

Spectrum Society for Community Living

Wage Equity Update #9

July 14, 2000

Update

Wage Increases and Retro Pay

As outlined in [Wage Equity update # 8](#), we have established a new wage grid for Spectrum employees. This new wage grid will be implemented as soon as we receive the new funding from government. The most recent news regarding final government approval of the funding is that a Treasury Board meeting was held July 12th, 2000 and the outcome of that meeting should be known on July 17th, 2000 when CSSEA and PSEC are informed of the decisions made at the meeting. As well, Retroactive Pay for all employees will be paid once the funding has been received. The new funding is retroactive to February 1, 2000, so our retroactive pay will be based on each employee's gross pay from February through to the date the new pay raises take effect.

Improvements to our Benefits Package

One component of the wage equity deal was that agencies would receive funding to implement and improve their benefits coverage for employees. Agencies must look at implementing basic benefits coverage first, then look at what portion of benefits is paid by the employer, look at eligibility levels for benefits, and look at enhancing existing benefits. As you know, our existing benefits package is already very comprehensive in its coverage, and Spectrum pays for all benefits except Long Term Disability. Spectrum employees are eligible for benefits when they have a position with 20 hours per week of permanent shifts. In our survey, we asked about benefits and received many additional suggestions about improvements to the benefits. These suggestions and others were discussed with the Policy Committee. After reviewing these suggestions with Sun Life, we have been able to offer the following improvements:

Implementation Date:	Enhanced Benefit	Cost to Spectrum & Employees
August 1 st , 2000	3 Month Waiting Period for all benefits	earlier onset of premium costs for Spectrum
August 1 st , 2000	Matching RRSP Contributions increased	\$25 or \$50 per employee per month
October 1 st , 2000	Pharmacy Direct Pay Card	15% increase in Health Benefit
October 1 st , 2000	Elimination of \$25 annual deductible on Dental	about \$2 per month per person in Dental Benefit

The addition of Pharmacy Direct Pay cards will allow employees to have their card swiped at participating pharmacies and the cost of prescription medications will be paid directly by Sun Life. This will ease the burden of collecting receipts, submitting them to Sun Life and receiving a cheque a few weeks later. Watch your paystub for a new enrollment card that must be completed by all plan members to activate the new cards. If you have any questions call Haisha or [Ernie](#) at the office.

Background:

Over the past two years, Spectrum Society and other non-union agencies have been advocating with government for fair wages for all community support workers. We have been repeatedly told that fair wages have always been in the plan, though they haven't reached that part of the plan yet. In July, 1999, we joined a group of agencies in filing an unfair labour practice complaint against the government. Our assertion was that the government was coercing our employees to join unions by giving large contract increases to unionized agencies and ignoring non-union agencies. In February 2000, just before the complaint was to be heard at the [Labour Relations Board](#), the government announced a wage equity deal for non-union agencies. Their press release stated:

"Treasury Board has approved the [Public Sector Employers' Council](#) Secretariat's (PSEC's) request to implement the following increases for these workers:

A 5% compensation increase, effective February 1, 2000;

A 5% increase for benefits, effective April 1, 2000; and

Another 5% compensation increase effective October 1, 2000;

Approval in principle for three further increases has also been granted: a 2.5% benefit increase and a 9% wage increase in 2001/02; and an 8% compensation increase in 2002/03."

It seemed possible in February that we would have contract increases negotiated with government and funding received by June 30, 2000 so that Spectrum employees would soon be receiving wages equitable with all other community support workers in Vancouver.

In March 2000, Spectrum employees completed compensation surveys that asked for feedback on the priorities for wage increases and people's priorities for benefits changes. This feedback was incorporated into Wage Equity Update #8 on April 28th, 2000.

In April 2000, [CSSEA](#)'s non-union council met for the first time. This group of employers met as a consultative group to [CSSEA](#) providing feedback on government plans for our sector. We began a series of meetings where the employers were unanimous in asking that government funding be released as quickly as possible to employers so wage increases could be passed on to our employees. Government and CSSEA debated competing contract proposals over the next three months, until it was agreed that government would calculate contract amendments directly with agencies.

We met with Vancouver regional contracting officers to ensure that they understood our urgency in having contracts amended. They assured us that they have already begun the process of preparing contract amendments and will work with us to ensure the funding can be processed as quickly as possible.

On July 12th, PSEC presented a funding proposal for final approval to Treasury Board. Once this approval has been granted, we will find out from our local MCF contract manager how long it will take to get the contracts amended and funding released to Spectrum. This will determine when we can implement the wage increases we have presented in Wage Equity update #8.