

**November 2015- No 3**

[www.staffassociation.ca](http://www.staffassociation.ca)

### **Message from the Chair...**

Don't forget our Annual General Meeting is this Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup> at the Coast Plaza Hotel & Conference Centre at 7:00 pm (Plaza 5). The Auditor's Report, our Proposed Budget for this year, Treasurer's Report, as well as a Negotiation Update are some of the agenda items you can look forward to hearing about.

As always, we will have an open question period after the meeting is adjourned. Hope to see you there!

*Lois Robb*

### **Vacation Pay and Pension**

On August 28, 2013, Alberta Pension Services (APS) sent a letter to the CBE requesting that the CBE no longer report vacation pay paid to employees on a regular basis as pensionable salary. We are unsure as to what prompted this letter. The CBE stopped reporting vacation pay as pensionable salary on January 1, 2014.

The change in reporting was not made known to the Staff Association or to its members by either the CBE or APS. It only came to light in the spring of 2014 when a member called our office to inquire as to why her pensionable salary was lower in 2013 than 2012. The Staff Association brought the issue up with the CBE and following several discussions, several meetings involving the Staff Association, CUPE, APS and the CBE were held. It appeared that we were headed toward a positive resolution until the APS Chief Pensions Officer we had been dealing with left the employ of APS. The CBE subsequently engaged a "pension expert" who provided them with the opinion they were looking for, that is, vacation pay is not pensionable. Following several communications by letter between APS and the Staff Association, APS, on November 10, 2015 sent us a letter stating that the legislation regarding the definition of salary as it pertains to pension eligibility is unclear and as such they accept the position of the CBE that vacation pay is not pensionable. APS further stated that they have no legislative authority to require the CBE to report vacation pay as pension eligible and that any further discussion should be pursued with the CBE. Our interpretation of this is that the CBE can choose to report vacation pay as pensionable or not. They have chosen the latter. The Staff Association is now determining the best course of action to take in an effort to support our members in reverting back to the long standing practice of reporting vacation pay as pensionable salary.

### **Negotiations Commence**

After a delay related to the unexpected absence of key CBE personnel, we have started negotiations with the CBE for new collective agreements. To date, we have had two meetings and have three more scheduled before the Christmas break. While discussions so far have primarily dealt with procedures, housekeeping matters, and the exchange and reviews of our respective initial proposals, we have had some meaningful and valuable discussions that leave us (guardedly!) optimistic that the group can work through everything expediently.

Negotiating for the CBE are **Wendy Bulbuck** (Director, HR), **Brant Parker** (Director, Area I), **Sonja La Pointe** (Senior Labour Relations Advisor), **Mark MacDonald** (Manager, Support Staff Recruitment), **Jaylene MacDonald** (HR Advisor, Partner Services) and **Sharon Walker** (Manager, Speech Language Services).

The Staff Association team is comprised of **Lois Robb** (SA Chairperson), Directors **Jen Copithorne** (Churchill), **Nancy Huizinga** (James Fowler) and **Wanda Stevenson** (Acadia) and **Albert Herscovitch** and **Mark Johnson** (SA Managers).

Please note that the former Collective Agreements (September 1, 2014 – August 31, 2015) remain in full force and effect.

## **Breaks from Work**

Clause 11.3 in our Collective Agreement speaks to breaks as follows:

- Employees shall be entitled to two (2) fifteen (15) minute breaks from work for each full day worked, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, times to be designated by Management.
- Employees who work less than three (3) hours in one (1) day are not entitled to a paid break from work.
- Employees who work three (3) to five (5) hours in one (1) day are entitled to one (1) paid fifteen (15) minute break from work.
- Employees who work more than five (5) hours in one (1) day are entitled to two (2) paid fifteen (15) minute breaks from work **and one (1) unpaid meal break from work of between thirty (30) and sixty (60) minutes. The meal break shall be scheduled as near mid-shift as possible.**

## **Questions...**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the office staff:

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