

# On the Road to a fair contract

November 2012

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MGEU

Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

GOOD JOBS

QUALITY SERVICES

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## How to Stay Informed During Bargaining



News happens fast during bargaining and the union isn't permitted to use the employer's e-mail system. The best way to make sure you get all of the up-to-date details is to provide us with your personal e-mail address and check [mgeu.ca](http://mgeu.ca) for the latest "MPI Negotiation Updates."

Visit [mgeu.ca/memberinfo](http://mgeu.ca/memberinfo) and send us your contact details to stay in-the-loop.

## FAQs

Check out the other side for answers to a number of Frequently Asked Questions we've been hearing from members.

### contact us...

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## MGEU and MPI Heading to Conciliation on December 6

Since members voted to reject MPI's final offer on October 25, 2012, your MGEU bargaining committee has been looking at every available option to reach a fair deal for members.

### First we went back to the table

We asked to resume negotiations late in October and urged MPI to reconsider their freeze on wages and benefits for the first two years of the contract. But, because the wage offer is controlled by the Province, MPI management had to meet with the Government to discuss what they were prepared to change. The answer: very little.

The only change the Government was prepared to make was to extend the Information Technology Market Supplement (memo of agreement #5 - p.107 of the contract) from two years to four and restore the Medical Fitness Administrator and Medical Assessment Supervisor supplement (memo of agreement #7 - p.109 of the contract) for the life of the contract. They also attached a condition that the offer would only apply if the bargaining committee highly recommended it to members in a second vote.

### Second offer wasn't good enough

The bargaining committee told MPI that it could not endorse such a weak offer because...

1. MPI had extended these market supplements in the past and likely would have renewed them anyway because they're needed to attract employees;
2. many members who receive the supplements told the bargaining committee they'd much rather see it become a permanent part of their salary, instead of annually renewed;
3. the supplements apply to less than 3% of all MPI members; and most importantly,
4. the revised offer represented a very minor improvement over the first one members decisively rejected in October. It simply didn't go far enough.

### Then we requested arbitration

The committee then decided to ask MPI to resolve the issue through interest arbitration (see reverse for more information about arbitration). MPI met with the Government to discuss the option but the Corporation responded on November 19 by saying "We have considered your proposal carefully and have respectfully decided to decline your suggestion."

### Conciliation is the last option before taking a strike vote

As we've said before, the committee regards taking any type of job action as a last resort because it can be very disruptive for our members and the public. We would much rather reach a new deal at the bargaining table than on the picket line.

So, the bargaining committee's final option before taking a strike vote was to request conciliation services. A conciliation officer has been appointed and the process will begin on December 6 (see reverse for more about how conciliation works).

### Stay connected, send your e-mail

Over the past couple of months, we've sent several e-mail updates. If you haven't received any e-mails, be sure to visit [www.mgeu.ca/memberinfo](http://www.mgeu.ca/memberinfo) and submit your e-mail (we cannot use your work address). You can also call our Resource Centre at 1-866-982-MGEU. Be sure to watch your inbox and if you're on Facebook or Twitter, be sure to "like" and "follow" the MGEU.

### Your MGEU Bargaining Committee:

Melissa Gosnell (Thompson)

Doug Eyres (The Pas)

Nancy Gibbs (Dauphin)

Paulina Harron (Brandon)

Val Doherty (Winkler)

Jacques Lambert (Steinbach)

Amanda Caufield (Winnipeg)

Beth Hazelwood (Winnipeg)

Marc Moins (Winnipeg)

Miranda Lawrence (MGEU Negotiator)

# FAQs

## Common Questions about the current MPI Bargaining Process

### Why did the committee endorse the employer's first offer but reject the second?

The committee believed there were a number of new and improved benefits in the first offer and, after looking at other recent settlements in Manitoba, felt the final offer was the best available. That's why they recommended acceptance.

However, MPI members had the final say on what they thought of the offer and they spoke loud and clear by decisively rejecting it. At that point, it was made clear to the committee that members felt a wage and benefit freeze in the first two years of the contract was unacceptable.

So, when the Province put out a revised offer that was essentially the same as the previous one, with a few minor tweaks, the committee looked at the previous vote result and felt it was not something members were prepared to accept.

### What is conciliation? How does it work?

Conciliation is a type of dispute resolution mechanism. The process involves a conciliation officer, who meets with the two parties separately to explore potential solutions and help resolve their differences.

Either party can apply for conciliation, in writing, to the Minister of Labour, who then appoints a conciliation officer.

Each party must attend meetings called by the officer and must provide a list of its terms of settlement. The failure of either party to co-operate may be construed to be an unfair labour practice.

### What's the difference between conciliation and arbitration?



The main difference between arbitration and conciliation is simple. Arbitration involves a neutral third-party arbitrator who hears arguments from both sides and delivers a final, binding decision. Conciliation involves having the two parties meet separately with a neutral third-party conciliation officer who acts as a go-between to help resolve

their differences. Unlike arbitrators, conciliation officers have no power to impose a final settlement.

### What happens if we can't reach an agreement through conciliation?

If that happens, there is little choice but for the committee to organize a province-wide strike vote.

If that were to occur and the majority of voting members cast their ballots in favour, the committee would have a strike mandate. This would give them the ability to take strike action.

### What is the difference between a strike mandate and strike action?

A strike mandate is the approval given by members to their elected bargaining committee to take future strike action (aka job action), if and when the committee deems necessary.

If a committee receives a strike mandate from the membership, it can provide enough bargaining leverage on its own to have the employer return to the table and enhance their offer. In this way, the strike mandate can be more of a threat to strike than a guarantee of future job action.

If the employer's position doesn't change at the bargaining table, the committee will begin to make strike preparations, selecting picket captains, and determining the date for job action to begin.

Job action can take many forms. It could take the form of a full-out strike, it could include introducing an overtime ban, or staging selective walkouts (also called rotating strikes). These rotating strikes mean different departments or locations walk out at different periods. One day, one department could be on the picket line and the next day a different department would take their place. This option keeps pressure on the employer, while minimizing impacts to the public and members' salaries.

Strike  
Mandate



Strike  
Action



### Why not hold a strike vote right now?

Taking a strike vote is a serious matter and, as anyone who has walked a picket line before will tell you, it's tough on everyone involved. That's why your bargaining committee sees striking as a last resort. However, in certain cases it's absolutely necessary in order to reach an agreement.

### Why is it important to vote in favour of strike action if the committee holds a vote?

If your bargaining committee holds a strike vote, it means they have exhausted every other avenue available. It also means that they will need the support of every MPI member to vote in favour of striking. **If MPI members were to vote against a strike at that point, it would put the group in a very weak position at the bargaining table for many years to come.** Basically, it would send a message to the Government and MPI that employees will not go on strike for a fair contract.

*Find more answers to common questions about strikes by reading the FAQs About Strikes sheet found on the MPI Negotiations Update page at [mgeu.ca](http://mgeu.ca)*