

## **Update from Common Interest Forum on Summer Vacation Scheduling**

Today, the Common Interest Forum (CIF) would like to update you on the work we have been doing to improve summer vacation scheduling. One of the most troublesome issues that affect our employees is their access to time off at the time they would like to take it. We know that employees in a number of groups have been able to achieve this objective on their own accord. Even with this cooperation, we estimate that there are at least 200 employees with over 25 years of service who cannot schedule a single week's vacation in the summer. This is unacceptable as employees need and deserve time off with their families. This is one of the issues that has been worked on extensively over the last several months by the CIF

You will recall that CIF involves officers of CEPACC, executives of Bell Aliant with support from officers of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The CIF meets monthly to discuss issues which are common to both parties. In June, the forum announced a new provision for rest periods, meal breaks and meal allowances in some overtime situations <link>.

This vacation issue is a complex one involving hundreds of schedules. CIF set an initial objective of increasing the number of bargaining unit employees who have access to time off during the summer months of July and August. While we considered over 80 options, most did not improve the situation for many workgroups or did not satisfy our two key interests of: 1) preserve employee seniority rights and 2) maintain excellent customer service.

To achieve our objective, we need to approach the problem in phases and would like to share with you the Phase I measures which we plan to implement. These measures do not require a change to the collective agreement and all seniority rights will remain intact.

First, where feasible, we will be making compressed work schedules available to those who are interested in working 10 or 12 hour shifts in order to get 5 days off between shifts. We have been trialing this schedule with some groups in the field forces with good success and we plan to expand this across the operations. If employees are offered a compressed schedule, it will be voluntary and they will be able to choose whether they want to work on a compressed schedule or not.

Finally, we will be examining the 2009 vacation schedule allotments to ensure every effort is made to increase the number of employees with vacation during these summer months. We will revisit the vacation schedule throughout the year as we more accurately forecast the workload.

While this is our initial approach for 2009, we will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these measures and take further steps as necessary to ensure as many employees get time off in the summer as possible.

We welcome any questions you may have regarding this initiative.

Thank you.

Common Interest Forum

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