

# CIVIL SERVICE

## BARGAINING UPDATE

### Your Elected Civil Service Bargaining Committee

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## Time to File for Arbitration – and KEEP UP THE HEAT!

This week, the employer came back to us with a final offer.

It was a long time coming and in the end, it wasn't good enough. The government offered us a **four-year agreement with a one percent raise in each of the first two years, and two percent in each of the last two years.**

We have been patient, and this is not a fair and reasonable offer. Most groups (MPI, the City of Winnipeg, the Colleges, the nurses, to name a few) who've recently been in bargaining with government received at least a two percent wage increase in each year of their agreements.

**Are we worth any less?**

### What we've decided to do

As your elected bargaining reps, we've spent hours deliberating the best course on behalf of our fellow members. In the end, we have decided to file for arbitration while continuing to fight for what we feel is only fair.

### What this means for all of us in the long-term

Once we file for arbitration, the union and government will agree on an arbitration panel or sole arbitrator to hear both the union and the government argue their case. The arbitrator/panel will then decide what they deem to be a fair settlement and both the employer and the union will accept that decision.

Given the precedent set by other groups similar to ours in bargaining, **we believe we have a very strong case.**

### What this means for all of us in the short-term

The downside of filing for arbitration is that **the entire process is long** – usually over a year, from start to finish. But fortunately, filing does not mean we must sit back and wait.

**Negotiations could resume any time.** So this summer, we plan to continue turning up the heat on government. And we can't do it without you!

We know it's summer (and most of us are focused on our hard-earned vacation!) but **we need you to:**

1. Wear a "Still Without a Contract" button when in your work-place, and encourage others to wear one, too.

2. Sign the petition for a fair contract at [Elephanttalk.ca](http://Elephanttalk.ca) using your home e-mail, and encourage your friends and family to sign it, too!

3. Check your e-mail or mailbox for updates on further MGEU actions to keep the pressure on government in the coming weeks!

On the other side, you'll find some frequently-asked questions about the bargaining process so far and the arbitration process to come.

Please feel free, however, to contact any one of us through the MGEU Resource Centre and we'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

In Solidarity,

*Your Civil Service Bargaining Committee*



**Q. Why has bargaining taken so long up to this point?**

**A.** As the Civil Service Bargaining Committee, we negotiate on behalf of over 14,000 members.

In any given round of Civil Service negotiations, the package we initially present to government includes hundreds of proposals for change, and given that, the entire process usually takes about a year to complete.

In this round, the non-monetary portion of negotiations, which considers everything from promotion and transfer policies to health and safety issues, took about eight months to get through, which is about average.

Just before Christmas 2014, we moved onto monetary discussions and that's when talks began to stall. For the first few months of 2015, the government delayed meeting due to their own internal challenges. And when negotiations finally resumed, we made frustratingly little progress in moving them towards a fair and reasonable monetary offer.

**Q. What exactly is arbitration?**

**A.** When an impasse is reached in negotiations between the Civil Service Bargaining Committee and the employer, the union has legislative authority through the Civil Service Act to request a third party arbitrator or arbitration panel determine a settlement.

The union and the employer both have a say in the selection of the arbitrator and panel members. Once selected, the arbitrator hears both the union and the employer argue their respective bargaining positions. The arbitrator then delivers what they deem to be a fair settlement and both sides must accept the decision.

**Q. How long will it take?**

**A.** Between selecting an arbitrator, presenting arguments and the release of a decision, most arbitrations take over a year to complete.

**Q. Why choose arbitration if it takes so long to get results?**

**A.** Over and over, we have made sound arguments for our position at the table, but much to our frustration, the government has simply not responded with what we believe to be a fair and reasonable offer for our membership.

We believe we have a strong case to present to a third-party arbitrator and while it may take more time, all of us would end up with a better deal.

Having said that, filing for arbitration does not mean negotiations are on hold. The employer could request a return to the table at any time. This is why it's so important that we keep promoting our position publicly and pushing the government to do the right thing sooner rather than later.

**Q. Who made the decision to file for arbitration?**

**A.** As your elected representatives at the Civil Service Bargaining Table, we work closely with our union's professional negotiators to gather and package bargaining proposals, strategize our responses at the table, and explore all our members' options.

Together, as a Committee, we decided that filing for arbitration would allow us to pursue the best deal possible for our members in the long run, while also giving us the short-term opportunity to keep publicly and aggressively pushing government towards a better offer this summer.