



Job Action (Strike) – Q&A

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to reaching a collective agreement that meets the common objectives of recognizing our valued public servants and the fiscal sustainability of the Northwest Territories, and is prepared to return to the bargaining table at any time. The GNWT is also preparing for potential job action to ensure minimal disruption of the delivery of programs and services to the public. This document is meant to provide general information to GNWT employees regarding possible job action. Bargaining unit employees may obtain additional information from the Union of Northern Workers and Excluded/Sr. Managers may speak with their supervisor.

How long would a strike last and how would services be impacted?

There is no reliable way to predict the duration of a strike.

The GNWT Departments and Authorities are finalizing Job Action Contingency Plans to determine the level of services to be delivered in the event of a strike in addition to those contemplated in Essential and Emergency Agreements. Some GNWT services may be reduced or shut-down during job action.

Excluded or senior management staff may be deployed from their home positions to provide GNWT services during job action.

How would my Pay and Benefits be impacted by a strike?

For Bargaining Unit Employees:

- The Collective Agreement ceases to apply upon the commencement of a strike and the terms and conditions of employment would be set by the GNWT.
- Employees will not receive pay or Northern Allowance for time absent from work due to strike activity.
- Time absent from work without pay due to strike activity is not considered pensionable service; contributions will not be made nor can it be bought back.
- The continuation of Public Services Health Care (PSHCP) and Disability Insurance (DI) coverage will be determined by the GNWT in consultation with the Federal Treasury Board in the event of a strike.
- The continuation of Dental Insurance will be determined by the GNWT in the event of a strike.
- The continuation GNWT Medical Travel will be determined by the GNWT in the event of a strike.
- Maternity and parental leave, including the allowance, will continue as outlined in the leave agreement. However, should the employee participate in strike activity, the allowance will cease.
- There is no entitlement to paid leave (annual/sick/special) during a strike. During a strike, all vacation is cancelled. Employees are responsible for any cancellation costs.
- All leave accruals (annual/sick/special) would cease during a strike.

For Excluded/Sr. Managers:

- Given that you are excluded from the bargaining unit you will be expected to attend to the workplace in the event there is a strike.
- There will be no change to your pay and benefits.
- If you are required to work additional hours you will be paid the appropriate overtime rate.
- You will be included in Job Action Contingency planning and your role during possible strike by your department's Job Action Coordinator and supervisor.

I am planning on retiring this year and using my banked annual leave to extend my service.

You may retire during a strike; however you would be encouraged to seek counsel from the Government of Canada's Public Service Pension Plan Centre on the impacts of a strike on your retirement date.

You will not be permitted to use your annual leave to extend your service during a strike.

I'm on a Transfer Assignment from a unionized position to an excluded position or vice versa. What will happen to me if there is a strike?

You will remain in your Transfer Assignment position unless either party evokes the 30 day termination clause, or until your Transfer Assignment expires without extension.

What is the average salary of a GNWT bargaining unit employee?

As of February 1, 2018, the average annual gross salary for unionized indeterminate/term GNWT employees was \$88,707. This does not include the payment of Northern Allowance, which for the 2017-18 fiscal year ranged from \$3,450/year in Yellowknife to \$31,982/year in Ulukhaktok.

What is the status of the Essential & Emergency Services Agreement?

The *Public Service Act* requires the Employer and Union to enter into an Essential & Emergency Services Agreement before employees can strike. The parties are in the process of finalizing the agreement.

Which positions are deemed Essential under the Public Service Act?

"Essential Services" are defined in the Public Service Act as

.....services that are necessary to ensure a continuation of minimal service,

- a. to protect the health and safety of the public;
- b. to prevent destruction or serious deterioration of machinery, equipment or premises; or
- c. to prevent disruption of the administration of the courts;

and includes services provided by the most senior employee at each power plant who has responsibility for the on-site operation of the plant.

How will I know if I'm in an Essential or Emergency position?

Once the Essential & Emergency Services Agreement is finalized with the Union; the Employer will deliver a notice letter to incumbents of these positions.

Who determines Essential and Emergency Service work schedules during a strike?

The Employer will determine schedules for Essential and Emergency Service employees; including stand-by schedules for Emergency Service employees.

Am I guaranteed work if I'm designated as an Essential Service employee? Will my hours of work remain the same?

No you are not guaranteed to work if you're designated as an Essential Service employee.

In situations where there is more than one incumbent of an Essential (or Emergency) Service position the Employer will determine which employees will be scheduled to work.

The number of daily hours is determined through negotiated Essential and Emergency Service Agreements and can be less than full-time hours.

What if I want to work during a strike and I'm not designated as an Essential or Emergency Services employee?

You are encouraged to speak with your Union on the implications of crossing-picket lines.

You are not guaranteed work if you request to return during a strike. The GNWT's Job Action Steering Committee will determine on a case-by-case basis if you will be permitted to return to the workplace. The previous terms and conditions of employment; including pre-strike hours of work are also not guaranteed. Your area of work may be reduced or closed as part of the GNWT's Job Action Contingency Plan.