

Lock Talk



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Corrections fights back

In the wake of the government's repugnant and idiotic move to stop allowing employees to take compensating leave in lieu of overtime payments, Corrections Bargaining Unit members are fighting back.

Correctional leaders met via conference call this week, and after much discussion have decided on a plan of action, a plan endorsed by both the MCSCS and MCYS MERCs.

Effective immediately, locals are asked to do the following:

1. Serve their local employer 30 days notice on their intent to stop participating in the HPRO (overtime protocol) agreement.
2. Serve their local employer notice to withdraw from their local Compressed Work Week (CWW) agreement. The length of that notice is specific to that local's agreement.
3. Demand that all acting managers who are members of the Corrections Bargaining Unit immediately step down from their positions.

These actions, while extreme, are an appropriate response to the employer's complete lack of respect for the elected MERC teams, and the employer's attempt to subvert a newly-signed collective agreement.

"Both ministries knew the protocol on withdrawing from any agreement means they notify the MERC chairs in advance," said Eddy Almeida, MCSCS MERC chair. "Up until now, we have always operated on the basis of mutual respect. This move, which the employer has still not provided any reason for, is a slap in the face to the MERC teams, and an even bigger slap to our

local presidents, as it cancels all of the local agreements. It is completely disgusting."

MCYS MERC chair Glenna Caldwell says she is both shocked and angry at the complete disregard shown by the employer.

"This goes to the very foundation of labour relations," Caldwell said. "The employer has now blown any goodwill and trust they may have generated over years of meetings. To completely ignore the elected MERCs is unprecedented, and indicative that there are bureaucrats in the Ministries that are accountable to no one."

Beyond the lack of respect is a larger issue of the employer immediately trying to sabotage a new contract before the ink has even dried.

A significant component of the new Corrections Bargaining Unit agreement is incentives for improving sick time. By removing the compensating time off (CTO) option from the contract, the employer has eliminated one of the methods in which sick time could be reduced.

"Our members could have had the option to take CTO instead of a sick day to keep the average down," Almeida said. "By taking that option away, the employer has just confirmed they will do everything in their power to make sure our members never meet the targets set out in the collective agreement. It also removes an option our members have to get away from the horrifying working conditions in our facilities, even for a day or two. This is not just underhanded; it also shows the distaste the ivory tower bureaucrats have for our front-line staff."

The actions, agreed to by almost all the local leaders across the province, are to send a strong message to the employer: If you aren't agreeable, neither are we.

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“The employer depends on our members to work overtime in order to keep facilities running,” Almeida said. “HPRO makes the employer’s lives easier. That is a two-way street. And it looks like the employer only wants to make our lives worse.”

Withdrawing from CWW agreements is also a serious move, one that will hopefully give the employer pause, considering all of the facilities are set up to run on 12-hour shifts. But Caldwell assures the employer this is not an empty threat.

“If the employer wants to play hardball with us, we are ready to come right back at them,” she said. “They are playing games with our lives. Well, this isn’t a game. We promise to make the employer’s lives just as hard as they’re making ours.”

Lastly, the Division hopes that ALL actors will step down from their positions. Both Almeida and Caldwell agree that as long as members continue to act as managers, the employer will never hire permanent managers. And that prevents unclassified members from getting full time jobs.

Both MERC chairs said they are proud of their members for coming out loud and strong on this issue.

“We don’t know why they want to go to war with us, but Corrections never backs away from a fight,” said Caldwell. Almeida agrees. “We will see who is still standing at the end,” he said. “I’m putting my money on our members, men and women who actually protect this province. Not mindless bureaucrats who push pencils and look down their noses at those of us on the front line.”

Authorized for distribution:



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