



RECORD OF DECISION (ROD)
National Union-Management Consultation Committee (NUMCC)
Hybrid Meeting
June 20, 2024
1:00 – 5:00 p.m. ET

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks and Review of Agenda

Chair: J.-G. Forgeron, Executive Vice-President Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

- J.-G. Forgeron, Executive Vice-President (EVP) CFIA welcomed participants.
- Milton Dyck thanked J.-G. Forgeron and spoke to the stress that the pandemic and Avian Influenza have caused. He added that he looked forward to the meeting.
- Dr. Lina Johannson noted the positive union-management relations and that while the parties do not necessarily agree she does feel heard and is looking forward to the day's discussions.
- In reviewing the agenda, Milton Dyck asked for Mental Health to be returned as a standing agenda item for future meetings.
- J.-G. asked if any concerns with the ROD of last meeting held December 2023. No concerns, all Chairs had already reviewed and it is only needing to be signed by the Unions.

Action Item(s):

- Secretariat to schedule a Mental Health update at next NUMCC meeting.

Agenda Items

2. Action Items

❖ **Presenters:** Karen Alexander, Associate Director, Collective Bargaining, Collective Bargaining and Labour Relations Directorate, Human Resources Branch (CFIA)

Key Points of Discussion:

- Dr. Ayman Soryal followed-up on VM salary and pay inconsistencies across the country.
- J.-G. Forgeron shared that he has had a number of conversations with Dr. M.J. Ireland on this and on the global shortage of veterinarians; this was also recently discussed with the PIPSC President.
- Don Kenny shared ongoing staffing concerns in Digital Service Branch (DSB) that he asked the EVP to familiarize himself with; J.-G. Forgeron agreed to do so.

Action Item(s):

- DSB to follow-up regarding staffing concerns.

3. Budget 2023 Discussion

❖ **Sponsor(s):** CFIA and PIPSC

❖ **Presenter(s):** Stanley Xu, Vice-President, Corporate Management Branch (CFIA), Todd Cain, Vice-President, Digital Services Branch (CFIA), Dr. Raman Srivastava, Vice-President, Human Resources Branch (CFIA)

Key Points of Discussion:

- J.-G. Forgeron shared that along with Budget 2023, the CFIA also received less funding than

anticipated for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), there will be no funding provided for incremental pay increases due to collective bargaining negotiations, and that while the Agency is aware of another cut in 2024, it has not yet been shared. Management understands the stress and anxiety caused by a lack of information, and committed that information will be shared as soon as possible. The objective is still to manage with attrition with minimal impact to our employees.

- Stanley Xu spoke to the required savings over a 3-year period, the planning process and the work of HR and shared that the Agency is close to having the numbers and arrangements finalized.
- Dr. Raman Srivastava spoke to the impact that Avian Influenza (AI) has had on carry forward monies and spoke to the complexities of the review while sharing that, in the first year or two, the CFIA may see little or no impact.
- Milton Dyck spoke to the need for information and requested the establishment of Joint Employment Transition Committees (JETC). While he hopes there will not be lay-offs, even attrition will impact employees. He asked for the numbers in writing as well as requested to receive a heads up before communications are released.
- Stanley Xu confirmed the required savings numbers can be provided in writing and Dr. Raman Srivastava added that CFIA is not ready to invoke JETCs as there is no indication they are needed at this time.
- Fred Jamieson sought clarification as to the distribution of cuts. He noted workload issues and a need for information to support career planning. The EVP shared that cuts will be based on the prioritization exercise and may be disproportionate; he hopes information can be shared soon.
- Audrey St-Germain spoke to the need for traceability and asked that regions and sub-regions be involved in budget decisions. Debbie Beresford-Green noted these comments and shared that Operations is hiring in a strategic manner but that there may be delays in staffing positions.
- Dr. Lina Johansson raised that a seemingly small program decision would have far-reaching consequences with trading partners and asked to review materials before they are shared.
- J.-G. Forgeron agreed as unions and management would review with a different lens.

Action Item(s):

- CFIA to share communications prior to messaging going out to all staff.
- Stanley Xu to provide in writing the figures shared during this discussion.

4. Foreign trained non-credentialed VMs

❖ **Sponsor:** PIPSC

❖ **Presenter(s):** Robert Ianiro, Vice President, Policy and Programs Branch, Debbie Beresford-Green, Vice President, Operations Branch (CFIA)

- Dr. Lina Johansson advised that there continue to be rumours of discussions with licensing bodies and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) related to veterinary standards and internationally trained veterinarians. PIPSC again noted concerns of any work in this space.
- Debbie Beresford-Green advised that there have not been many changes since the fall meeting beyond how to deal with the global veterinary shortage, given the stage CFIA is at in negotiations and other priorities, but that consultation would take place before any changes were introduced. Debbie spoke of the veterinarian profession being highly respected and to the continuous work on recruitment being done. Beyond foreign trained veterinarians as a possible solution, she spoke of HR-led veterinarian recruitment campaigns, internship programs, dialogue with veterinarian colleges, and outreach to universities and colleges on graduation days.

- Dr. Raman Srivastava agreed and spoke to some of the HR initiatives underway, including LinkedIn and social media, internal pools at the VM-03 and VM-04 levels, and the internationally trained veterinarian pilot in rural areas for meat hygiene; sharing that this is still a pilot and that the CFIA will be respectful of the statutory freeze. Consultation with union colleagues is critical.
- Dr. Lina Johannson noted the great recruitment efforts but raised a continued concern with foreign trained veterinarians and licensing standards - anything regarding an amendment of standards and licensing is a no go for PIPSC.
- Dr. Ayman Soryal spoke to the staff shortage requiring employees to cover more than one area, impacting work life balance.
- Robert Ianiro spoke to the great work done by HR and CPA and the need to discern what other opportunities exist. He committed to engaging with PIPSC for a more formal discussion.
- J.-G. Forgeron closed the discussion by reiterating that the Agency is seized with the issue and confirming all parties want the same outcome.

Action Item(s):

- n/a

5. Update on Prescribed Presence in the Workplace (RTO/Return to Office)

❖ **Sponsor:** PIPSC

❖ **Presenter(s):** Dr. Raman Srivastava, Vice-President, Human Resources Branch (CFIA), Stanley Xu, Vice-President, Corporate Management Branch (CFIA), Todd Cain, Vice-President, Digital Services Branch (CFIA)

- Dr. Lina Johannson reiterated PIPSC’s principle of “presence with purpose” and spoke of specific concerns with office spaces across the country, inconsistencies of application and monitoring of locations and internet data, and accommodations requests being denied. PIPSC is looking for transparency and ongoing information sharing.
- Dr. Raman Srivastava spoke to the discussions that took place before CFIA made its decision, including multiple SMC discussions, branch management discussions, and the union engagement session held on May 10, 2024. Raman also shared that the feedback received in the engagement session on space, accommodations, adjustable desks and chairs, Archibus, assigned space and GC co-working facilities, IT, safety and security, and office environment and etiquette, were all taken into consideration and influenced the delayed implementation date of October 21, 2024, which should align with the completion of T1 construction. Some groups (e.g. IT and pay services) will start the transition now, but will take one full year. Raman shared that meta data will continue to be collected for monitoring and compliance. Additionally, Dr. Srivastava shared that the exception process is being reviewed, in particular for DTA, with Branch Heads being the decision makers.
- J.-G. Forgeron responded to Fred Jamieson’s question on the T1 construction and shared that if circumstances change, the date would be reviewed as needed. In any situation, managerial discretion will be used.
- Audrey St-Germain asked for clarifications on the approval requirements for exemptions and ensuring consistency, this included a request for data on the number of accepted exemptions per region compared to the total number.
- Pat St-Georges spoke to language in Collective Agreements on flexibility and added that the root of the issue is rigidity and lack of flexibility; noting the President of Treasury Board’s comments on May 23, 2024. Pat encouraged managers to be flexible. He also spoke to the language agreed to

in negotiations for the Panel and the need to find the sweet spot between this committee and not interfering with final level grievances. PSAC looks forward to working with CFIA on this.

- Dr. Cheick Sidibé had a question on the stages of approval for exemption and if a request is refused what rights are there and what is the criteria for an exemption.
- J.-G. Forgeron spoke about the need for education and communication (for both employees and managers) in that employees with a telework agreement may be required to report for various meetings, that having a telework agreement does not preclude them from this. Dr. Lina Johansson added that while this may often be the case, it will be dependant on individual DTA exemptions.
- Aaron Swerdlyk encouraged management to spend budgets on mandate as opposed to presence.
- Don Kenny asked for clarification as to DSB and whether it was following CRA in terms of timelines. J.-G. Forgeron clarified that the CFIA will follow the Core (CPA) and apologized for any potential miscommunication. Todd Cain confirmed that DSB will be following the Core, in phases beginning in September to be completed by 2025; he noted that CRA is the only organization that appears to be following a different approach.
- Dr. Lina Johansson spoke to the stress the announcement has caused to employees with invisible disabilities or for those with difficulties with office environments, and that managers need to be mindful of this. She also asked management to ensure that letters of offer (LOO) are reflective of correct work location.
- Milton Dyck spoke of accommodations requests and that PSAC will continue to work through the grievance and adjudication process to fight for their members.
- Don Kenny asked about the space at the Moncton office. Stanley Xu advised that the space continues to be monitored and if data indicates it is close to full capacity, then CMB will look for options.
- J.-G. Forgeron shared that a lot of time was spent in making a decision, including discussions on feedback raised at the May 10, 2024 engagement session. He spoke to the complexities of DTA and ensuring accommodations, the need for management to make employees' time at the office fruitful, and that it will take time to adapt and get to our new normal. The EVP also spoke to the exemptions process and upcoming changes to the approval requirements.
- Dr. Raman Srivastava agreed that the discussion and collaboration is ongoing. He highlighted some of the upcoming process changes to lower the level of delegation required, with the exception of the exceptional circumstances category, to ensure some degree of consistency. These will be posted on Merlin.
- Debbie Beresford-Green spoke to comments on regional offices and shared that there are ongoing conversations in which input shared feeds into management's thought process with the goal of resolving by October 21, 2024. She asked that any specific issues be shared with VPO.

Action Item(s):

- Dr. Raman Srivastava to share exemption criteria and ensure that Merlin is updated with the new process requirements.

6. Update on Scientific Integrity Guidelines development

❖ **Sponsor:** PIPSC

❖ **Presenter(s):** Dr. Mohit Baxi, Acting Vice-President, Science Branch (CFIA)

- Fred Jamieson shared that PIPSC would like the opportunity to get back together to work on this.

- Milton Dyck added PSAC also has a stake in the scientific integrity guidelines as they have members in the community. PSAC asked to review the finalized policy.
- Dr. Mohit Baxi confirmed that Dr. David Nanang was the lead and agreed that this does need to be reviewed and updated. He committed to working with PIPSC and PSAC on the Scientific Integrity Policy (SIP).

Action Item(s):

- When ready, Dr. David Nanang will reach out to the Unions for discussions on the Scientific Integrity Policy.

7. Values and Ethics (V&E)

❖ **Sponsor:** CFIA

❖ **Presenter(s):** Martin Rubenstein, Chief, Audit and Evaluation

- Martin (Marty) Rubenstein spoke to the importance of the topic; the CFIA is working on the Call to Action from the Clerk and launched engagement sessions with employees in May. Data and responses are being analyzed to develop an action plan with plans moving forward to establish a V&E pathway, training for employees and management, as well as to have conversations on a renewed Code of Conduct. Marty shared his openness for feedback and the importance of ensuring people see themselves in our values and the need for open and safe conversations. Knowing how people want to be engaged is important to ensure rich input is provided.
- Audrey St-Germain enquired about the ambassador role. Martin clarified that it's not a 'policing' function, but a role to help broker conversations, allowing opportunities for discussion. The role is more one of promotion to share information and to help direct employees if they have questions.
- Pat St-Georges raised social media and artificial intelligence (AI) as areas of concern, specifically around the need to exercise caution in the use of social media, and while PSAC is concerned with AI and technological change, how does it impact V&E? Martin spoke to these being two key issues that would be explored in the action plan, but more time is needed to explore.
- Milton Dyck spoke of the need for more information and the work to come. Martin confirmed the importance of making it relevant for today and that the unions will be included.
- J.-G. Forgeron spoke to the need for education to be in a modern context, and that diversity and inclusion should be imbedded.
- Dr. Lina Johansson spoke to the need for consistency and a desire to be involved at the national level as they can bring a different perspective to the table.

Action Item(s):

- n/a

8. Round Table

❖ **Presenter(s):** Everyone

- Milton Dyck reiterated his desire for ongoing Mental Health discussions.
- Dr. Lina Johansson asked to schedule the next meeting soon. She also asked that materials be provided more in advance and thanked the Employer for putting forward the V&E agenda item. Finally, she shared that Science Branch is ending a small but significant

program at a lab for vector research, noting concerns for trade market activity and job stability; perhaps something to be discussed at a Science Branch call.

- Dr. Ayman Soryal thanked Debbie Beresford-Green for the monthly calls and Dr. Raman Srivastava for quick responses to questions. He also noted that he and Fred would be more than happy to accelerate the bargaining process.
- Audrey St-Germain spoke on mental health and the need for collaboration at all levels. Audrey asked that messaging about the importance of union-management relations be shared down to regional levels.
- Dr. Cheick Sidibé agreed with Ayman's comments about negotiations and asked for confirmation that the budget cut is 3%. Stanley Xu confirmed this figure.
- Milton Dyck spoke about the important work being done on pay equity and the value of face-to-face participation. J.-G. Forgeron committed to taking this back for discussion.
- Fred Jamieson spoke to SR and VM issues and while he has had good discussions with Debbie Beresford-Green, he would like to ensure SRs have opportunities to move up.

Action Item(s):

- Employer to communicate the importance of union engagement at the lowest level.

9. Closing Remarks

❖ **Presenter(s):** J.-G. Forgeron, Executive Vice-President, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Dr. Lina Johansson, CFIA-PIPSC Consultation Team (PIPSC), Milton Dyck, President, Agriculture Union (PSAC)

- J.-G. Forgeron thanked the participants for the frank and open discussions and noted the number of agenda items pre-planned for the next meeting and a number of items for senior management to take away and think about.
- Dr. Lina Johansson agreed and added that they felt heard, speaking to the changes that have enabled an open relationship with good discussion.

Action Item(s):

- n/a

Attendees:

Chair:	J.-G. Forgeron	
CFIA Attendees:	J.-G. Forgeron Dr. Raman Srivastava Debbie Beresford-Green Scott Rattray Robert Ianiro Dr. Mohit Baxi Todd Cain Stanley Xu Luc Rivard Jane Hazel Martin Rubenstein	Chantal Gauvreau (observer) Jason Bruder (observer) Karen Alexander (observer) Raghida Bitar (observer) Traci Mathias (observer) Nycole Sanborn (observer) Esther Sanderson (observer) Jenna Murphy (observer)
PSAC Attendees:	Milton Dyck Pat St-Georges Randy Olynyk Audrey St-Germain Aaron Swerdlyk	
PIPSC Attendees:	Dr. Lina Johannson Fred Jamieson Dr. Ayman Soryal Don Kenny Shova Dhar Dr. Cheick Sidibé Terry Petrow	Spencer Underwood (Observer)
Facilitators:	Dana M Gerein (Secretariat)	



 J.-G. Forgeron
 Executive Vice President
 Canadian Food Inspection Agency

11 Oct/24

 Date

 Milton Dyck
 National President, Agriculture Union
 Public Service Alliance of Canada

 Date

 Dr. Lina Johannson
 President, CFIA-PIPSC Consultation Team
 Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada

 Date

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