



eleven locals represented by the union's centralized bargaining team in the dispute with the government have ratified the tentative agreement.

Workers of Local 1253, which represents education workers such as school bus drivers, custodians and others, rejected the agreement because they want more comprehensive protection of their pension plan than contained in the memorandum of understanding signed between the union and the government in this negotiation. The government is trying to turn their defined benefit pension plan into a so-called shared risk plan where workers could suffer cuts in their pension benefits if the plan is declared underfunded. The spokesperson of the local noted that although workers support the wage agreement, they want more certainty about their pensions. They want to go back to the bargaining table with the government and CUPE NB has committed to supporting them in their efforts.

## The Wage Agreement



Steve Drost, on behalf of CUPE NB, presented the wage agreement that is now part of the collective agreement. Workers are to receive a wage increase of two per cent yearly for a five year contract, in addition to an annual hourly increase of \$0.25. This represents an approximate three per cent increase per year. The \$0.25 has a different impact on workers, depending on their wage level. For the lowest paid, who are numerous in the union as well as in the province's public sector as a whole, this translates into an overall increase of around 17 per cent over five years, while for workers at the top of the wage scale, the overall increase is just over 14 per cent. The increases are retroactive to when the contracts expired, some two or three years ago.

Over the past 15 years or so, successive governments in the province have imposed wage freezes combined with one per cent yearly increases, far below the increase in the cost of living. This buying of the capacity to work of public sector workers at a very low price has impoverished workers and exacerbated the problem of attracting and retaining those who deliver public services and deterring the migration of workers out of the province. It has left more money in government coffers for its pay-the-rich schemes.

In addition, the agreement provides that casual workers will now be paid the same hourly wage as regular workers doing the same work. According to the union, until now, by government decision, they were paid only around 80 per cent of the hourly wage of regular workers. This correction means that the wage increase for casuals will be about 30 per cent.

According to the union, the achievement of these wage increases is the culmination of a 15-year campaign by public sector workers to break the government's wage freeze mandate. It believes that this agreement can serve as a benchmark for the thousands of public sector workers who are due to renew their collective agreements shortly.

## Solving the Attraction and Retention Crisis

While appreciating the fact that the wage rollback mandate has been halted thanks to the

mobilization of workers and the public, speakers at the press conference made it clear that the problem of attracting and retaining workers and guaranteeing quality public services remains.

"This is just the beginning," remarked Steve Drost. "People understand their worth. We have a labour shortage. This has done nothing to address recruitment and retention which is a crisis in many sectors [such as with] transportation, education, health care, nursing homes, social workers, right across the board. This is a good start but we have got a long ways to go. The best recovery plan for New Brunswick is to invest in public services."

He noted that just as collective action by workers was the key to tackling the wage freeze mandate, collective action is at the centre of forcing the government to invest significantly in public services and ensure the well-being of those delivering services.

*Workers' Forum* congratulates New Brunswick's public sector workers, their defence organization and the residents of New Brunswick for having energized the province and shown so clearly that defending the public interest takes place by upholding workers' rights. They stood their ground and successfully mobilized the population in denouncing state repression and the criminalization of a just struggle that benefits all of society. Workers and people in New Brunswick, Quebec and Canada are calling for a peaceful pro-social solution to the public services crisis, one based on the demands and solutions put forward by those who deliver the services.



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### **Racist Policing Practices Target Migrant Workers**

## **Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario to Hear Case of Racial Discrimination**

Starting on Monday, November 22, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario will hear the applications of 54 migrant farmworkers charging the OPP with racial discrimination that violated their rights under Ontario's Human Rights Code.

Migrant Rights Network Reports:

"In October 2013, after a sexual assault that occurred near the community of Bayham, Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) conducted a DNA sweep to collect samples from approximately 95 migrant farmworkers employed in the region.

"The OPP conducted its investigation with what appeared to be a total disregard for the detailed suspect description that it had obtained from the victim. DNA samples were taken from Indo- and Afro-Caribbean men from Jamaica and Trinidad. Their ages ranged from 22 to 68, their heights ranged from 5'2" to 6'6", and their body sizes ranged between 110 lbs to 328 lbs. Other identifying features were also disregarded.

Workers were targeted solely on the basis of their skin colour and their status as migrant



farmworkers.

"Fifty-four of the migrant farmworkers who were impacted came together to jointly file human rights applications with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. Starting at 10:00 am on Monday the applications will finally be heard. The Applicants will argue that the DNA sweep and the manner in which it was conducted was racial discrimination that violated their rights under section 1 of *Ontario's Human Rights Code*.

"This is the first human rights case of its kind in Canada to examine allegations of systemic racial profiling and discrimination by the police towards migrant farmworkers. It is anticipated that it will expose not only the inherent vulnerabilities that workers are exposed to under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, but how those vulnerabilities were exploited by the police in their execution of the 2013 DNA sweep."

To follow the proceedings on Zoom, [click here](#).



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## **Defending the Rights and Dignity of Workers in Entertainment Industry**

### **Actors Getting Work**

In most countries, actors need to audition to get work. The process consists of the movie producer contacting casting directors with a list of characters. Casting then sends out that list to talent agents.

Agents submit actors from their roster to casting for each role and then if casting chooses one of their actors to audition that actor is contacted by their agent.

Most auditions are either 'Zoom auditions' or self-tapes. Zoom auditions are run by casting directors. For a self-tape the actor films themselves and sends their audition tape to their agent. Most of these self-tapes are done in the actor's home and sometimes in a professional studio.

The movie industry is highly organized, all to suit the needs of producers. Actors, like all the film workers, have no say. So it goes with auditions. Refusing an audition is looked on very poorly by agents and casting and an actor can be blacklisted for doing so.

Actors need auditions and are loathe to say no even though that is the only act they have to protect themselves.

A survey conducted in 2016 by ACTRA (The Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists) showed the average annual salary of an actor to be \$15,000.00 and that 20 per cent of ACTRA's members earn zero dollars per year.

Actors are asked to deliver auditions on very short notice, sometimes in just twenty-four hours. This means the actor's creative work is at a minimum with all the effort being spent on just memorizing the lines.

In Great Britain the situation is similar and a code of practice for self-tape auditions has been developed to address unrealistic deadlines and script demands on actors and foster a better working environment.

Four leading industry bodies have come together for the first time to create the guidelines. Equity, the Casting Directors' Guild, the Co-operative Personal Management Association and the Personal

Managers' Association have developed and published the code, and will meet regularly to monitor its effectiveness.

Key points include limiting the number of pages actors can be asked to learn for a self-tape or Zoom audition, as well as minimum turnaround times and commitments to inform actors about whether or not they have been successful.

A significant number of performers responding to a British Equity survey said they had been asked to turn around auditions in less than 24 hours, with some asked to produce self-tapes in less than five hours. Actors also reported having to learn up to 50 pages for a single audition.

Section A28 of the Independent Production Agreement between the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) deals with Auditions and Interviews. Clause A2801, Auditions, states that 'Performers shall not be required to learn special material or spoken lines or special business.'

Even with this clause in place actors in Canada have a history of learning their lines and most feel the pressure to do so thinking that will better their chances of booking a role.

In recent years, since the pandemic, studios producing streaming content have been making record-breaking profits and are running at breakneck speed to produce more and more content. Production is at a high in Canada and other countries. This quantity and pressure to produce quickly forces actors to get auditions done in short time and to do lots of them.

More actors are auditioning for the same role as producers can now scroll on a device looking for an actor that looks right for them. This means the actor's work isn't looked at carefully, adding humiliation to the actor's work life.

Casting has the power over actors, so they can ask for anything of actors doing self-tapes -- including good lighting, good background, good readers and for the actors to have memorized their lines. This means the burden of auditions is now on the backs of the actors.

Often, it is difficult for an actor to find someone to read with them for a self-tape as the auditions are given on short notice.

ACTRA is in the process of developing their own guide and putting new clauses in the agreement to better protect actors doing self-tapes.



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