

# CUPE WIRE

Official Publication of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 38  
1439—9th Av. SE, Calgary, T2G 0T4, Phone (403)233-2700 Fax (403)290-1757  
Email—office@cupe38.org Website-www.cupe38.org

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## Salaries on the Rise

There has been much talk in Calgary, and across Alberta, about the impact of the slowing energy sector on jobs and salaries. Throughout 2015, many of the oil and gas companies engaged in layoffs to compensate for the decline in oil prices, which has inevitably led to concern around our own salaries. There have been some calls in the media that perhaps the public sector should bear some pain in sympathy of those workers laid off in the oil and gas sector. What has been completely ignored by the media and the right wing special interest groups, however, is that the public sector has never enjoyed large compensation packages in the good economic times.

So what is the truth behind the noise? Are salaries decreasing in Alberta as oil prices stay low?

Compensation levels and salaries are tracked annually by a number of organizations and this data is made available to employers. Groups such as Mercer and HayGroup track this information both nationally as well as segmented regionally.

For 2016, both organizations anticipate that salaries will increase in the range of 2.5% to 2.8%. According to the groups, this slower growth in salaries is linked to the slower economy. As pointed out by HayGroup, Saskatchewan (2.7%) and Alberta (2.5%) still lead the country with projected overall base salary increases which is higher than the national average (2.4%) but are lower than in recent years, due mainly to the softening commodity prices.

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## Redeployment and Severance

We have received a number of calls from members who are concerned that redeployment and severance may not be available for them if they are impacted by the current economic downturn. Both of these items are secure in the collective agreement and were negotiated to provide members protection during hard times.

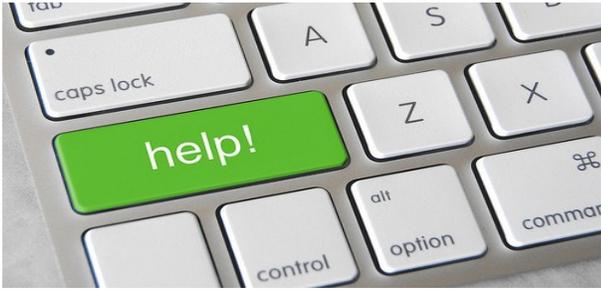
For these protections to be removed, they would need to be negotiated out of the collective agreement. Under the Alberta Labour Relations Code, the contract cannot be opened until this fall, when it comes up for renewal. Even then, you the members would need to ratify such a change by accepting a new collective agreement without these provisions.

We are confident that the members hold the same opinion as the Union Executive that these items are not for sale. We wouldn't sell them in a boom and we certainly see no value in allowing them to be taken when they are most relevant.

These items are like everything in the collective agreement; they will remain as long as we collectively stand up for them.



## Stewards Wanted



The Union Steward is a key “link” in our union. As a Steward, you make collective bargaining agreements meaningful by helping your co-workers implement their contract and defend their rights on a day-to-day basis. You are in the best position to understand your coworkers’ concerns and priorities, organize with them to take action, and communicate their priorities to other Union leaders. You are also the best person to educate co-workers about our Union’s goals.

Communication is a key attribute in an effective Steward. The most effective forms of communication are one-on-one workplace conversations. Flyers, newsletters, emails, and meetings are all important, but the best way to inform members, get feedback, and encourage participation is through personal contact.

There are some areas still in need of someone to come forward as a Steward. The most important aspect of being a Steward is that he/she is an employee’s link to the Union. A Steward is a friendly and trustworthy face in the area and someone co-workers can go to for information or help. Stewards advise employees on their rights in the workplace but their most important duty is to listen and respond conscientiously.

If you are interested in becoming a Steward, please contact the Union Office at (403) 233-2700 for more information.

## Advance Notice of CUPE Local 38 Elections

At the Regular General Meeting April 22nd the following positions will be open for a two (2) year term:

1. President (full time)
2. Treasurer
3. Chief Steward
4. Five (5) Executive Members-At-Large

To be eligible for nominations for any of the offices, members must have attended at least 50% of the Regular General Meetings in the twelve (12) months immediately prior to the election. The member must be present at the April meeting, or indicate in writing to the Recording Secretary a willingness to stand for nomination.

In accordance with the CUPE Local 38 bylaws, in order to be eligible for the office of President, Treasurer and Chief Steward, a member shall declare their intention to run at the March Regular Meeting. This declaration can be made verbally at the March meeting or by submitting a written declaration witnessed by another member which is to be read at the March meeting.



## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



Life expectancy would grow by leaps and bounds if green vegetables smelled as good as bacon.

### Salaries on the Rise

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Meanwhile, the Mercer survey indicates that, although the Alberta projections are softer for 2016, the rate is in line with their projected national average of 2.8%. Calgary and Vancouver areas are projected to be at 2.8%.

While there are obvious differences in projections depending upon the data reviewed, what is becoming clear is that salaries are still on the rise, albeit at a slower rate of growth. The biggest difference is that the slowing energy sector has brought Alberta's increases more in line with the national average. It is important to note that our salaries over the life of this contract simply amounted to the average.



Let us not forget that the employer is the first to tell us in the good times that we are NOT the energy sector, so we cannot compare our compensation to them. Well, if that is true in the good times, then it must still be true in the slow times.

### It's Vacation Time Soon!

Given the unseasonably nice weather, many minds are turning to vacation, and now would be the time to start planning. The collective agreement outlines both vacation accrual and banking of vacation time.



Article 32.0 outlines the accrual each employee receives for vacation. In the last round of bargaining, it was agreed that Enmax would provide each employee their vacation allotment at the beginning of each year, and the full allotment would be accessible. Should an employee reach an accrual benchmark on their anniversary date in that year (for example, move from 3 weeks vacation to 4 weeks vacation), the allotment would be pro-rated to ensure they received their proper amount of time off.

Another new item from bargaining is that employees are allowed to take up to five days in hourly increments (that is, 40 hours of vacation), with the rest of vacation being taken in no less than ½ day increments. This allows you to utilize some vacation time for unexpected circumstances, while providing some safeguards that the employer does not pressure people into taking vacation in small amounts.

It is important to note that each employee must take their minimum provincially legislated vacation as time off. Unless the employee agrees, this block of time must be unbroken. For example, the Employment Standards Code requires an employee receive 2 weeks for up to 4 years and 3 weeks after 5 years.

### Connect with CUPE 38

Email: [office@cupe38.org](mailto:office@cupe38.org)

Phone: 403-233-2700

In-person: 1439 - 9th AVE SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0T4

Online: [cupe38.org](http://cupe38.org)

# Get involved!

# REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

*All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend*



**When: Tuesday, February 23, 2016  
at 7:00 p.m.**

**Where: CUPE 38 Office,  
1439-9 Avenue SE**

**Business: Regular**