



Fair, safe and productive workplaces

Labour

Workplace Bulletin **Collective bargaining monthly update** **August 2013**

Key Negotiation Activities

In August, the most prominent major negotiations¹ took place between:

- The Government of Alberta and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE, 21,000 public servants): formal negotiations started in March 2013, stalled in May and moved to mediation in July. On September 12, AUPE's application for arbitration was accepted. The reform of the public service pension plans is one of the contentious issues.
- The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and 20,030 federal public service employees: negotiations are still continuing with a few unionized groups whose contracts expired between 2010 and 2012. One of the contentious issues is the elimination of severance benefits after retirement or resignation.
- The Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) and the Government of Canada: as negotiations stalled, rotating strikes started on April 2nd and continued throughout the month of August, causing a backlog in processing visas of all types. Permanent residency applicants would be the most affected.²

Settlements Reached

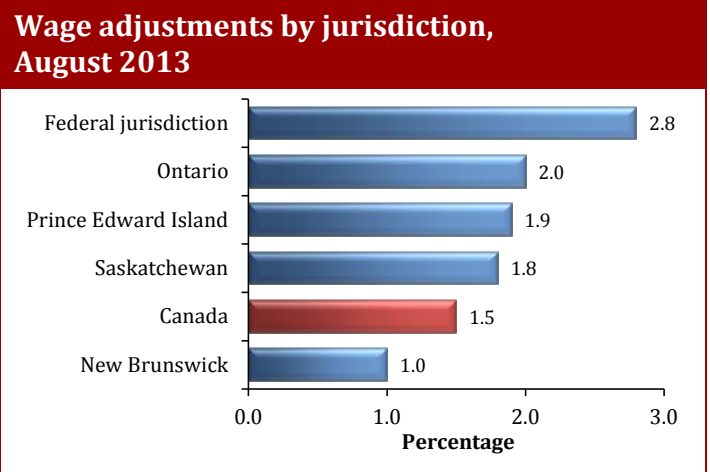
- A total of seven major settlements, covering 16,330 employees, were ratified in August. Five of these collective agreements were settled at the stage of negotiation, while the remaining two were signed at the conciliation/mediation stage.
- Six agreements covering 15,530 employees were concluded in the public sector, whereas one, involving 800 employees of the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA), was in the private sector.
- The GTAA settlement was also the only one within the federal jurisdiction.
- The agreement between the Government of New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Teachers' Association involved more than half (55,1%) of the total number of employees covered by the seven August settlements.

The texts of collective agreements can be accessed through the [Negotech](#) while the year-to-date list of [ratified settlements](#) in 2013 can be accessed on the [Workplace Information Division](#) website.

Settlement Outcomes

Wages

- In August, [major wage settlements](#) recorded annual base rate wage adjustments averaging 1.5%.³ This increase was higher than the rate of inflation (1.1%)⁴.
- When the parties to these settlements previously negotiated, the wage adjustments were higher (2.3%).
- The average wage adjustment recorded within the federal jurisdiction was 2.8% (one agreement), which was between the GTAA and its employees. This was the highest wage increase amongst all jurisdictions. Also of note, Ontario registered the second highest wage increase at 2.0%.
- In the public sector, an average wage adjustment of 1.4% was obtained by 15,530 employees (6 agreements) while the employees covered by the only private-sector agreement (GTAA) obtained an increase of 2.8%.
- Two agreements in the education, health, and social services recorded the lowest average wage increase (1.1%) among all industries. This increase is mainly due to the modest wage increases obtained by the 9,000 teachers in New Brunswick (1.0 %).



Duration

- For the agreements reached in August, the average contract duration was 48 months. This is the longest average duration since December 2011 (49.4 months).
- The longest contract duration (60 months) was negotiated by the Government of Prince Edward Island with its 2,600 public servants.

Working conditions

- The government of Canada and the Association of Canadian Financial Officers have reached an agreement, through arbitration, to increase the number of annual vacation weeks. This will allow employees of this group to take up to four weeks of vacation per year once they complete five years of full-time continuous service or equivalent. Currently, employees in most bargaining units are eligible to four weeks of annual vacation after eight years of service.
- Construction unions in Quebec and the Association provinciale des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec negotiated a provision aiming to improve employees' work-life balance. When required, employees' scheduled shifts will have more flexible start and end times, with the consent of the employer.
- At VIA Rail, a new job-sharing arrangement will allow shop crafts and on-board services employees to temporarily share a position or an assignment to balance their professional and personal lives. This provision will allow two permanent employees, who want to work fewer hours per week, to share one full-time job.

Major Work Stoppages

- During the month of August, the number of major work stoppages⁵ was low with only one lockout to report. U.S. Steel Canada locked out its 842 unionized workers at the Nanticoke plant on April 28; the lockout continued until the 30th of August.
- So far in 2013, there have been 12 major work stoppages, compared to nine during the same period in 2012. These 12 work stoppages have resulted in 858,070 person-days not worked (PDNW).
- Ninety percent of these days were in the construction industry (768,960 PDNW), followed by manufacturing (87,230 PDNW).

The listing of the weekly [major work stoppages](#) in Canada can be accessed on the [Workplace Information Division website](#).

Features

Literature Scan

- The Conference Board of Canada released a new report on absenteeism in the Canadian workplace: [Missing in Action: Absenteeism Trends in Canadian Organizations](#). The authors estimate the average absenteeism rate among Canadian organizations at 9.3 days per full-time employee in 2011, costing \$16.6B to the Canadian economy. Despite the cost of absenteeism, the report found that only 46% of Canadian organizations track employee's absences.

- A second report on absenteeism has been released by Statistics Canada: [Understanding public-private sector differences in work absences](#). In 2012, the average full-time employee took 9.3 days off because of illness or disability, and personal or family responsibilities. The average public and private full-time employee took 12.4 and 8.3 days off, respectively; the report concludes that 80% of the discrepancy between sectors could be explained by their demographic composition of workers.

Contact

For more information, please contact the [Workplace Information Division](#) or call us at 1-877-259-8828.

Note: This bulletin is based on August data/information, which is collected as of September 15, 2013.

- 1 All data reported in this bulletin relates to major collective agreements covering 500 or more employees across Canada.
- 2 A tentative agreement has been reached on September 26th.
- 3 The wage data are employee-weighted.
- 4 Statistics Canada, [The Daily](#).
- 5 Major work stoppages involve 500 employees or more.