity. We do not produce and sell goods, we provide our services and expertise to teach those who have come here to learn. NAIT did not mention that AUPE salaries only make up 25 per cent of that 67 per cent.

Let's put some context around the proposed four per cent rollback. We had originally expected a proposal for a three per cent rollback, however when arbitrators awarded one per cent increases around the province, the United Conservative Party decided that they needed to claw that back as well. The UCP's position is a very serious attack—it does not reflect fair and respectful bargaining.

While NAIT is being pressured by the government, we all need to remember that they made a decision to follow the mandate rather than take the penalties associated with going against it. We don't fault them for their proposal, but we do want to acknowledge NAIT had a choice in the matter.

The other significant proposal the employer put forward was a job adjustment to the Library Tech II (minus 1.3 per cent), Finance/Accounting Assistant I (minus 6.9 per cent), and Buyer II (minus 9.2 per cent) classifications. NAIT is proposing to adjust the salary grid by those amounts for future employees. Anyone at the top of those grids would be red circled meaning that after the 4% reduction there would be no future salary increases for those individuals until the grid catches up to their salary.

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Your negotiations committee believes that NAIT is not doing a full investigation into those classifications. They are only looking at public comparators and have not questioned what it takes to recruit into the positions against a private sector.

While NAIT claims they have made their monetary proposal we are still waiting on many proposals that have financial implications to the membership. There have been no proposals tabled by NAIT surrounding benefits, the flexible spending account, or parking—just to name a few. While the proposal to reduce salaries by four per cent is a shock, your negotiations committee is aware of other proposals at other bargaining tables that are also impacting account benefits and flexible spending accounts.

These proposals are very troubling. They have consequences for our pensions. And they have consequences for every family and household coming out of a global pandemic.

Your negotiations committee remains committed to fighting on your behalf for a fair deal, but we can't do it alone. Now is the time for AUPE Local 038 members to come together collectively to decry this insulting offer. We need to hear from you. We need your stories so we can present them at the table. If NAIT will not do what's right, then we'll need to shame them and show them that we will fight for respect and for our rights.

Your negotiations committee will continue to fight very hard on your behalf at the table, but NAIT and its management need to see the discontent in the work force. They need to see that you are taking all of your breaks because that is your right. They need to understand that the overtime is getting gratuitous and it's unsustainable. And they need to learn that in some areas, overtime is not at straight time and that it's your right to choose whether you bank the time at the appropriate overtime rates or whether you want to be paid for it.

We need to be very frustrated and mad with this poor proposal and we need to find ways to express that message to NAIT. If any of us choose to remain silent, the employer will interpret that silence as an endorsement of their proposal to slash our salaries.

This will be a long battle to achieve a fair deal. We would like to remind you that we do not have access to binding arbitration. This means that at some point in time if bargaining stalls or reaches an impasse then job action may become a consideration of the membership.

Please keep discussions and messages related to bargaining to your personal time—not while you are on work time. It's also important to remember that NAIT has the capacity to monitor emails and Teams chats if the topic arises.

Please reach out to your AUPE Local 038 negotiations committee with any concerns, questions, or thoughts. We highly discourage you from reaching out to the NAIT bargaining team as they are not bargaining on your behalf, they are bargaining to increase the rights of Management.

Together, we can win a fair contract that respects the essential work that we all do at NAIT. It won't be easy, but we can do it. And our most powerful tool is solidarity.

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