



Important Update on Collective Bargaining

June 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

In accordance with Association policy, regular communication will be provided to NLTA members by way of periodic updates on the status of the collective bargaining process. This communiqué is a follow up to the Bargaining Brief of January 16, 2020.

The current Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements will expire on August 31, 2020. However, pursuant to Article 43 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Labrador West Article 3), the Agreements in place remain in full force and effect until such time as new agreements are negotiated.

The opening proposals for negotiations on the Provincial Collective Agreement were presented to Provincial Executive in January 2020. The NLTA Provincial Negotiating Team has been established and conducted their first training and preparation meetings on February 6 – 7. As per Association policy, there was a presentation on March 6 to Joint Council on the priorities for negotiations identified by the Collective Bargaining Committee. As per Association policy and good bargaining practice, details of the NLTA opening proposals are shared with members following the exchange of opening packages with the government negotiating team. To aid in developing the opening proposals for Labrador West Collective Agreement negotiations, a membership survey was conducted within that bargaining unit to identify priorities for opening proposals. Expressions of interest have been sought for membership of the Labrador West Collective Bargaining Committee and Negotiating Team.

You may be aware that government has proposed a two-year contract extension template to public sector workers. The components of this proposal are:

- a 4% wage increase;
- changes to pension plans to: integrate with new, enhanced CPP provisions; reduce provincial public sector pension plan benefits over time; and, reduce contribution rates to existing provincial public sector pension plans for government and employees; and,
- changes to post-retirement group insurance premium cost sharing for new and future employees.

Some bargaining groups have ratified this extension, but others have chosen not to accept it.

Government approached the NLTA on December 13, 2019 to discuss the Association's willingness to accept this template. President Dean Ingram and senior Association staff engaged in discussions with the Minister of Finance and government officials to determine whether agreement could be reached on a mutually beneficial contract extension.

The NLTA raised several concerns about the template, including the impact of proposed changes to post-retirement group insurance premium cost sharing on new and future members. Assurance was also sought that any changes to the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) would not negatively impact the funding levels or long-term sustainability of the TPP. Additionally, the Association sought a commitment from government to an independent review of the teacher allocation model and to discuss meaningful measures to address workload concerns.

The NLTA and government continued discussions up to March 3, 2020. Unfortunately, no agreement could be reached. Government would not commit to address the issues brought forward by the Association in any meaningful way. Most concerning was government's refusal to agree that there could be no changes to the TPP that would place its long-term sustainability or funding targets at risk. After the tremendous efforts and success achieved through pension reform negotiations in 2014 and 2015, the NLTA is unwilling to jeopardize the hard-won financial stability of the TPP or to accept any proposal that could negatively impact the future expected retirement benefits for our young and new members.

After careful consideration of the potential adverse impact of government's contract extension template on all NLTA members, Provincial Executive determined that to agree to government's template would be to accept the unacceptable. All members are strongly encouraged to watch the video presentation that has been prepared to provide further information on government's proposed template and explain the rationale for Executive's decision to reject this approach: [\[Watch Video Here\]](#)

Following consultation with the Provincial Negotiating Team and Branch Presidents, Provincial Executive decided at its March 7, 2020 meeting to serve notice to open contract negotiations and prepare communications to NLTA members regarding the status of collective bargaining.

Association staff immediately began working on furthering the action directed by Provincial Executive. However, in the week following these decisions, the reality of COVID -19 set in, hitting the province full force over the St. Patrick's Day long weekend. In response to the NLTA's public expressions of concern, on March 16, the decision was made to suspend in-school instruction indefinitely, and the education context has continued to evolve rapidly since then. In light of these unprecedented circumstances and the significant changes in the political and economic landscape of the province which ensued, Provincial Executive met via video-conference on March 19 and passed a motion to delay further decisions/action on bargaining, including serving notice to open negotiations. The NLTA continues to closely monitor the ongoing implications of the public health emergency and related response measures/restrictions, and is actively engaged in discussions on planning for the 2020-2021 school year. Provincial Executive met on June 12 to discuss strategy and next steps. After careful consideration of the priorities identified by members, the economic and political context, and government's lack of interest in discussing NLTA concerns, Provincial Executive decided that there was no advantage in further delaying the decision of March 7. Accordingly, the President notified government of the Association's request to open negotiations for both the Provincial and Labrador West collective agreements.

While the NLTA continues to be available to discuss an extension to the current collective agreements with government, we are not prepared to negotiate salary increases on the backs of our new and future members or by jeopardizing the sustainability of the pension plan for all teachers. We will keep you advised of any significant developments or progress in negotiations through subsequent Bargaining Briefs and other communications as necessary.

Once again, all members are strongly encouraged to watch the video presentation for more information on government's proposed template and the rationale for Executive's decision to reject this approach.

[Watch Video Here](#)