

Collective Bargaining



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Sick leave and the current round of bargaining

The Liberal government released its inaugural budget on March 22nd to much fanfare and popular support. As promised, it did not include the previous government's fictitious \$900 million "savings" in public service sick leave, signalling its commitment to negotiate a new plan in good faith.

Discussions with the Treasury Board may appear to have gone on forever, but actual bargaining has only now just begun. Although our PIPSC Groups have been at the table for the last couple of years, there were no real negotiations taking place during the final years of the Harper regime as its only solution was to use legislative changes whenever it needed to tilt the playing field in its favour. Sick leave was their only issue, and they were uninterested in addressing issues that were important to our members and to the public good.

Today, some PIPSC members are asking why the Institute continues to want to negotiate sick leave. Can't we just go back to what we had? There are two reasons we can't do that.

First, the government itself wants to continue negotiations on sick leave. Second, we need to improve a system that does not work for thousands of our members. Right now, employees can't access long-term disability benefits before the end of a 13-week waiting period. But half of our members have less than 13 weeks of sick leave banked.

Those who have 13 or more weeks of sick leave available are forced to completely use those up before they can access long-term disability benefits, leaving them none should they become ill again upon returning to work.

The current system also does not provide adequate protection for our members who suffer from chronic or episodic illnesses or injuries, and is ill-equipped to deal with the surge in mental health issues that many of our members are faced with. These are just some of the areas in which we have the opportunity to propose improvements during this round of negotiations.

We want to provide members with greater income protection when they're off work for medical reasons, and ensure that they transition seamlessly back to the workplace, or to long-term disability coverage for those facing long-term injuries or illness.

It's difficult to predict when the current round of negotiations will conclude, but I can assure you that PIPSC bargaining teams are working diligently to secure meaningful improvements to our members' sick leave and disability provisions. We want to provide members with greater income protection when they're off work for medical reasons, and ensure that they transition seamlessly back to the workplace, or to long-term disability coverage for those facing long-term injuries or illness.

Better Together!

Debi Daviau, President



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