

Union Proposals
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10 principles around workforce reduction

Finance Minister Robert McLeod has publicly stated that the Government of the Northwest Territories has to find approximately \$150-million through the combination of expenditure reductions and revenue measures over the next five years.

The Union of Northern Workers is concerned that this exercise in expenditure restraint could result in a reduction of the workforce that provides key public services to citizens across the territory. The UNW notes that in its opening proposals at the bargaining table, the Government said its overall goal “is to maintain a sustainable public service.” It also said that it believes this should be a shared goal between the Union and the GNWT.

Should the Government contemplate a reduction to the public service, workforce, the UNW intends to ensure that any cuts to staffing are fair and transparent, and that restraint measures are conducted in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts on employees.

In this spirit, the Union has developed 10 clear principles that we believe should guide any approach to workforce reduction.

1. The Employer will inform the Union at least six (6) months before any workforce reduction notices are issued that it is contemplating a reduction of the workforce
2. Within thirty (30) days of such notice, the Employer and the Union shall meet to consult meaningfully on alternatives to workforce reduction, and the Employer shall make every reasonable effort to minimize adverse effects on employees.
3. When the Employer identifies a need to reduce the workforce, consistent with the Collective Agreement, it shall first make every reasonable effort to reduce the workforce through attrition.

4. If after such attrition there is still a need to reduce the workforce, the Employer shall offer voluntary separation opportunities and early retirement opportunities to employees within the classification, first in the employee's department, and then in the employee's headquarters area (community).
5. Such voluntary separation shall be consistent with
 - (a) the provisions of Article 32.08 of the Collective Agreement, or
 - (b) the provisions of Article 39.02 of the Collective Agreement, in which case, the Employer shall pay the cost of any penalties that would otherwise prevent a waiver.
6. If there are more volunteers in a classification than are required, volunteers shall be selected in order of seniority.
7. No full-time indeterminate employee shall be laid off while there are students, casual, term, part-time indeterminate, and relief employees still working.
8. If after offering voluntary separation opportunities it is still necessary to reduce staff, layoffs shall be in reverse order of seniority within an employee's classification/department/headquarters area.
9. Employees who are laid off shall be placed on a recall list for a period of 18 months. Employees shall be recalled in order of seniority.
10. No new employees shall be hired while any employees are on a recall list.