

Message from President

Funding Discussions

Recently some concerns regarding the one time payments to staff came to my attention, along with some questions regarding the Association's advocacy for increased wages and funding. I thought it would be worthwhile to share some information in writing as many members were unable to attend the AGM.

I would like to start by saying that I understand how frustrating the ongoing issue of inadequate wages and funding is. As the President of the AASCF I have made it very clear to the Ministry that the issue needs to be resolved and needs to be resolved soon. The urgency of the situation and the need for an immediate solution, along with the development of a longer term sustainable approach to contracting and funding, have formed the basis for discussions with the Ministry since the spring. I am somewhat frustrated that progress has been slow and inevitably constrained by government processes (budget cycles, leadership races, etc.) over which the AASCF has no control. That being said, I remain hopeful that the discussions will lead to positive changes for agencies.

I also understand that the distribution of the one-time payments has been administratively burdensome and has caused a high level of frustration for some agencies. Please know that I have shared all the feedback we have received with the Ministry on at least two occasions since the end of September. With respect to the intent of the one-time payments to staff, I think it is important to convey to all member agencies that the decision to provide these payments was never intended by the Ministry to be a solution to the wage issue. They know it is not the answer and clearly shared that message when they announced the decision to provide the payments.

Throughout a series of meetings in the spring and summer between the Ministry and the AASCF, the Ministry repeatedly acknowledged and committed to finding a meaningful and long term solution to wages and to overall funding for agencies. Knowing that any significant increase to wages and contracts was not likely to occur mid-year, the Ministry offered the one-time payments as a gesture of goodwill and as a "bridge" while discussions on longer term solutions continued. Following the decision to provide the one-time payments for staff, Deputy Minister Steve MacDonald reiterated the Ministry's commitment in a letter to me, stating that the Ministry "will continue to work with the AASCF to develop medium – and long-term solutions to support the sustainability of the organizations and their workforce".

I also think it is important to reiterate to all member agencies that neither Rhonda or I, nor the AASCF Board or the Strategic Initiatives Committee, view the one-time payments to staff as a solution to the wage issue. Our message to the Ministry has been, and will continue to be, that a more permanent solution involving regular increases to overall contracts is needed. I believe that this message has been clearly stated and heard, and that through the continuation of thoughtful, solution-focused dialogue we will in the near future see positive changes for agencies.

On November 23rd Rhonda and I have a meeting with Steve MacDonald, Gord Johnston and Lana Lougheed (ADM – Strategic Corporate Services) to discuss the 2012 Provincial Budget and our request for increased funding for both wages and operations. We will update you on the outcome of that meeting.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either Rhonda or myself.

Regards,

Danica

Danica Frazer
President, AASCF