

## **LINC Bargaining FAQ**

In this document you will find answers to the commonly asked questions listed below.

### **What is the LINC agreement?**

LINC stands for Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee.

Teachers in Saskatchewan experience bi-level bargaining. Every teacher has both a provincial and a local agreement. Each of these agreements provide different benefits to teachers.

The Local Collective Bargaining Agreement (or *LINC agreement*) is an agreement between the Prairie Valley Teachers' Association on behalf of the teachers of the school division and the Prairie Valley Board of Education. The agreement is the local contract that teachers are party to and includes benefits for teachers that may be different than those in other school divisions

### **Who is part of LINC bargaining?**

The employer committee is comprised of elected Board members and senior administration.

The PVTA LINC team is comprised of teachers who are elected by PVTA members. The PVTA President also sits on the LINC team.

### **Who decides who sits at the table?**

The Board of Education chooses who they want to represent them.

The PVTA LINC team is elected by the teachers of the division each year and the President is elected by the teachers for a two-year term.

Each party chooses their own chair and the two chairpersons co-chair the bargaining sessions. Each party also decides who is part of their quorum. Quorum are number of people, and specific people, who need to be present for negotiation to occur.

### **What is Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN)?**

IBN is a bargaining approach intended to serve the interests of all parties at the table through collaboration and consensus. Rather than haggling over best offers or firm positions, both teams will attempt to identify their separate and shared underlying needs. Then we work together to explore options for solving problems and creating positive opportunities. Negotiations are considered a success if a

tentative agreement can be reached that addresses both sides' needs to the satisfaction of the groups they represent.

IBN is very different from the way that bargaining happens at the provincial level. Many teachers may be used to hearing about bargaining from a provincial perspective, particularly how the bargaining occurs. Positional bargaining focuses on the “what” and typically results in a win-loss situation. IBN focuses on the “why” and aims to reach a win-win for all parties involved. This allows parties to better understand the interests and needs of each other and work to ensure that all needs are met.

PVTA's LINC team and the representatives of the Board jointly chose this format for bargaining and invested a day of bargaining time to attend IBN training together. At this training parties collaborated on a set of Ground Rules for negotiations and booked the first sets of bargaining dates.

### **Who decides what is discussed?**

All items in the current LINC agreement have the potential to be discussed. When bargaining begins, both parties indicate which topics they would like to discuss. Parties may also bring additional topics to be discussed when the list is created.

### **What is the joint communication and why are only some topics listed in it?**

Bargaining sessions typically run two days at a time. At the end of each session, the chairs of both parties create a communication to send to teachers and the board members explaining when the session occurred, what topics were discussed in the session, and when the next session is planned.

The topics listed are those discussed in that session only. Listing the topics does not indicate that agreement was reached, it means that the topics were discussed that session. All topics are still open for discussion until a tentative agreement is reached. The order in which topics are discussed during the bargaining process does not indicate their priority of importance to either party.

### **How are the topics for each session determined?**

The parties discuss at the end of each session which topics they wish to discuss at the next one. Typically, topics that will likely require more time and discussion are not paired together; rather they are partnered with simpler topics or those that require only housekeeping or further clarity. This allows the parties to balance the topics being discussed.

### **Why aren't more details from bargaining sessions shared with teachers?**

Both negotiating teams have agreed to a list of Ground Rules for bargaining, one of which is to maintain confidentiality during the bargaining process. This confidentiality serves several important purposes. It creates a safe space for open discussion, builds trust between the parties at the table, prevents misunderstandings, allows for clear examination of the issues underlying our interests, and maintains the integrity of the process.

Once a tentative agreement is reached, the LINC team may have greater flexibility in sharing details about the process before a ratification vote. Once an agreement is reached and the language is finalized, educating members about the final terms becomes the LINC and Board teams' shared priority.

### **When is a tentative agreement reached?**

When all topics that are on the agenda have been discussed and agreed to at the table, it is considered to be a tentative agreement. Agreement is done through a consensus model with everyone at the table agreeing to put forward the agreement to their respective parties.

### **What happens once a tentative agreement is reached?**

Once an agreement is reached and specific wording is worked out, each party refers the agreement to their respective Boards (PVSD Board of Education and PVTA Executive) for approval.

The PVTA Executive considers the tentative agreement and puts it forward it before the membership of PVTA – all teachers in the school division – for a ratification vote. Prior to the vote, information sessions are held for the membership to be able to gain additional information and ask questions. The PVTA LINC team presents the agreement and clarifies information but does not tell teachers whether to accept or reject the agreement.

The Board of Education also considers the tentative agreement and the Board votes to ratify the agreement.

Through PVSD email, teachers receive a ballot for them to vote in favour or against accepting the tentative agreement. If 50% +1 vote of all those voting vote in favour, the agreement passes and is signed by both parties and come into effect. Typically the agreement takes comes into effect immediately, although it may be agreed that specific clauses take effect at the start of the next year for simplicity.

**How long does it take to negotiate a new agreement?**

When bargaining begins, the parties plan for whatever days can be arranged based on individual calendars of those at the bargaining table. If a tentative agreement cannot be reached by the end of those days, additional times are planned.

**Why doesn't PVTA present a bargaining "asking package" to members?**

Asking packages go against the spirit of IBN. By presenting what is asked for, a party is not taking part in discussions of interests and attempts to work together to find an agreeable solution to concerns. Asking packages are typically found in bargaining that is positional rather than interest-based.

**Where can members find more information?**

If members have specific questions they can email [pvta@pvta.ca](mailto:pvta@pvta.ca) and a member of the bargaining team will respond.