



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### **Q. Why did the committee recommend this agreement?**

After a tough round of negotiations concluding with conciliation, your bargaining committee reached a tentative agreement that they felt was both fair and the best they were able to achieve without job action. That agreement provided the same wage improvements achieved for the Health Care and Support Services members, and most significantly, would create a Pay Equity Committee which will evaluate all classifications within your bargaining unit compared to similar positions in other workplaces. The committee's findings would position us well to argue for pay increases by classification when the next round of bargaining commences later this year. There were also other significant language improvements achieved.

Now, in order to achieve an improved offer, we must obtain a strong strike mandate from the membership to back your demands for an improved offer.

### **Q. Do I need to be a signed member to participate in a strike vote?**

You are not required to be a signed member to participate in a strike vote. The Trade Union Act states that: "employees in the unit affected" have a right to participate in a strike vote.

### **Q. What if I don't vote?**

If you don't vote, it essentially works as a "no" to a strike. Ratification votes and strike votes are calculated in different ways: ratification votes are based on the number of ballots cast, whereas strike votes are calculated based on the total number of members in the bargaining unit.

### **Q. When could we be on strike?**

We must receive a strong strike mandate in order to authorize strike action. It is important to note that ratification votes and strike votes are calculated in different ways: ratification votes are based on the number of ballots cast, whereas strike votes are calculated based on the total number of members in the bargaining unit. So, it is imperative that we engage all members in the next steps. An electronic strike vote will be held the week of June 5<sup>th</sup>.

As per the Health Authorities Act, essential services staffing levels must be agreed upon before a legal strike can be held. The unions have submitted their staffing level proposals and are in the process of arranging meetings with the employers to review. Any areas of dispute will be referred to the Labour Board, which has 30 days from the date of referral to issue a decision.

### **Q. What happens if a strike vote is not achieved?**

All efforts are being made to ensure there is a strong turnout for a strike vote to prevent this. However, should a strike vote not be achieved, Council representatives would have to

reconvene to decide next steps, which may include returning to the table with the employer to see if an improved offer could be achieved.

**Q. Who will be required to stay at work, as per essential services?**

Until an essential services staffing plan is in place, we cannot say. There will be some key areas, such as emergency departments, that will require staffing, but the union's intention is to achieve staffing levels that are low enough to ensure we are able to hold an effective strike.

**Q: What should I do personally to get ready for a strike?**

It is wise to do your best to stabilize your financial situation by talking to your banks, mortgage holders, and credit card companies. Let them know you may be heading into a strike. Most institutions have policies to assist their clients during times of financial hardship. Doing this sooner rather than later can take a load off your mind and make life during a strike run smoother.

**Q: What happens to my benefits and pension when I am on strike? Do I have to pay the premiums myself?**

NSGEU will pay the full premium (both your contribution and the employer's) for the basic life and health insurance benefits you receive through your work. These benefits include:

- Basic life insurance as per the collective agreement
- Long Term Disability protection
- Medical benefits as per the collective agreement

The NSGEU does not cover your pension contributions during a strike. Your pension will remain as is and you will not make contributions for the duration of the strike.

**Q: I am being asked by other people how to do my job in case I go on strike. What should I do?**

Unless it is your manager asking you how to do your job, you are not obligated to tell others how you do your work. For example, if an employee in another bargaining unit asks you how to do your job, politely decline and refer them to your manager. If your manager directs you to train or give out information about your work, you are obligated to do so.

**Q: Do I have to go on strike?**

If your bargaining unit votes in favor of a strike and the union calls you to strike, all members of the bargaining unit are expected to take part. An effective strike takes hard work and solidarity.

**Q: What will I be paid while on strike?**

The union pays strike pay to those that perform strike duties as assigned by their Strike Committee. This will usually consist of picket duty although other duties may be assigned, and could include, for example, helping to organize rallies and demonstrations or lobbying. To earn strike pay you must perform a minimum of 20 hours of strike duty per week. Strike pay is currently \$200 per member and \$25 for each dependent, per week. Strike pay will not be paid if a striker is in receipt of earned benefits – ie: EI sick leave, LTD, WCB, maternity leave, etc.

You will be paid weekly and cheques will be distributed on the line.

**Q: What are my duties when on strike?**

Members who perform a minimum of 20 hours of strike duties per week are eligible for strike pay. Strike duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Picketing
- Lobbying politicians, directors of employer organizations, and the employer's allies
- Outreach to service users and groups that represent them
- Outreach to labour, community, and other potential allies
- Mass rallies and demonstrations
- Media relations work and advertising
- Any other activities that help end the strike with the desired result

You will be contacted by your picket captain at the home or by personal cellphone number you have provided to the union. Please ensure we have your latest number by [filling out this form](#) or contacting us at 424-4063, 1-877-556-7438, or [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca).

**Q: What does a picket captain do?**

A picket captain co-ordinates the strike duties and strike pay for a group of up to several dozen members. Your picket captain will help schedule your picket and/or other strike duties.

**Q: How do I find out who my picket captain is and where to go when the strike starts?**

In the event a strike is called, you will be contacted by your picket captain directly. You will also receive an email to let you know where you will be picketing. Picket lines will likely be organized based on the site at which you work.

**Q: I have physical limitations and am concerned I will not be able to walk a picket line with my fellow members. Does this mean I won't get strike pay?**

There are a variety of ways you can support the strike. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from picketing, we will work with you to find other strike duties you can perform and earn strike pay. If you feel you need accommodation, please advise your picket captain or strike coordinator when you are contacted about picketing.

**Q: What if I have already planned a vacation and a strike is called?**

Since your pay stops during a strike, any vacation days you have booked that end up falling on a strike day won't count against your vacation allotment.

Regardless of vacation you booked with the employer, however, you will still be expected to complete your picket duties in order to qualify for strike pay. If you have already paid for tickets and/or accommodation for a trip outside of Nova Scotia, inform your picket captain or strike coordinator, and arrangements will be made so you can complete your 20 hours of strike duties prior to and/or after returning from your vacation, ensuring you remain eligible for strike pay. Each circumstance will be assessed individually and proof of travel may be required.

**Q: What if I am on maternity leave when the strike is called?**

You will not be eligible for strike pay if you are receiving earned benefits such as EI, maternity benefits, long term disability, or workers compensation, and are therefore not be expected to do

picket duty. There is no doubt, however, that your striking co-workers would draw strength from any time you're able and willing to spend on the line with them.

**Q: Can I work another job while on strike?**

Yes, you can, but you will still be expected to complete your hours of picket duty as required to receive your strike pay.

**Q: What should you do about employer communications as they relate to the union and the strike vote or a potential strike?**

According to the Trade Union Act, the employer is not allowed to intimidate or coerce a person to refrain from becoming or to cease to be a member of a trade union. This would extend to participating in a legal strike and all other legal activities of the union. The employer is free to express themselves so long as they do not use coercion, intimidation, threats or undue influence. If you receive any communication from the employer that you are unsure of, or that makes you feel like you should not support union activities, please contact us at 902-424-4063, 1-877-556-7438, or [inquiry@nsgeu.ca](mailto:inquiry@nsgeu.ca).