

## **Labour Management Relations Committee (LMRC)**

**May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 3:00 p.m.  
By Zoom Meeting**

Present: Nina Joyce, Jeff Armour, Noah Austin, Karla Pacheco, Nick Soave, Andrea Klooster

### **1. Management Plan Moving Forward**

J. Armour: In order to be transparent, it is important for the Union to know what the narrative has been on the Management end. It has been communicated to Management that they are to use up their vacation time the same way that the Union has done except that it will be more of a hybrid service model. This will be done in order to avoid everyone going on vacation all at once when the USC re-opens. Management also agreed to forego their Cost of Living increases and merit pay that would normally be given at the beginning of next fiscal. Management will be able to use any remaining discretionary benefits (i.e. staff courses and wellness) until the end of May but will forego using any starting in June and for the foreseeable future. It did not seem prudent to go ahead with any of these financial benefits when the times are so uncertain.

### **2. Western Update**

J. Armour: There are no definite speaking points for this item since there have been no answers yet from Western but when information is available, there will be full collaboration with the Union. Western released an announcement yesterday regarding the hybrid model that they are looking at for the fall. They are being applauded for their creative approach and it will give them a competitive edge over schools that are going fully online. Unfortunately, the USC was not consulted on the announcement at all so it was a bit of a surprise. That should change going forward as Jeff is hoping to be included in the Western working groups that would apply to the USC. This involvement would be on a purely operational level as opposed to an advocacy one. It is important that we are part of the conversation since we run a lot of the UCC and it would be good to know if for instance Centrespot was remaining closed so that we would know what to do with the Spoke. It is important that they represent a united front with operations in the building. Just because public restaurants might be opening, it does not mean that the Wave will be etc.

N. Austin: What kind of working groups are in place in regards to safety etc.?

J. Armour: There are several groups including high level leadership groups. Jane O'Brien with Western HR is working on strategies and they have hired consultants. Some senior managers at the USC have been doing some background work on what the outcomes could look like but it could all be different from what Western decides so it is important that we have a seat at the table.

N. Austin: Have the affiliates been consulted and are they in lock step with Western?

J. Armour: They will probably want to be on the same page as main campus but they have their own Boards of Directors and sometimes have their own way of doing things (fee collection etc.).

N. Soave: King's said that they would do the same things Western was doing.

J. Armour: Karla has been speaking with other schools and HR people and it is clear that whatever Western or anyone else does, we will be above and beyond those measures. We will definitely be erring on the side of safety.

K. Pacheco: Our approach right now is to look at peoples' situations for working from home. We are engaging a couple of external consultants for that purpose. We will take our time and set everything up properly for everyone and will explore every avenue before putting ideas in front of the Board.

### **3. Engagement Groups Moving Forward**

K. Pacheco: We will be looking at engagement groups again when normal operations open but in the meantime we will be looking at setting up some smaller groups focussing on areas such as isolation, working from home, parenting etc. This will be a USC wide initiative and is important because it could be that this current environment is what will be in place for a long time going forward.

N. Austin: Fully in support of this type of initiative.

### **4. Lay-Off Notice**

K. Pacheco: We have been approved for the wage subsidy. It took Vicki six days to complete and it took three days for us to be approved. This information will be communicated to staff today. Knowing that some other student unions have been turned down and that we were so quickly approved leaves cautiously optimistic that we will have future coverage. The next Board meeting is on May 25<sup>th</sup> and the next set of decisions regarding the lay-off notices will be discussed.

J. Armour: We were required by the CBA to issue notice while everything was being sorted out. Hopefully the membership understands that.

N. Austin: Yes, they are aware. There was a general meeting after the lay-off notices were issued and it was determined that the membership is in support of special projects being assigned based on skill set and not necessarily seniority. For example, if a project had to do with clubs, it would make sense for Saku and Shari to be consulted rather than going through everyone else first. As long as the Union is involved in all of these discussions, they are amenable to these types of situations. It was agreed that it would be too complicated to go by seniority in these cases.

J. Armour: That sounds good in theory but in practice, how would that be applied? For example, if there were special projects that did not necessarily relate to any particular skill set (i.e. dropping off care packages to new students if there was no O-Week)? How would a situation like that be navigated?

N. Austin: If the project was not designed for anyone in particular, it would be presented to the members and they would ask for volunteers.

J. Armour: They would go through seniority if it was not specific to anyone's job?

N. Austin: Hypothetically, the job would be offered that way but it would be up to the member to decide if they want to do it and then it would just get passed on to the next senior person if they did not.

J. Armour: They just do not want anyone to assume that they are laying off the bottom half of the seniority list by doing that.

N. Austin: Either everyone is working or no one is working. The details can be worked out as we go along.

J. Armour: It is great that everyone is thinking along these lines and is being flexible but there is concern about how to apply the process in a fair way.

N. Austin: The onus would come back on the Union leadership. These are unprecedented times and anything that is done now should not be codified as how we would normally do things. It is good to be flexible now with the understanding that it will not necessarily be policy going forward. For this, Letters of Understanding can be used. Everything will have to be addressed again before returning to work.

J. Armour: It is great to hear that there is a good understanding as it is difficult to send out the communications, not knowing if people are reading them in the spirit that they are intended. The concern here is about setting a precedent. For example, in terms of the care packages, how would we make sure that this would not be considered Union-specific work once things go back to normal?

N. Austin: Will engage CUPE National on that and see what they can use in terms of Memos of Understanding and other mechanisms. Since we do not really know what is happening going forward, they would not want to come up with anything that is too general in nature.

J. Armour: It would be great if the Union leadership could come up with something that he could bring back to the table for the Board meeting discussion.

N. Austin: They will bring up this information to the collective and consult with them. People are flexible but they just want to feel like they have been heard and consulted on all of these things. They want to feel communicated to and looked after.

J. Armour: We can touch base before the Board meeting if necessary. The Board cannot be faulted for being nervous about the situation. They need to show them that there is a reason to

be calm and that everyone is pulling together on this to provide the best student experience possible given the circumstances. For this reason, they would like to really speak to what the Union is willing to do.

N. Austin: We will come up with some verbiage and present it to the collective. We would like to show our ongoing commitment to being flexible under these circumstances.

J. Armour: It might be possible to defer the lay-off, we just need to show that something is happening. It would be better to avoid the uncertainty of deferring 10 days and then another 10 days etc.

N. Austin: The least uncertainty, the better.

## **5. RFP/Staff Health & Dental Plan**

J. Armour: There is currently an RFP for the plan since the performance of the current plan has been disappointing. It would be prudent to look at getting new consultants that can help with that and give some good recommendations going forward. Everyone will have input on any changes when the time comes.

K. Pacheco: This is definitely a step in the right direction. It was time to get a fresh look at the plan and get some better recommendations. The consultant role will be very important going forward especially with the future being so different than originally thought. The RFP will be due September 1<sup>st</sup> and they will work away at it after that. In the meantime, nothing changes.

N. Austin: It is understood how they might be unhappy with how things have gone with Campus Trust.

## **6. Health & Dental Performance**

K. Pacheco: As predicted, claims have gone down significantly over the past couple of months and there has been an accumulated surplus. No doubt this will swing back the other way when everything changes again so we should not get too comfortable with the low usage situation.

N. Austin: It makes sense that this is how things were going to go.

### **Staff Plan**

The staff plan also experienced a significant decrease in claims due to the pandemic. After a monthly average of \$15,000 in claims from June through March, claims dropped to just \$3,795 in April. The result was a much-needed surplus of \$9,088. This reduced the year-to-date deficit to just \$5,760.

Dental claims were already low in March, having dropped from \$6,553 in February to \$1,064 in March. Claims continued to decrease to just \$767 in April, resulting in a surplus for the month of \$4,794. After eight months the dental plan has accumulated an overall surplus of \$10,119.

The health plan also managed to accumulate a surplus of \$4,296—it's first month to experience a surplus since January 2019. After eight months its overall deficit is now \$15,879.

The break-even rates I provide each month are based on the most recent 12 months of claims. It should be noted that this month's rates, therefore, include April's unusually low claims and are not the truest indicator of the plans' financial stability.

Health plan - \$84.11/\$210.27 (\$68.03/\$169.07 currently)

Dental plan - \$45.72/\$114.29 (\$52.25/\$128.63 currently)

## **7. Other Business**

J. Armour: Was there anything else that should be covered in your opinion because I noticed the union hadn't submitted any agenda items for the past few meetings. Do you need more time for the agenda callout or did you see it beforehand?

N. Austin: We did see it and nothing that needs to be added. The membership just had questions about the subsidy being extended going forward. They have questions about when to apply for EI and the CERB. Obviously if there is flexibility going forward and the subsidy continues that would be the best case scenario. They understand that there will be no more information until the Board meeting but putting something forward from the Union would be a best practice.

J. Armour: They will be looking at every scenario. For example: what would a top up look like for EI and is it better to keep people on? Management cannot speak for what the Union is willing to do.

N. Austin: The process will probably look something like a working group for special projects where work will be presented and then squared with the CBA. We need to work with what we have right now. We will have some information for you to present to the Board early next week.