



February 4, 2019

Dear Vancouver Art Gallery Members:

Re: Last Offer Vote

When we last updated you, we indicated that the employer had the option to present its last offer directly to members through a last offer vote. It now appears they are going to exercise this option, and the vote could be held as early as Tuesday. This update will give you some information about the vote, and will present the Bargaining Committee's clear recommendation that we vote against the employer's proposal.

What is a "Last Offer" vote?

This is a process under the Labour Code that enables employers to put a "Last Offer" before bargaining unit members once in a bargaining process. It requires that members vote to accept or reject the employer's last offer to the union. The process enables the Bargaining Committee to take a position on whether they recommend members vote for or against the "Last Offer" of the employer.

What is the Bargaining Committee recommending?

Your Bargaining Committee has been working hard to achieve a fair resolution, to push back against concessions and two-tier models, and to win fair wage adjustments that don't erode the value of our work. The committee would never recommend anything to members that it could not support, nor anything it believed would ultimately harm Gallery workers. The committee has already rejected this "Last Offer" from the employer, and is recommending members do the same by voting NO.

Why the Committee is asking members to VOTE NO

The offer being presented by the employer contains two important areas where the parties have not agreed: wages and the nine-day fortnight.

Nine-Day Fortnight

The employer's proposed change to the nine-day fortnight is a concession. Make no mistake: they are demanding that members give up an important working condition that is our right under the current agreement, and are asking us to give that up with zero benefit in return. The employer does propose to maintain this scheduling option for those currently working for the Gallery, but would eliminate it for anyone hired after this agreement is ratified. Such a two-tier model is a tactic used to get unionized workers to vote against their own interest because it doesn't affect them personally. This proposal erodes our working conditions, undermines future generations of Gallery workers, and sets a dangerous precedent for future attempts to undermine our rights.

This Bargaining Committee, and bargaining committees all over the country, have taken a hard stance against concession and two-tier models. Both to protect our own rights, and to support the thousands of workers facing regressive employer proposals across the country, we should send a clear message that we will not bargain away the rights of our future co-workers, allies and friends.

.../2



Wages

Again the Gallery is asking that we accept wage increases that are below inflation, which puts us further behind. Every year as our wages fail to keep pace with the cost of living, we are forced to live with less, take side employment or move further away from our neighbourhoods and communities. We all work hard to make the Gallery the best it can be, but we simply cannot afford to subsidize the Gallery with our labour and the current wage proposals asks us to do just that.

The Bargaining Committee has put forward the idea that our members are not paid a fair wage in comparison to other workers in similar galleries across the country. We have talked about the affordability crisis in BC, and the housing crisis in Vancouver. As we say in our leaflet, we need this employer to join the other employers across the region in addressing the affordability crisis with fair wage proposals.

What happens if there is a no vote and the employer's offer is rejected?

One of several things could happen if there is a no vote. The parties could go back to the table and find a solution, and/or could pursue mediation to seek external help in finding that resolution. Following a no vote, the Union is also in a legal position to take job action and would continue or escalate current plans to work-to-rule.

What will the Bargaining Committee do if there is a no vote?

If there is a no vote, the Bargaining Committee will be proactive in seeking further negotiating dates with the employer. Our goal is to get a fair deal and we are willing to consider respectful offers that reflect this objective.

What happens if we vote yes?

A yes vote means the members accept the Employer's offer. The offer accepted through the voting process becomes the memorandum of settlement and in turn, the collective agreement for 2017 to 2020.

Conclusion

Please consider the information presented here as you are deciding how to vote, and feel free to reach out to the Bargaining Committee with any questions or concerns. For eight months we have been working to take your issues forward and to fight for the things you identified. We have faced down far reaching concessions, and pushed back hard on measures that would erode our rights. We will bargain only for the fair and justified improvements in wages, benefits, and working conditions that you deserve. We're behind the Gallery; we need the Gallery to get behind us.

Thank you for the support while we continue this work.

In solidarity,

Noel Graves (Chair)

Kulvinder Lehal

Susan Rome

Jim Stamper

Emmy Wall

Gail Johnson (CUPE Local 15 Staff Representative)

Warren Williams (CUPE Local 15 President)