

THE CONSERVATIVE ATTACK

DECEMBER 2013

#4



Targetted: Sick leave and health benefits

The Harper government is viciously attacking public servants by portraying us as sick leave abusers. These statements are part of a deceitful campaign to justify the replacement of our present earned sick leave credit system with a short term disability plan (STD) and a long term disability plan (LTDP).

As Treasury Board President Tony Clement said in one media report: "The Conservative government is putting public service unions on notice that sick days will be targeted in the next round of collective bargaining." – National Post, June 10, 2013.

The Harper government's propaganda on this subject overinflates sick leave statistics by including appointments, family-related responsibility leave, and so on. The Conservatives have already issued public tenders for these plans without consulting, much less negotiating with, federal public-service unions.

In the past, the employer stated on many occasions that they plan on gutting our present earned sick leave system and that they will be pursuing discussions on sick leave

at the bargaining table in 2014. UCCO-SACC-CSN will stick to its practice of consulting members in every local general assemblies beginning in 2014 on this and all other negotiating issues.

In our past negotiations we proposed amendments to sick leave provisions that were supported by members in general assemblies to build our negotiating platform. We will not engage in any discussions on this matter without consulting with our membership, and this, before our current collective agreement expires in 2014.

In addition to this, Treasury Board is pressuring CSC to enforce its 130-day policy that places our members on direct pay following a work-related injury if they are unable to return to work. In 2006, we negotiated a provision in the Global Agreement that keeps our members on pay until such time as their claim is examined and it is recommended they be placed on direct pay by the return-to-work committees. We continue to insist that the

employer respect our Global Agreement and our return-to-work committees.

As Tony Clement said many times in another era, "I fully support correctional officers." He could better support us by walking a day in our shoes at a job where work-related injuries are increasing as a result of the sweeping policy and legislative changes by his government. As the Harper government assaults our sick benefits, we continue to be exposed to infectious diseases, physical assaults, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and many other work-related health problems. This fact of our working lives makes our sick leave an essential benefit.

Finally, the Harper government is also trying to attack our Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP). Through the National Joint Council (NJC) all unions are trying to negotiate some improvements to the PSHCP. In exchange

for these improvements Treasury Board is demanding we agree to make retired federal public servants share 50% of the costs of the PSHCP. NJC member unions

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have collectively made it clear that we will never agree to a concession that would hurt our retired members on limited incomes.

We are certain Treasury Board will attack our sick leave benefits in the next round of bargaining. We must be ready to mobilize and send a strong message to the employer that will we not be bullied into giving up our present sick leave system. This benefit is absolutely essential to the working lives of federal correctional officers who risk their health every day to keep Canadians safe.

We encourage our members to challenge their local Member of Parliament on this assault on a vital benefit for correctional officers.

