

Federal Crown lawyers reach 15.25 per cent tentative pay deal

Tess Kalinowski

Toronto Star Staff Reporter

In a move that breaches the atmosphere of restraint in Ottawa, federal Crown lawyers have reached a tentative settlement that would give them a 15.25 per cent wage increase by May 2014.

The agreement with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, is expected to go to a ratification vote in August. It would give 2,700 federal Crowns, represented by the Association of Justice Counsel, a 12 per cent increase next year alone. That includes a 10 per cent “pay restructure.”

Federal Crown attorneys prosecute drug and terrorism offences. They also negotiate civil cases.

The relatively high settlement essentially corrects about 20 years of lagging wages that has prompted many to leave the federal Crown for the private sector or even provincial Crown offices, said Lisa Blais, association president in Ottawa.

The average federal Crown wage is about \$106,000.

“Our salaries have sunk like a stone, not just compared to the private sector. We don’t even try. But compared to our provincial comparators,” she said. “This deal we hope, when and if it’s ratified, will curb that tide.”

The agreement also gives the most experienced lawyers a lump-sum payment of about 4.6 per cent annually.

Junior lawyers will, however, lose overtime provisions that were not available to senior federal Crown attorneys.

“This increases base rates of pay and we felt it was the right thing to do for the majority of our members,” Blais said.