



Bargaining

FortisBC Energy Inc. – Bargaining 101

Friday, May 12, 2017

To: All Members at FortisBC Energy Inc.

Your union and FortisBC Energy Inc. will be heading to the bargaining table to negotiate a new collective agreement.

I'm writing to offer a quick introduction to the bargaining process.

Your bargaining committee

Your committee is made up of your coworkers and colleagues because that is who they represent. Based on your feedback and input through the bargaining surveys your committee will compose bargaining proposals. Your bargaining committee does not have the final say about what is in the collective agreement – you do through your vote.

Bargaining surveys

Bargaining surveys will be distributed. The surveys ask a series of questions about your work and conditions of employment. It is designed to find out what is good about your current working conditions and what could be improved upon.

It's incredibly important for you to offer your input to your bargaining committee members. They are your voice at the table and they need to hear from you. I hope everyone will take the time to meet with your committee members, and voice your thoughts and concerns regarding the collective agreement.

Proposals

Your committee will take all of the information they have collected from the surveys, along with the one-on-one feedback they've heard from fellow union members, and draft a series of proposals. While working on proposals, the committee will keep a few things in mind:

- What are the top priorities for the majority of members?
- What do they think is possible to achieve?
- Are the workers united and willing to stand up to defend the rights they have or to make gains?

It's a balancing act: no one ever gets everything, but a skillful committee backed up by a determined membership can move the ball forward.

Of course, FortisBC Energy Inc. will bring their own proposals to the table. It's the bargaining committee's job to decide if

those proposals are in the best interests of their coworkers.

Exchanging proposals

When the two sides meet to exchange proposals they often start with the easier issues first before moving to more difficult subjects. Items like wages and benefits – anything dealing with money – are generally the last to be discussed.

If an agreement is reached:

Your bargaining committee and FortisBC Energy Inc. will declare they have a tentative agreement. The agreement will then come to you, the members, for the final decision. The bargaining committee will tell you if they are recommending the agreement or not. Then it's your choice to decide whether or not you will vote for or against accepting the agreement.

If the majority of your coworkers vote to accept the agreement, you have a new agreement.

If you don't accept the agreement, the bargaining committee and the employer must return to the table. The situation can get more serious. If this is the case, one or both sides may consider some type of job action to turn up the pressure to reach an agreement.

If an agreement can't be reached:

If your bargaining committee is at an impasse and cannot agree on the terms for a new collective agreement, one of several things may happen.

The union may decide to ask for a strike vote, which would authorize you to take some sort of job action, ranging from a ban on overtime to a full strike walk-out. The employer has that right too, and can issue lockout notice.

But the overwhelming majority of all agreements – over 95 per cent – are concluded without job action.

The parties may apply for mediation, to get a neutral third party to help. Or, in rare circumstances, both sides are ordered into binding arbitration, where an arbitrator decides the last outstanding issues.

I hope this brief introduction to bargaining answers any questions you may have and makes the process clear.

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact me by phone or email me at clee@moveuptogether.ca.

In solidarity,

Cindy A. Lee

Union Representative

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