

BPSU Wants Salary Increase For Its Nurses

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While the Bahamas Nurses Union is pushing for a better industrial contract, Bahamas Public Services Union President John Pinder is urging the government to honour its industrial agreement by paying all members of the BPSU their salary increases, including its members who are nurses.

According to Mr. Pinder, 200 of the BPSU's members are nurses and are entitled to the benefits of the five-year industrial agreement that was recently signed with the government.

However, Mr. Pinder said that the nurses have informed him that the \$700 lump sum payment that the majority of civil servants received last Friday was not allocated to the nurses.

"The nurses have been calling ever since we signed the industrial agreement and they have not enjoyed the \$700, nor have they enjoyed the \$100 added to their base salaries, like the other members have enjoyed," Mr. Pinder said at a press conference held yesterday to bring attention to the matter.

He added that with pressure being applied to the BPSU by the nurses for their entitlement, he is now putting the pressure on government to pay up the money.

"Our recognition agreement with the government speaks to us being able to negotiate for all our members, and certainly we don't want any of our members to feel at a disadvantage. And so I am asking the government, as expeditiously as possible, to execute those payments to the nurses in the BPSU so that they will be enjoying the same benefits as the other members," Mr. Pinder said.

The government has agreed to pay out \$24 million in the first year of the BPSU contract.

This worked out to civil servants receiving a \$700 lump sum payment in their December pay packet retroactive to July.

Additionally, in the first year of the contract \$100 per month will be added to the base salary of each civil servant, effective January 2006.

In July 2006, the salaries of civil servants will increase by another \$50 per month.

In the third year, the union will undergo a salary review, in which case some persons will receive another increase in salary.

In the fourth year of the contract, another \$750 will be added to civil servants' base salaries.

In the last year of the contract, civil servants will receive an increase based on their performance.

Mr. Pinder described the counterproposal received by the Bahamas Nurses Union as "unfair" and reasoned that the BPSU package should set the precedent for other unions.

While he indicated that he does not want to become involved in the current conflict that has sparked a nationwide sickout, Mr. Pinder insisted that nurses are entitled to stronger benefits, like uniform allowance, risk allowance, insurance and even hazardous pay.

"Certainly I think the nurses union is in a position to go after some stronger benefits and certainly we do support nurses getting their insurances and their uniform allowance and additional uniforms," Mr. Pinder said.

In addition to the BPSU's nurses not receiving their benefits, Mr. Pinder indicated that the union's Airport Authority members also have not received their pay benefits.

"I would hope that the minister complies with the agreement because I do not wish to see our members have to go no later than the next pay packet without their salary increases. I just want to ask in good faith for the government to make good on those payments to those persons who have been transferred from the public service to the Airport Authority," Mr. Pinder said.

Presently the union president is working on an industrial contract for the College of the Bahamas, which Mr. Pinder said he expects to be concluded by the end of the week.

The BPSU president is also seeking to get increased salaries for its COB union members and a lump sum payment before the Christmas holiday.