

PAY INCREASES FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE PSWs: CUPE/OCHU ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

Before Ontario's June election, the Liberal government announced it would increase wage rates for publicly funded home and community care Personal Support Workers (PSWs).

It promised to increase wages for these PSWs by \$1.50 an hour effective April 1, 2014, with further increases of \$1.50 an hour effective April 1, 2015, and \$1.00 an hour, effective April 1, 2016.

Due to the provincial election there has been a delay in payment from the previously announced date (July 1, 2014). The government now states the increases will be implemented on September 1, with pay retroactive to April 1, 2014, paid out at the same time.

CUPE Ontario and Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) have contacted the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to get more detailed information. The following questions and responses are based on our discussions with the Ministry:

Q1. Which PSWs are eligible for the pay increases?

- A. PSWs providing direct personal care and working for agencies funded through the provincial government, the LHINs and CCACs are eligible. Most PSWs giving respite care and working in supportive housing are also eligible.

Although the majority of publicly funded PSWs who provide personal care in the home and community care sectors are eligible for the increase, there are exceptions. One exception that we are aware of: PSWs working in community mental health/supportive housing. They are currently excluded from receiving the \$1.50 wage increase.

Also not eligible: PSWs on private contracts; those who work at hospital and long-term care facilities (including municipally funded long-term care facilities); PSWs working under government funded self-directed care; those providing homemaking services.

Q2. What is the difference in the type of work?

- A. PSWs who provide personal care are eligible for the pay increase: their duties can include getting people up out of bed, helping to bathe people, light wound care, etc.

If workers perform solely homemaking services, they are not eligible for the pay increase – for instance, if they clean clients' homes, do the dishes, etc. and perform **NO** personal care.

Q3. What about PSWs who do both personal care and homemaking services?

- A. The government says it will take a "wider" rather than a "narrower" approach. In other words, if a job requires both services, the PSW may be eligible for the increase.

Still, some questions remain: are *municipally* funded home and community care PSWs included in the wage adjustment? Will pay adjustments be awarded to PSWs whose employers are funded through community mental health programs? The answers might not be automatic, but CUPE will champion members on these and other issues.

Q4. Has there been any progress on securing more full-time jobs for PSWs?

- A. The government knows that this is an issue that is important to CUPE and our members and it has promised to develop measures to create more permanent and less casual employment for PSWs. It says it will work with home care agencies to create better schedules, improve mileage rates and ensure better consistency between publicly funded providers and the regions. And of course, CUPE will continue to push the government on this vital issue.

Q5. What happens to those PSWs who already make \$14.00 an hour or more?

- A. Regardless of their current hourly wage, publicly funded PSWs working in home and community care as of April 1, 2014, will make \$1.50 more; there is no cap on salaries. If you earn \$16.00 an hour now, you will move immediately to \$17.50, and then, under their plan, end up at \$20.00 after two more installments.

Or to put it another way: after April 1, 2016, publicly funded PSWs providing personal care in Ontario's home and community care sectors will earn a *minimum* base hourly wage of \$16.50 an hour.

Q6. How can we be sure that agencies will use extra funding for pay increases for PSWs?

- A. All monies have to go to PSWs, so no agency will get funded without a direct submission of hours. Providers do not receive the funding – they are to flow it directly to the PSWs and there is no other permitted use for these funds.

Q7. Are there funds for non-PSW staff (e.g., homemakers) who provide CCAC service funded care?

- A. No, this pay adjustment is for staff who provide PSW services.

Q8. My job title isn't "Personal Support Worker" but my duties are almost all the same as a PSW's. Am I still eligible for the increase?

- A. Yes. The pay increase is for workers who provide the services of a PSW, even if they have job titles other than Personal Support Workers. However, please see the exception noted in question 1 for PSWs working in community mental health/supportive housing.

Q9. Is the \$1.50 increase to be applied in addition to any current or planned wage increase?

- A. The government has promised that increases are exclusive of any other negotiated increase and that they apply regardless of actual current wage rate.

Q10. How can we be sure that the funds are spent as intended?

- A. The Ministry requires verification in the form of attestations from the service providers (CCACs, CSSs, etc.) and they will be subject to audit.

Q11. How is the pay adjustment applied to the base rate of what a PSW earns?

- A. PSW wage adjustment is to be applied to the base hourly wage rate; it is not any sort of "provincial premium." If there is any dispute about this application, CUPE will work to ensure that the principle of applying the increase to the base hourly rate is upheld.

Q12. How much is the government investing in pay increases for PSWs? Where is the money coming from?

- A. PSWs provide 30 million hours annually of home care service. The government is putting \$50 million dollars towards pay increases for PSWs this year and \$130 million a year by 2016. This money comes out of the overall health care budget of \$48 billion.

If you have any further questions or need more information, please speak to your Local Union leaders, CUPE National Staff Representative or you can check the CUPE Ontario website for updated information (cupe.on.ca).

Both the Health Care Workers Coordinating Committee of CUPE Ontario and OCHU will be watching and ensuring the monies are paid out in the way that benefits workers most.

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