

Questions and Answers from your CUPE Local Negotiations Team

Why wasn't this offer brought back to our members?

Our team stated at the Sept. 18, 2018 meeting that the employer has tabled offers and we have tabled counter offers. There has not been an offer made that the bargaining committee can recommend to the membership. If and when there is an offer we can recommend, it will be taken to the members for a vote.

What were the results of the vote held on September 18, 2018 to hold a strike vote? 180 Votes in favour and 17 opposed

How did we get here?

The employer filed a grievance prior to this round of negotiations, seeking to have the ability to make unilateral changes to our pension plan. The arbitrator ruled in the University's favour that the current language in our current contract supports the University to do so. Our lawyers argued that previous changes to the pension plan were always negotiated at the bargaining table and saw no reason to discontinue that practice.

What does that mean?

This ruling, unless we can negotiate different language in our contracts gives the employer the ability to not only dictate the type of plan you are in but also what the employer's contribution rate will be among other things.

On the employer's website, they mention that with the current Non Academic Pension Plan and enhancements to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Long term employees may receive more income in retirement then they are actually working, is this true?

Some long service members in the past have had the good fortune to benefit that way. However, the average pension payout to our members is 18,100 a year, a little over 1500 dollars a month. The old age pension will provide another maximum 596 dollars per month and the average CPP benefit in retirement is less than 600 dollars per month for males and less than 500 dollars per month for females. All of this income is taxable.

What is the financial situation with our current Defined Benefit Plan? The employer has told me it is unsustainable.

At the most recent valuation of the plan in the spring of 2018, the plan is funded at 103% on a going concern basis. The Superintendent of Pensions requires a 5% cushion to account for changes in the market etc., so currently we have a 2% shortfall in the plan. We believe your plan is in very good financial position and is sustainable now and in the future.

Recently I read the employer's offer highlights on their website and noticed there was nothing on the site about pensions. Can you respond to that?

In negotiations, the employer has not been open to discussing pensions, believing that the decision from the arbitrator gives them the ability to make non-negotiated changes to the current pension plan now and in the future. Your negotiating team's intent is to bargain new language in our current contract that allows us to bargain and negotiate any changes to the pension plan, as we have done over the last 60 plus years.

I noticed that the University of Regina, who we used to bargain together with, currently has a contract and has retained their Defined Benefit Pension Plan. Is this true?

Yes, this is true.

Can you explain the wage adjustment/compensation offered in the employees' offer?

In our current language, anyone who is not at the top of their phase will have received a 2% wage increment or portion thereof, for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. In lieu of any additional increases, the employer is offering \$1500 fully taxable, one time lump sum payment. The 1500 signing bonus is a one-time payment which does not increase your base rate. There will be **no** retroactive pay for 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In 2019 and 2020, in the model proposed by the employer, anyone below the midpoint of their phase would receive a 2% increment, and then above the midpoint of their phase, would receive a 1% increment. This language would be worse than our current language.

Additionally the employer is offering an additional 2% wage increase for 2019 and 2020, if you are not at the top of our phase. We have had some discussion at negotiations about a different wage model, however, we have not agreed to any language and have no firm answers as to how and where you, the member would be placed in a new wage model.

Can someone clarify a bit further on the arbitration ruling? What I am particularly trying to understand is the following: If arbitration was made in favour of the University to unilaterally make changes to our pension, I am still confused on how we can still fight it as a union. Was the arbitrator decision more of a "referee call" but we are still able to fight to keep our pension as a Defined Benefit? I guess I thought in my mind that once the ruling was made by the arbitrator that meant we could no longer fight the decision.

The arbitrator's ruling means that unless we negotiate language into the collective agreement, we have to live with that ruling and the employer can do what they want to the pension plan. We are not precluded from negotiating changes to the language to protect and ensure our right to have all future changes to your pension plan negotiated between ourselves and the employer. The same right we have had for nearly 70 years.

I was wondering why CUPE 1975 has not provided more information in regards to negotiated updates.

Your CUPE 1975 executive conducts a general membership meeting, with the exception of July and August, on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The location and times of the general membership meeting is communicated on our website and on our CUPE 1975 bulletin boards on campus. At each of these General Membership Meetings, the executive provides an update on all committee activities including negotiations. Along with that, your local has brought in CUPE National's pension expert to speak to our membership on a number of different occasions during last contract negotiations and this one also. They have spoken to the challenges facing our local and provided support not only with advice and guidance but also with numerous swag items many of you have with the "Paws Off Our Pension" logo. In an attempt to reach out to our membership, your executive has also instituted numerous "You Talk, We Listen" coffee days to speak of these challenges and others you and the members face on campus.

I work as a CUPE 1975 member for the University of Saskatchewan but I am not located on the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon. How do I vote on Sept. 27th or 28th.

If you contact the union office at 966-7015 we will issue you a release from work to enable you to come to campus for the rally/vote on September 27th or just to vote on September 28th