

March 17, 2010

Ministries are in the planning stage of implementing cuts announced in the provincial budget earlier this month.

Half of all PEA members in government are employed by the Ministry of Forests and Range. The ministry's budget was particularly hard hit and communications from the Deputy Minister indicate that decisions are being made to implement reductions to staff budgets.

PEA members are reporting that morale and productivity are down because of rumours and uncertainty. At this time, the PEA does not have any specific information about further reductions in licensed professional staffing in MFR or any other ministry where our members work.

Despite rumours to the contrary, the employer has advised the PEA that further redundancy notices are not imminent and will not be distributed this week or next. However, the timelines remain unconfirmed. PEA representatives will continue our efforts to gather as much information as possible, and commit to reporting confirmed information to our members as soon as we are able.

Any further reductions in staffing will represent the third round of workforce adjustment in recent months. On January 20, 16 PEA members in MFR received redundancy notices. Of those affected, half have opted for voluntary severance with their last day of work falling on March 31. Other impacted licensed professionals remain in the 90-day informal placement process.

Many members and Local Representatives have contacted the PEA seeking seniority block lists. The PEA does not have seniority block lists for our members. The employer is responsible for seniority block lists and has taken the position that lists will not be made widely available to employees. The PEA is provided with the lists only for seniority blocks where a member is impacted by redundancy or layoff.

Some members have noted that Article 11.07 of our collective agreement requires the employer to provide the PEA with seniority lists on a quarterly basis. However, the list provided under this article is for the whole bargaining unit and is not broken down by seniority blocks; nor does it include the information the PEA would require to break the list into accurate seniority blocks. Individual members who have questions about their seniority are encouraged to seek clarity from their payroll/HR contact.

Ministry re-organizations may require the PEA and the Public Service Agency to review and re-negotiate the seniority blocks defined in Appendix D of the Master Agreement. Any changes to the blocks are subject to mutual agreement between the parties. When changes are required by reorganization – for example, with seniority blocks for Foresters in MFR in Victoria, which are defined by Branch and Division – the PEA generally aims to retain the stability and continuity of existing blocks.

The PEA is working to produce a plain-language summary of Article 37 and the workforce adjustment process, and hopes to be able to distribute these materials to members in the near future.