

RSMC Negotiations

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Arbitrator Appointed.

By letter dated May 11, 2010 the Minister of Labour Lisa Raitt appointed Brian Keller as the interest arbitrator in the dispute between the Union and the employer concerning revisions and additions to the RSMC collective agreement.

Mr. Keller has extensive experience as an arbitrator, serving as a Vice-Chair of the Canada Labour Relations Board (CLRB) for the period of 1983-1988 and holding the same position with the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) for the period of 1988-2007. He also has experience with labour relations at Canada Post as during the time he was a Vice-Chair of the CLRB he conducted the review of the bargaining unit structure of Canada Post in the late 1980s.

Since his appointment, the arbitrator has been in contact with the parties to provide possible arbitration dates in June, July and August of this year. The parties are currently reviewing their respective availability on those proffered dates. The Union has made it clear; we are available on week-ends and in the evenings.

Hearing on Merits Delayed

Despite the appointment of the interest arbitrator, and his providing of possible arbitration dates, the hearings into the merits of the proposals being made by both parties will be delayed. The reason for this delay is that the employer intends to raise a number of preliminary objections. These objections include whether the arbitrator has jurisdiction to deal with non-monetary issues as part of his mandate and, secondly, whether the arbitration can occur while there are unresolved national grievances pertaining to the financial cap. While the Union will vigorously contest these employer objections it will take time for the arbitrator to review and make decisions about them. The result will be an unreasonable and unnecessary delay in the arbitrator being able to actually consider the proposals being made by the Union to improve the working lives of the membership.

Membership Must Stay United

In the period leading up to arbitration, and during the arbitration process, the RSMC membership must stay united behind their demands and in support of their Negotiating Committee. This solidarity can be expressed by reading Union publications, visiting the Union's website (www@cupw-sttp.org) and participating in collective actions organized by the Union. The Negotiating Committee still believes that it would be better for the parties to negotiate changes to the collective agreement, rather than have them imposed by a third party. Through their expressions of solidarity the membership may convince the employer to return to the bargaining table with more reasonable proposals than it has presented to date.

The membership of the Urban Operation bargaining unit should also support the RSMC bargaining demands as some of the proposals being made by the employer, for example its short-term disability plan (STD) proposal, will undoubtedly be on the bargaining table when negotiations to amend the Urban Operations collective agreement begin.

Solidarité,

Donald Lafleur

4th National Vice-President & Chief Negotiator

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