



# CEP Atlantic Communications Council

Bargaining Agent for CEP Locals 401, 410, 506 & 2289

## Conseil des communications du SCEP de la région de l'Atlantique

Agent de négociation pour le SCEP Locaux 401, 410, 506 & 2289

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***Brothers and Sisters,***

***Find below some “Frequently Asked Questions” that will assist in answering some questions in advance of your membership meetings. If you do not see your question listed below, please bring your question to your local meeting for clarification.***

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

#### **1. When did you start talking about a new Agreement?**

As you know, we've been involved in the Common Interest Forum (CIF) for a couple of years. We've been discussing issues that we knew could become part of an agreement for over a year. Specific discussions on things like security and wages began in March of this year.

#### **2. Why have we negotiated this new contract now, considering the existing agreement was valid for another 1.5 years?**

We could not afford to wait until the collective agreement expires in 2011. We saw a window of opportunity – a short window – where we thought we could lock in some important security guarantees from the company:

- stop consolidations that are forcing members to choose between their jobs or their communities
- reduce outsourcing of CST work in our communities
- secure post employment benefits
- ensure no labour disruption in the foreseeable future.

If we waited until 2011, we would likely lose the opportunity to negotiate a deal like this (we don't know who the players will be, what the company's interests will be – right now, we know the executive team well thanks to the CIF process and we know that the company has an interest in labour stability as well). We seized the opportunity and we got important concessions from the company that will provide much greater security to our members.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **3. Why were there no wage increases for the remaining years in the Contract?**

We put security over wage increases, based on:

- What we have heard from members,
- What we have seen within the company in the past few months (contact centre closures, CST outsourcing), and
- What we are seeing in the outside environment (increased competition and NAS losses, corporate conversion, speculation about foreign ownership and ownership more generally).

The dollars that could have been spent in the form of wage increases in the final years were used to buy employment security for members in their current locations for the life of this new contract. This security has a real cost to the company – in terms of their ability to make business changes such as consolidations or reorganizations that would affect our members.

### **4. What if the cost of living increases significantly over the life of the agreement?**

We meet monthly with the Common Interest Forum and deal with critical issues that arise – we don't have to wait for an agreement to expire to deal with important issues.

### **5. Why was the 2011 wage increase delayed by 6 months?**

Wage increases were delayed from January 1, 2011 to July 1, 2011 to offset the cost of providing the 146 days of strike time for employees who retire by end of 2014. In addition, the employment security that is at the heart of this agreement takes effect right away, in 2010, and delaying the wage increase for 6 months helped us to negotiate the increased security.

### **6. Why did you agree to a lower wage rate for CST's?**

Firstly, we should point out that the lower wage rate is not for current CST, only new hires, so it is not a wage reduction. Secondly, changes to the CST wage rates gave us the best opportunity to make a case to control contracting out of CST work. This agreement is about security – and the greatest security comes from making sure we are a high quality and competitive workforce. But our existing wage rates are not competitive so contracting out work is attractive for the Company because they can do it at a lower cost. By agreeing to a lower wage rate, we build the case to keep the work in-house as part of our Bargaining Unit. We've established the lower wage rate and the CST labour pool as a means for getting back into the I&R business and bringing new employees into the Company.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **7. Why do the lower wage rates apply only to CST's ?**

Having a more competitive wage rate for CST's provided the best opportunity for us to see the number of contractors working in this classification reduced and also to start to see new CST hires into the company. The current CST wage scale is unaffected and applies to any current employee who might move into the CST role. This new wage scale applies only to employees hired on or after July 1, 2010.

### **8. The reductions in Contractors - what does that mean to me? How many contractors do we currently have? What is the commitment to reducing contractors? How will we know that they are keeping their commitments?**

First of all, through the new CST Labour Pool, work that would otherwise have been contracted out will be given to our own bargaining unit members. The Company will be hiring new CST's to work in the Pool . Also, the new agreement provides a measurable and enforceable mechanism to significantly reduce the number of contractors working in the Company. The agreement requires the Company to eliminate at least 50% of the number of contractors working in the CST classification in the Ten Cities over the next 3.5 years. We will see quarterly reports through CIF to make sure this is on track.

### **9. Why did you agree to Community and Combo Techs?**

Again, this agreement is all about security. We have done everything possible to ensure that you are kept actively working in your community/area – Combination Techs and Community Techs give employees broader experience, enhanced SELQ's, and greater opportunity to remain in your community as a fully productive and engaged employee each day.

### **10. How will Combination/Community Techs be chosen/selected?**

Technicians working in rural or remote areas could be identified as either Community or Combination Technicians. A joint union management committee will oversee the process of identifying the technician(s) who will be 'deemed' or identified. The number and location of Combination/Community Technicians has already been defined.

### **11. Why did you agree to Remote Call Monitoring?**

Remote Call Monitoring is a standard quality assurance tool in the Contact Centre industry. In order to keep this work in the Bargaining Unit, our Call Centres need to have the same quality assurance standards as the industry. We have agreed to institute a program with significant controls to protect members. Joint union management committees will be established to oversee the implementation and ongoing operation of the program.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **12. Why is there a Sales Incentive Plan (SIP) for CSR's/BSR's/Telesales?**

We think our CSRs, BSRs and Telesales Reps could make a real difference raising additional revenue through telephone contacts with customers and we want to make sure that these members are rewarded for making the most of every sales opportunity. We are doing this because competition is fierce, and we believe this will give us a competitive edge.

### **13. What about Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEBs)?**

Yes, this is new part of the tentative agreement. The company has agreed that OPEBs cannot be diminished during the life of this new agreement.

### **14. What's the Company getting from this agreement?**

The Company benefits in a few ways. As you've heard over the past year or two, Bell Aliant needs to reset its cost structure and better manage costs – this is part of the ongoing strategy to remain competitive. This new agreement helps them to do that for the next 4.5 years. Recent changes have been hard on employees. The Company hopes that employees will be more engaged as a result of increased security.

### **15. What is the Common Interest Forum (CIF)?**

In April 2008, we introduced the [Common Interest Forum](#) (CIF) as a means to develop more effective and efficient means of resolving differences and make necessary amendments to the Collective Agreement during its term. CIF involves officers of CEPACC and executives of Bell Aliant, with support from officers of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The CIF meets monthly to discuss issues which are common to both parties. For more information on CIF, you can refer to Appendix Z of the Agreement

### **16. Will there be another LRO or VSO in the next year?**

VSO's are often associated with consolidations – and with this new agreement the company can't do those for the next 4 years if the consolidation would force an employee to leave the company or leave their community. With an LRO, the Company will decide if they need one – if they do, they'll come to us, because it needs to be negotiated. We would only agree if we felt it was in the best interests of our members.

### **17. You asked members to send in issues that are of concern to us. I sent in my issue - why isn't it addressed in this agreement?**

The Common Interest Forum (CIF) is an ongoing process. Just because a specific issue is not addressed in the current agreement, doesn't necessarily mean it won't be addressed in the future. We have considered all of the issues submitted by members, prioritized them and have addressed some of them in this agreement. Through CIF, we continue to work on and discuss issues that have been identified and to find solutions. The CIF process is also entrenched in this new agreement which enables us to deal with new issues as they come along.