

Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

PSAC/NEU Serve Iqaluit Housing Authority Strike Notice



For Immediate Release: Iqaluit, March 13, 2023: The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)/Nunavut Employees Union (NEU) served the Iqaluit Housing Authority (IHA) a 72-hour strike action notice.

"No one wants to be outside picketing, especially if it gets brutally cold again here in Iqaluit," says NEU President Jason Rochon. "However, when you are dealing with an employer who has shown no signs of any honest commitment to reaching a fair agreement on wages, you are left with no options and that is why we are where we are at this point."

This January a previous strike vote was overwhelmingly revalidated by NEU Members working for the IHA. If the employer does not come back to the bargaining table with an acceptable and fair offer, then Members would be forced to go out on strike and set an actual date for that action to begin.

"I am proud of our IHA Members for understanding and expressing their own worth," adds Rochon. "The IHA has serious recruitment and retention issues that the employer is unwilling to recognize. IHA is understaffed, and employees are constantly leaving to find better paying jobs with other employers in Iqaluit. This puts the public at risk for being underserved and places stress on our Members as they work hard each and every day to do their best under unacceptable working conditions."

The NEU is a component of the PSAC and has been fighting for fair wages and working conditions for all Housing employees across Nunavut. The Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) is responsible for the allocation of funds for the operational budget for all Nunavut Housing Associations, including salaries for employees working for IHA. In mid-November 2022, the PSAC and NEU called on the Honorable Lorne Kusugak, the Minister responsible for the NHC, the NHC President and the Board of Directors to intervene and change the NHC mandate to "protect workers in the current inflationary context by providing fair wages for the work that Housing employees do throughout Nunavut."

The employer has tabled economic increases around 1.25% and 1.5% per year despite the high rate of inflation, stating that these numbers reflect the NHC bargaining mandate and that they will not budge on these numbers.

"Workers must be able to thrive, and not just survive. Many of them are the primary breadwinners for their families," says PSAC North Regional Executive Vice President Lorraine Rousseau. "We're fighting for fair wages that address the high cost of living in Iqaluit. We will not accept any concessions that jeopardize the livelihoods of PSAC/NEU Members and their families."

"I live in Iqaluit and see the services our IHA Members provide to residents here every day," adds Rochon. "We have given the employer every chance to make a fair offer and they have failed to do so at each and every opportunity. We ask Iqaluit to support our Members and to understand that this fight is not only for the employees of IHA, but a fight to ensure the long-term ability to provide housing services and support to all those who call Iqaluit home."

With the cost of living in Iqaluit, the Union is only asking for fair salary increases that reflect the current inflationary reality.

"The cost of living in Iqaluit has dramatically increased over time, more so in the last year. We are looking for a fair increase in salaries to be able to afford the increasing cost of living. A deal will not be possible if it means the deterioration of our current benefits and salaries that are making it hard for current staff to remain working at Iqaluit Housing", says Nicky Nauyuk a plumber at IHA and a PSAC/NEU Bargaining Team Member.