



AFS NEWS

YOUR AFS GROUP NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

From the President ...

I would personally like to thank all of our AFS stewards and members for their constant support through our last round of bargaining. We are getting regular updates on the status of our new collective agreement's implementation. The employer has indicated that they expect to meet their 150 day implementation deadline as of our August 22nd pay. After this date, if your retro pay is incorrect or incomplete, you should contact Compensation and, if you need further support, then please also contact an AFS steward.

Participation in our AFS national elections was higher than we've had in the past and higher than typical in PIPSC elections. This shows member engagement with our union and the strength of our group within PIPSC. I want to express my appreciation to the candidates for running good clean campaigns and I am sincerely touched by the high level of support that I personally received from stewards and members. I pledge to continue to serve all our AFS members to the best of my ability working with our national executive and our strong network of AFS stewards.

I encourage everyone to use some of your well-deserved vacation and enjoy the summer!

In solidarity,
Doug Mason
AFS President

From the Editor ...

Welcome to the reboot of our AFS Newsletter. We hope that you enjoy this edition and look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions for future content. This newsletter includes articles on the new AFS Collective Agreement; the AFS Presidents Meeting and AGM; Phoenix; the Employee Wellness Support Program; PSHSCP Out of Province Benefit; use of personal cell phones; leave with Income Averaging; and the CPA Public Sector Conference 2018. The newsletter concludes with important upcoming dates and AFS contact information.

Manny Costain,
AFS Secretary and Newsletter Editor

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AFS Collective Agreement

The new AFS Collective Agreement was signed on March 29, 2018. This was the culmination of over three years of hard work from your AFS Bargaining Team. While this round of bargaining was long we must remember that the Employer initially offered an annual economic increase of 0.5% and the legislated replacement of sick leave with a defective short term disability plan.

It also must be recognized that as a new government was elected in October 2015 it effectively stopped the process as the Agency had to receive a new bargaining mandate from the newly formed government. Furthermore, due to the implementation of Bill C-45 by the Harper Government in 2012, the Agency must now receive their mandate directly from the Treasury Board and no tentative agreement can be signed off on the Employer's side unless the Treasury Board also signs off on the agreement. This caused additional delays in bargaining and signing.

The AFS Bargaining Team is proud of the fact that it was able to achieve the highest salary increases in the Core Public Service along with several gains in employee rights. The AFS Bargaining Team is also proud that we accepted no concessions in this round of bargaining.

AFS Sub-Group Presidents Meeting and AFS AGM

The AFS Sub-Group Presidents meeting and AFS AGM were held in Ottawa beginning on Thursday afternoon June 7th. For the first half day of the Presidents meeting, break-out sessions were held to discuss regional issues and concerns. Friday started with a presentation by AFS President Doug Mason on the work being done on the development of the Employee Wellness Support Program (EWSP). Doug and AFS Negotiator Jean-Paul Leduc provided a post-mortem on the last round of bargaining and an overview of the upcoming round of bargaining. A review of the AFS bargaining survey results was provided and priorities were debated and voted on by the delegates in attendance.

On Saturday, the AFS AGM was held. Doug Mason provided his president's report to the delegates and observers. Of special note during his report was a well-deserved PIPSC citation certificate provided to AFS Group Vice-President/Atlantic Regional Representative Chris Roach for his years of outstanding service to the AFS Group, PIPSC, and our members.

PIPSC President Debi Daviau updated the AGM regarding ongoing concerns including Phoenix. She supported the AFS Group's proposal to use the Agency's existing Corporate Administrative System (CAS) as a suitable pay replacement system for CRA and CBSA employees.

Proposed amendments to the AFS Group bylaws were presented and debated as well as several resolutions to go to the PIPSC AGM in November. PIPSC staff resource Natalie Belanger and NCR IT Representative Allaudin Alibhai were thanked for organizing this successful event.

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Phoenix

The Phoenix pay system was rolled out in several departments as phase 1 in January 2016 with some 30,000 public service employees moving over to this new pay system. While the Treasury Board were aware of the issues, many of them serious such as zero pays, phase 2 was rolled out in April 2016. Phase 2 included the Canada Revenue Agency.

During the spring 2016 National Union Management Consultation meeting, we were informed that the Agency would be moving to Phoenix and we were assured that all pay issues would be resolved by June 2016. Two years have elapsed since that date and issues still abound for our AFS members. We continue to receive new cases to resolve with CRA compensation every pay cycle.

As part of Budget 2018 an additional \$431 million over the next six years was allocated to fix the clearly broken pay system. Why throw even more good money after bad? It simply does not make any sense.

But what about a replacement system for Phoenix to take some employees off of Phoenix to alleviate some of the issues with that pay system? Well, it just so happens that the Corporate Administrative System (CAS) can do that. CAS has been running for many years at CRA and CBSA keeping track of such things as time reporting, leave balances, test results, and performance reviews and already has the required module to pay CRA and CBSA employees. In fact, CAS prepares the pay file for all CRA and CBSA employees for every pay cycle which is picked up by Phoenix for processing. CAS also performed all the calculations for each employee as part of the retro payment for each AFS member. It has been noted that CAS provides the cleanest files to Phoenix currently.

An implementation period of six to nine months is all that is required as opposed to the six years or more to stabilize Phoenix. These assurances have not only been provided internally by CRA but also by the actual software vendor.

By implementing CAS as the pay system for CRA and CBSA, nearly 100,000 employees would no longer be on the Phoenix pay system. Such a reduction in workload would be a benefit for both the staff working to resolve Phoenix issues as well as the compensation advisors who would see a reduction in workload.

Employees are tired of hoping that their pay is correct. It is time to implement CAS as a pay system to ensure employees at CRA and CBSA are properly paid. After all, that is part of the deal when an employee signs their letter of offer.

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Employee Wellness Support Program (EWSP)

In 2014, the employer demanded, and then passed enabling legislation, to impose a new sick leave regime. Their plan would have eliminated sick leave banks leaving only six paid sick days a year before going on a 70% short term disability plan with NO pay during the first week.

After the 2015 Federal Election and a change in government, PIPSC had meaningful consultations with Treasury Board on how to improve sick leave. The rationale was that the current system has disadvantages for many employees. Half of PIPSC members do not have enough banked sick leave to reach the 13 weeks required to bridge to Long Term Disability (LTD). Through discussions between the Treasury Board and PIPSC, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed on December 6, 2016 committing the parties to develop a new and improved Employee Wellness Support Program (EWSP).

As part of the MOA, the parties agreed that the EWSP would include a minimum of nine annual sick days with a carry-over of up to three days for a maximum of 12 sick days in any one year. For an absence over three days, employees would receive full salary continuance for up to 26 weeks and not have to use their annual sick days. Absences beyond 26 weeks would then be paid at the LTD rate of 70%. For those with sick leave banks of greater than 26 weeks, the period of full salary continuance would be extended beyond 26 weeks. An additional benefit is that one additional family related leave day will be included as part of the new plan.

Unlike the original plan proposed under the Harper Government which would have been outside of any collective agreement, the EWSP being developed between the Unions and Treasury Board will be part of our collective agreements meaning members will have the opportunity to vote to accept or reject it. There are also significant legal protections for collectively bargained items. The plan will be internally administered, meaning no external administrator (no SunLife) and all costs will be borne by the Employer.

The current target date for the parties to complete a plan to be presented at the individual bargaining tables is September 2018 however that date will be extended by mutual agreement from the parties. Negotiations are now expected to continue through the end of 2018.

When an agreement is reached between the parties, member information sessions will be held followed by ratification sessions to ensure that we all have the opportunity to make an informed decision to accept the new plan or not.

The EWSP bargaining structure is fully explained on the PIPSC website. We encourage members to visit the PIPSC website for further updates and details.

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PSHCP Out of Province Benefit

Do you know what coverage you have while out of province? The PSHCP out of province benefit is available to members with supplementary coverage in addition to their provincial/territorial coverage. The benefit consists of three components:

- Emergency Benefit while Travelling
- Emergency Travel Assistance Services
- Referral Benefit

The Emergency Benefit while Traveling allows each participant to be covered for eligible medical expenses incurred as a result of an emergency while travelling of up to \$500,000 per period of travel not exceeding 40 consecutive days. Employees required to travel on “official travel status” for government business are covered by the Emergency Benefit while Travelling and are eligible to use the emergency travel assistance service. The 40 consecutive day limit is lifted but the maximum of \$500,000 still applies.

The emergency travel assistance services is a 24-hour toll free number ([1-800-667-2883](tel:1-800-667-2883) within North America) giving participants access to a world-wide network of professionals who offer help with medical, legal, or other travel related emergencies.

The Referral Benefit services must be:

- Performed when the participant physically leaves the province/territory of residence,
- following a written referral by the attending physician in the person’s province/territory of residence,
- for a service that is not offered in the person’s province/territory of residence.

Eligible expenses under the referral benefit are limited to reasonable and customary charges in excess of the amount payable by a provincial/territorial health insurance plan and to a maximum eligible expense of \$25,000 per illness or injury.

Use of Personal Cell Phones to Conduct CRA Business

Recently, the AFS Executive was made aware that some offices are requesting that employees disclose their personal cell phone numbers. In addition, employees are being asked to conduct CRA business on their personal cell phones.

There is no requirement for AFS members to provide their personal cell phone number to the Employer even when asked. Furthermore, no CRA business involving protected information should ever be discussed on any cell phone, whether it’s your cell phone or a CRA provided device.

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Leave with Income Averaging & Leave Credits

The AFS Executive has been made aware that the Agency is not crediting sick and vacation leave to employees while in Leave with Income Averaging (LIA). This is in spite of the fact that the AFS Collective Agreement has provisions for the accumulation of sick and vacation leave credits. For vacation leave accumulation article 15.02 states “An employee shall earn vacation leave credits for each calendar month during which he receives pay on at least ten (10) days or seventy-five (75) hours” while article 16.01 for sick leave accumulation states “An employee shall earn sick leave credits at the rate of nine decimal three seven five (9.375) hours for each calendar month for which the employee receives pay for at least seventy-five (75) hours.”

The recommendation from the AFS Executive is to review your leave banks upon your return to work. If you have not been credited your entitled vacation and sick leave credits please consult your local steward for assistance. The employer has agreed to transmit all of these grievances directly to the final level.

CPA Public Sector Conference 2018

An upcoming event that some of our AFS members may be interested in is the Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Public Sector Conference 2018 being held in Ottawa October 22nd and 23rd. This is an opportunity to connect with peers, hear about some of the top challenges facing today’s public sector finance professionals, and stay up to date on emerging trends as you explore the leadership and accounting topics that matter most to you.

If you would like more information please click on this link:

<https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/career-and-professional-development/conferences/2018/october/public-sector-conference-2018>

Important Dates

August 20-23, 2018

- AFS Bargaining Preparation and Bargaining Training

September 10-12, 2018

- AFS Bargaining Preparation

October 18, 2018

- AFS National Union Management Consultation Meeting

November 1, 2018

- AFS Executive Meeting in conjunction with the PIPSC AGM

November 2-3, 2018

- PIPSC AGM

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