



September 2023

Dear PS/GE member,

Here is an overview of the union's ongoing proposals that were approved in May 2022 at the PS/GE Proposals Conference.

Many of these proposals are still being negotiated. Some of the proposals have and will be adjusted and withdrawn as bargaining progresses. We will provide bargaining updates as negotiations progress.

1. Classification

We know that job descriptions are out of date. In response, your negotiating committee brought forward proposals to have a full classification review done. We are also seeking improvements to the reclassification and appeals process to ensure workers have access to a fair appeal process.

2. Staffing

We have brought forward proposals that would improve job competition language and job security.

We want to ensure everyone has the opportunity to apply for all positions. To this end, we introduced proposals that would extend the amount of time that job competitions are posted and ensure that lateral transfers from one occupation to a different occupation are not being used to undermine the job competition process. All members should have an opportunity to apply for these positions.

Where someone has been laid off and is on the re-employment list, we want to ensure that they're not bypassed for job openings regardless of whether the open position is a merit or diversity position. Those whose positions have been abolished or are laid off should take priority over someone who currently has a position or someone who is not a member of SGEU.

3. Probation

There is usually little job security for members on initial probation. We are proposing a slight increase to their job security by requesting the employer provide just cause instead of terminating a probationary employee for mere 'unsuitability'.

In subsequent probations, when someone takes another position within the bargaining unit, we do not believe they should be required to serve a probationary period in a position within the same occupation. The employer already knows they are competent in that occupation. If a member is required to serve a subsequent probation, they should have just as much right as the employer to say that the new position is not working and, at their request, revert to their previous position. We are proposing to adjust the language to reflect this.

4. Hours of Work

The union is seeking changes to ensure that those working modified work patterns are compensated appropriately for all hours worked on designated holidays and that their averaging period's hours are reduced by the appropriate number of hours for each designated holiday that occurs within that averaging period.

We are also trying to ensure that employer mandated work on other days of rest, such as Earned Days Off (EDOs), is compensated at overtime rates regardless of whether the employee works field hours or not.

5. Overtime

The union has many proposals that deal with overtime. These proposals include overtime to be paid at two (2) times an employee's regular rate, overtime for all hours after eight (8) hours, overtime to include shift differential and weekend premium, and if an employee attends work on overtime and the employer cancels the shift the member is paid a minimum of two (2) hours at overtime rates.

In addition, the union is proposing increases to the maximum hours of time in lieu a member can bank, and the standby compensation rate.

6. Temporary Assignment of Higher Duties (TAHD)

The union is putting forward potential fixes to the TAHD language. We are finding that the employer is citing training purposes to appoint junior employees to TAHD. We are looking for written justification in advance for these appointments to give us an opportunity to challenge them.

We are also seeking to make pay administration fairer, by ensuring that experience gained during a TAHD is used for the purposes of wage increments when promoted, expanding who gets a higher rate including those performing instructor duty, and ensuring that language that applied to longer TAHD is also applied to shorter TAHD.

7. Designated Holidays

The union proposes to add the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and any other day proclaimed as a statutory holiday by the federal and/or provincial government. We are also asking for increases to the premium rate for work on a designated holiday.

8. Pay Administration

We believe all workers' wages should keep pace with the rising cost of living at a minimum. We cannot, however, bargain for all workers' wages and are limited to our members only. Our members' wages have not kept pace with inflation. Wage increases that do not keep pace with inflation are effectively wage cuts which are unsustainable where inflation rates have hit highs not seen since the 1980s. We are seeking to make up the ground our members have lost.

We are seeking increases of nine per cent (9%) for each year of the life of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and to introduce a cost-of-living adjustment in addition to ensure we do not fall behind again. We are also taking into account the labour market for some occupations, asking that those who are deemed essential services receive additional compensation, and to adjust wage increment dates for labour service and long service workers.

Additionally, members are frustrated with frequent overpayment errors being made on their pay that are subsequently being clawed back by the employer. We are asking for the employer to bear the financial burden of their mistakes and not claw back the overpayment. We hope this proposed change incentivizes the Government of Saskatchewan to get our pay right the first time.

9. Allowances, Differential and Other Payments

We are proposing enhancements to many of the existing differentials including weekend premium, shift differential, per diems associated with travel for work, and work in northern districts. We are also trying to expand eligibility for differentials to include some occupations and some situations that have been excluded to date.

We are also proposing the introduction of new differentials that would compensate instructors for travel for putting on courses and for workers who incur costs while required to isolate in the context of a pandemic.

There are proposals, that if agreed to, would result in increases in funding to our benefits plan. SGEU's Health and Welfare Trust Board of Trustees is responsible for securing health benefits. If all the additional funding is secured, that will enable the Board to make improvements to health care benefits, the benefit surplus, retiree benefits, and flex spending account.

We are also looking to introduce modest increases to employer contributions to pensions so that all PS/GE members have, at minimum, nine per cent (9%) matching pension contributions and to expand what earnings are considered pensionable for the purposes of calculating those contributions.

10. Vacation

Your union brought forward proposals that, if agreed to, would improve our vacation entitlements. Currently, vacation entitlement caps out after 22 years of service and members can only carry over five (5) days of vacation. If the employer agrees to our proposals, long service employees will see additional vacation entitlement and all members will be able to carry over more vacation from one year to another.

We have also included proposals to improve Special Northern Leave. Currently, Special Northern Leave has restrictive qualifying language. We are proposing to eliminate much of the qualifying language and to include a benefit, the Northern Medical Leave, in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Currently, Northern Medical Leave is only contained in an employer policy which means that the employer could change the policy without negotiating with the union.

11. Sick Leave, Pressing Necessity & Family/Personal Leave

The union is seeking enhancements to sick leave, pressing necessity, and family/personal responsibility leave. We are asking to increase the number of days we can use for these leaves as well as bereavement leave and citizenship ceremony leave. In addition, we are asking for a dedicated mental health leave bank.

We are seeking changes that would give members more flexibility in how they communicate with their managers when they will be absent due to illness.

After the pandemic, there's been renewed concern about who on the employer side may ask for, and can access, our medical information. We have proposals that would limit which supervisors and/or managers can make legitimate requests for medical information and ensure that if there is a cost to providing any information that the employer bares costs associated with obtaining that information.

12. Leave of Absence

The current language in Medical Donor Leave restricts blood donation location options for workers who wish to donate blood. We are proposing to eliminate the restriction to the geographical location for paid leave.

13. Employment Security

We are putting forward proposals that would provide several layers of job security. We are asking for language that would prevent the employer from abolishing or contracting out any positions at all for the life of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

In the event that someone's position is abolished or they are laid off, we are asking to simplify the language for Career Assistance Options to make it easier to determine what Career Assistance Options workers are entitled to under this Article.

14. Discipline, Demotion, Dismissal, Termination, and Resignation

The union is asking that certain disciplinary documents be removed from an employee's file sooner than what the timeline currently allows.

We are also asking to enhance protections in the disciplinary procedures to ensure that the union receives advance notice of any fact-finding meetings, that the union is told what the nature of the allegations are in advance of any fact-finding meeting, and to enshrine the right to union representation in any meetings that could lead to discipline.

15. Workers' Compensation

We want to make it clear that if a member is absent from work due to occupational injury or illness, that medical leave of absence still counts as years of service for the purposes of calculating severance entitlement.

16. Appendix B – Base and Additional Hours of Work Designations by Occupation

We are seeking to update the current list to ensure that it's accurate given the creation of new classifications and the changing of existing classifications.

17. Letter of Understanding (LOU) 09-1 – Rehabilitation Placement Process

Currently, workers who are being accommodated into a new classification may have access to funds to help them retrain in that classification. We are proposing to eliminate language that prorates these funds based on hours worked so that all workers who need this assistance have access to the same resources. This benefit is specifically for those who are being accommodated as a result of the Duty to Accommodate which results from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

18. Letter of Understanding (LOU) 98-6 – Terms of Reference for Modified Work Pattern

We are seeking to make it very clear that any worker on a Modified Work Plan gets paid the appropriate premium rate for working on a Designated Holiday by eliminating Article 2.5.3 of this LOU.

19. Miscellaneous

This is a variety of proposals which would provide the union with union specific bulletin boards within each work location, prioritizing essential workers when distributing scarce resources during a pandemic — such as vaccines, masks, and other personal protective equipment — and increasing the scope of who gets meal allowances under Red Alert (LOU 2015-04).

20. Allowances

Some classifications are unable to leave their workplaces during their shifts. We are proposing that members who are unable to leave their workplace during their shift be provided a meal.

COMPONENT SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

Trades and Technical

The union is looking for increases to tool allowance and to ensure that the employer provides personal protective equipment including reflective coveralls and winter jackets. We are also asking for increases to the annual boot allowance.

Human Service

We have proposals that are intended to bring Trades Inspectors, Teacher Therapists, and Instructional Assistants pay and number of days of work in a year in line with the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation agreement(s).

The same set of proposals would provide those classifications that have an Earned Day Off (EDO) every three weeks with an EDO every two weeks instead.

We also acknowledge that workload has been unsustainable for many in Human Services and we have multiple proposals on the table which are aimed at improving retention, reducing caseloads, and hiring more staff for SAID workers, Child and Family Programs, and Income Assistance Workers.

Legal, Inspection and Regulatory

There were proposals brought forward about market supplements, danger premiums, and pension. These are being addressed through discussions about pay administration, differentials, and pensions.

We are advocating for significant increases to boot allowances and to ensure the relocation expense clause in Article 15.5 applies to all members who need to relocate out of their current location.

Vehicle, Equipment and Operations (VEO)

We are proposing significant increases to allowances such as winter allowance, boot allowance, and pilot endorsements, and to expand when applicable employees will receive the first meal out per diem.

We are also asking for the introduction of new allowances to allow pilots to purchase headsets and sunglasses necessary for them to perform their duties.

There are additional pieces of gear such as chainsaw boots and other weather appropriate clothing that are necessary for workers within VEO to be able to perform their duties safely. We are asking that the employer provide these at the employer's cost.

Again, these are our ingoing proposals. We do need employer agreement to make the proposed changes above. Some of these proposals will be withdrawn and some will change through negotiations. If a proposal that we have outlined above is not included in the tentative agreement we bring to you for a vote, it is because the employer has refused to make that change.

It is important to remember that nothing about our agreement at the table is final until a vote of the PS/GE membership is held and we have a ratified tentative agreement. That being said, we have made some agreements that are not dependent on us ratifying a tentative agreement/Memorandum of Agreement. The employer approached the union about extensions for about 120 workers who are temporarily assigned to the Enterprise Business Modernization Project (EBMP). In exchange for approving these extensions now, the following will be implemented as stated below:

- Upon completion of one (1) year of service and upon written application, an employee who is reemployed following a break in service shall be credited with their previous in-scope PS/GE service for seniority purposes. **This will take effect immediately.**
- The union shall be provided 48 hours notice of any changes to scheduled staffing actions. **This comes into effect November 1, 2023.**
- That any member who has left government employment after October 1, 2022, can apply for retro pay dated back to October 1, 2022 **once the contract has been ratified.**

Please refer to the 2016-2022 current Collective Bargaining Agreement for the current language. This CBA can be found on the SGEU website under the Member Resources menu option.
<https://www.sgeu.org/pub/cba/2019-cba-5-x-8---final-004.pdf>

Please update your contact information to receive updates. The website is:
<https://www.sgeu.org/member-dashboard/forms/member-information-update>
Or by emailing Membership Information Services at mis@sgeu.org

For any questions, please contact:
Bernadette Lusney, Labour Relations Officer, at blusney@sgeu.org or 306-775-7241
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In solidarity,
Lori Bossaer
Chair – PS/GE Negotiating Committee