



Unifor ACL (Atlantic Communication Locals)

Membership Bulletin Common Interest Forum Update April 28, 2014

The Common Interest Forum met on April 15 – 17, 2014 in Halifax. This was the first meeting of CIF since Dec, 2013 and it followed the Unifor ACL's Special Meeting and Issues Caucus in Moncton where the 4 Local's leaders met to discuss CIF & the Issue Proposals that were submitted by members.

- 1. Negotiations:** As mentioned in a bulletin last week, the top issues identified through the Issues Caucus were Wages; Vacation; Other Post Retirement Benefits (OPEB's); Pension; Pool Techs/CST Article 30A (which includes the difference in wage scale 13 & 13A) and Job Security. Both parties recognize and accept that wages is the #1 issue going into these negotiations. The company has agreed that wages will be a part of the package. The union is gathering information through the national union to assist us in these negotiations. Early in our discussions, consideration was given to whether a package of enhancements that would serve as a tentative agreement could be done quickly and brought to the membership relatively soon. After further discussions, the decision was made to work through the various priorities identified by our members in the coming months, secure the best possible wage improvement package we could and then bring everything to the membership for ratification in the fall.
- 2. Job Evaluation:** A separate communication addressing the Job Evaluation Project is currently being worked on and will be issued soon.
- 3. ARM/WOA/Mentor Concerns:** The union expressed concern that the company continues to rely increasingly more on contractors in many areas of our company. In Accounts Receivable, Work Order Accuracy and the Mentor queue, our CSR's have to assist the contractor to do their work which can cause some animosity. While we recognize that there is a significant decrease in contractors in Regional Services, the same is not true of everywhere in the company. There was also discussion on how the CSR's are being moved from queue to queue which is causing angst and feelings of uncertainty. A joint group from the CIF table will take the concerns aside for further discussion.
- 4. Cornell University:** Cornell University which is located in Ithaca, NY, is reputed to have an excellent Labour School. Fred Crooks called the University to get their thoughts on the Interest Based Negotiation Process (IBN/CIF) and asked if they have conducted any research that they would be willing to share. Sally Klingel, Executive Director of Labour Relations at the school is willing to speak with CIF on their experience with Interest Based Negotiations, their experience in union workplaces, getting information from the shop floor and their work on governance such as at Volkswagen Inc.. This would include researching a new Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) model of governance that includes Social Responsibility accountability throughout the organization. We agreed that it would be interesting to talk to Ms. Klingel, therefore Fred will invite her to a CIF meeting this summer or in the fall.
- 5. POET:** Dr. Matthew Burnstein (Health & Wellness), Jennifer Palov (VP Legal) and Roy Swain (Union Co-chair OSH Policy Committee) joined the meeting for the POET presentation. **Post Offer Employment Testing** is testing to ensure that any employee being considered for employment in a physically demanding position is able to safely perform the essential physical requirements for the position before they start work. A joint union/company committee have been meeting for the past several months to work on the aspects of POET. The classifications requiring POET are BST; CST; Line Tech; Cable Tech; Network Equipment Tech; Network Tech; Building Maintenance Tech; Building Equipment Tech. This testing will apply to employees starting a new position in one of the

above mentioned classifications who are moving from a position that is less physically demanding. Members who are already working in these classifications will not be required to do this testing for the job they are currently performing. When a member is awarded a job posting in one of the mentioned classifications, they will be referred for a physical abilities test which will be available within 72 hours. If the member passes, they will be placed in the new job. If they fail, they will not be awarded the posting and will remain in their current position. External hires must do this testing as well and if they fail, they will not be hired. If they pass, they will be hired into the job. In cases where a current employee is incapable of performing or fulfilling the essential duties of the position because of a disability, a referral will be sent to Health & Wellness who will work with the employee to understand the nature of their disability and explore available accommodation opportunities. POET will be added to the SELQ's for the 8 classifications which will state "successful completion of a physical abilities test may be required". The testing will commence by the end of June, 2014.

6. **Staffing in Health & Wellness:** Dr. Burnstein remained for this topic as well. The union had, in previous meetings, expressed concern about frequent turnover in staff and staffing shortages in Health & Wellness and the effect it was having on all employees who were dealing with this group. Dr. Burnstein presented the current staffing for his group which include, a team lead, an administrative support person, a workers comp program manager and 4 health & wellness advisors. This represents one additional health & wellness advisor than there was previously. We hope with the increased advisors, that dealings with Health & Wellness will improve.
7. **EFAP – ComPsych:** Dr. Burnstein gave a presentation on the services available to all employees through ComPsych. Psychological diagnosis is a major contributor to SDB claims at Bell Aliant. Community resources for psychological conditions are stretched which creates a very long wait to see a psychiatrist. Bell Aliant in conjunction with ComPsych is taking part in a couple of initiatives to help alleviate problems with getting the right kind of help when you need it. Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) will provide managers, who have direct reports, and union leaders with practical tools and skills related to employee mental health. It helps to reduce stigmatization or discriminatory biases surrounding mental health and increases the manager's confidence with regard to approaching employees who may be suffering from a mental health problem. 400 managers have received MHAT and training will continue all year. Dr. Burnstein emphasized the importance that managers need to be very careful not to put employees under unnecessary stress. In addition, Health & Wellness have signed a contract with Medaca which will provide rapid assessments for employees with mental health based SDB claims. This service is offered by Health & Wellness, through referral, to employees on a voluntary basis. Medaca is a group of psychiatrists who will talk to an employee over the phone within 2-3 weeks of their SDB absence. With the employee's permission, the psychiatrist will contact the family physician and assist with a diagnosis and treatment plan. For more information on Medaca you can go to their website at www.medaca.ca. You can also visit the ComPsych website at www.compsych.ca to find a wide range of services available to employees including Personal Development/Work-Life Workshops on Parenting, Older Adult Care, How to Deal with a Difficult Person, Improving your Memory and much more.

8. **CIF Schedule:** 2014 Meetings of CIF are scheduled as follows:

May 13 – 15

Jun 3 – 5

July & Aug: to be scheduled

Sep 9 – 10

Oct 7 – 9

Nov 4 - 6

In solidarity,

Penny Fawcett

Steve Howlett

Bobby MacDonald

Mary Croke

Lynn Briggs

Joyclin Coates