

ALBERTA UNION OF PROVINCIAL EMPLOYEES

BARGAINING UPDATE

JANUARY 10, 2022

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD

LOCAL: 118

CHAPTER: 020

ALL CERTIFIED STAFF

Negotiations team condemns PBCO meddling It's time for the employer to come back to the table

It's been nearly two months since your negotiations team at the Special Areas Board last heard from the employer, and our patience is beginning to wear thin.

Since you and your co-workers democratically rejected the employer's "final offer" in the fall, your negotiations team has been hard at work trying to create a deal that is fair for all parties. Our priority remains to secure a collective agreement that benefits all members, regardless of classification.

Your negotiations team last heard from the employer on Nov. 18, when they told us they would provide us with a counter-offer by the end of the week. That has not happened—instead, it's been radio silence.

What is taking so long? Your negotiations team believes that the foot-dragging is being caused by pressure from the Provincial Bargaining Coordination Office (PBCO).

Who is the man behind the curtain?

The PBCO is, according to the government's website, "the central agency that coordinates collective bargaining with the broader public sector employers." In other words, the PBCO sets the bargaining agenda for all public sector bargaining tables—it's how the government of Alberta attempts to create a common set of bargaining priorities in all areas where it is an employer, from health care to education to public-service administration.

And we know what the PBCO priorities are in bargaining—they've been given orders to go on the attack. This government is intent

on slashing wages and benefits for public-sector workers, as part of its program to turn Alberta into a low-wage jurisdiction. The PBCO is the instrument that they use to implement that agenda in public-sector bargaining.

Here's the problem, though—the PBCO has no jurisdiction over bargaining in 2018, 2019, and 2020, which are the years our agreement will cover. The Order-in-Council for the PBCO passed in May 2021, well past the time that our negotiations began. Your negotiations team has confirmed with the employer repeatedly that they have the authority to make the decision on their own, without the PBCO input.

This is why it's a problem that the PBCO is interfering with our bargaining. This organization has no jurisdiction over our current negotiations, and their entire purpose is to attack workers. Your negotiations team has put together a deal that is fair for everyone—including all workers as well as the employer. It's time to get to work on it.

PBCO pressure has lead to a lot of bizarre circumstances during this round of negotiations. Why, for example, did the employer propose a five-year agreement, and then rescind that offer, claiming they don't have the "authority?" Why would the PBCO be interfering with the length of our contract?

The fact is, your negotiations team felt that we were only a few hours from a deal during our last bargaining session in

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November—until the PBCO stepped in and threw a wrench in the process. Now, we're being stonewalled.

It's time for the PBCO to let us bargain in peace. We all know that previous rounds of negotiations with the employer were relatively fruitful for both parties. We know that negotiations at the Special Areas Board do not need to take on the extremely hostile tone they have taken in this round. We want to repair that relationship, but we can't until the PBCO gets out of the way.

Your negotiations team already has an outstanding bad-faith bargaining complaint going at the Alberta Labour Relations Board, and we will be expanding that complaint to include the interference from the PBCO. This body has no authority over our negotiations, and it has continually held up the process. So we're fighting back.

Call your MLA!

We also encourage you to call your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and tell them clearly: Get the PBCO out of our contract negotiations! We want to focus on our jobs, and we're tired of the government interfering in our negotiations. We should be allowed to come to a fair agreement with our employer, without any meddling from the central government.

You can find your MLA and their contact information by [clicking here](#).

Your negotiations team hopes that we will be able to resolve this matter soon, but it's going to take pressure. That's why we're expanding out ALRB complaint, and that's why you should call your MLA—make sure to ask them why the PBCO is singling us out and preventing us from reaching a fair collective agreement.

If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, don't hesitate to reach out to members of your negotiations team. Together, we're going to end this stonewalling, and secure a fair deal for our co-workers.

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD NEGOTIATIONS TEAM:

Paulette Pratt pkp.2005@hotmail.com or 403-664-0549

Clint Nicholson poolshot69@yahoo.ca or 403-854-1056

Robin Lacelle robinlacelle@gmail.com or 403-363-9855

AUPE RESOURCE STAFF:

Christian Tetreault, negotiator: c.tetreault@aupe.org

Farid Iskandar, organizer f.iskandar@aupe.org