



## GREATER VANCOUVER REGIONAL DISTRICT EMPLOYEES' UNION

October 25, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The purpose of this update is to respond to comments from the Employer that you may have seen in the media, or have had explained to you by a supervisor, suggesting that the Union is unreasonably holding up a deal. Let us begin by telling you these comments from the Employer are FALSE, and we have formally called them out on their misinformation via a letter of protest. In said letter, we identified our clear intention that any further dissemination of similar misinformation will be identified to the Labour Relations Board.

Make no mistake about it, the purpose of the Employer's misinformation is to divide the Union membership and sow discontent to weaken the resolve of the rank and file. They hope that a weakened membership will in turn result in a weakened Bargaining Committee. We are aware of this tactic and will counter it by informing the membership of their approach. As well, we will provide the membership with the 'whole truth' instead of half-truths.

Let's look at some of the some of the Employer's publicly made claims:

### **The Employer is no longer seeking any concessions**

**FALSE:** The last written offer from the Employer still includes the concession seeking to wave the 'me too' clause for a second time in as many rounds of bargaining. As well the concession on 'mutually agreed to hours of work' remains in the last written proposal. The last two bargaining sessions (Oct.18 & Oct.20) have been 'exploratory' in nature and they are not binding, and could be revoked, as we've seen the Employer do following previous 'exploratory talks'. As such they have not made an actual proposal to remove any of the concerning concessions.

### **The Employer has offered a settlement that meets or exceeds recently ratified settlements.**

**FALSE:** The bargaining committee believes we still have a way to go before meeting the general pattern of settlement in the region insofar as benefit increases goes. As noted earlier in this update, this is only true if one considers 'exploratory talks' as an actual offer; which it isn't.

**The Union bargaining committee abruptly walked out of talks Friday afternoon.**

**FALSE:** We advised the Employer (through the LRB mediator) that unless they were prepared to offer us a deal that included improvements to benefits that mirrored those recently gained by other municipalities at the bargaining table, we would be leaving the table. Our position on seeking parity with other municipal settlements had been well established and to describe our actions as abrupt is disingenuous.

**The Union sabotaged an imminent deal at the last moment on Friday Oct.20, by asking for a last-minute rate increase for 'trades'.**

**FALSE:** The Union had been advocating for many rate increases for significantly underpaid positions (both in the trades and otherwise) going back to our very first proposal in 2022. At Wednesday's exploratory discussions (Oct.18), the Employer dismissed the Union's request for a single rate of pay increase for any of the positions identified by the Union. When we met with the Employer again on the Friday (Oct.20), in an effort to secure a deal, the Union in fact *pared down* its request in the number of rate of pay increases.

**The Union walked away from an imminent deal on Friday (Part 2).**

**FALSE:** Even if all of the other issues noted above had been resolved (which they haven't). The Union is still asking for several 'NOTICES' to be removed by the Employer that were issued to the Union at the start of bargaining in 2022. A 'NOTICE' is the Employer's way of formally stating that they intend on stopping a practice that has been commonplace in the past because they feel said practice is inconsistent with the Collective Agreement.

The most consequential of the NOTICES we received in 2022, is associated with the Employer's claim that they have the right to terminate Union members from carrying-over vacation time. This is something that the Employer has tried to bargain away from the Union in past negotiations. While we are confident that we would win the right to 'carry-over vacation' in arbitration, we are seeking that this NOTICE be removed from this round of negotiations to facilitate a deal. The Employer has flatly rejected the Union's request to remove the NOTICE associated with 'vacation carry-over'.

The Union wants a fair and equitable deal for its membership. We know times are tough and other municipalities have already settled, but we are not about to throw in the towel prematurely and take a deal that is not at parity with the pattern of recent settlements reached at other municipalities.

Your continued support is essential and appreciated.

Yours in Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee