



Nunavut Employees Union Iqaluit Housing Authority Bargaining Update June 2023



June 5, 2023: IT IS ABOUT MORE THAN MONEY

The Nunavut Employees Union (NEU)/Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) North Bargaining Team met with representatives from Iqaluit Housing Authority (IHA) on Wednesday, May 31, 2023.

The IHA refuses to remove concessions that would strip rights from term and casual employees. The employer is seeking to restrict access to maternity allowance, severance pay, leave without pay and other leave provisions for term and casual employees. They are also proposing to limit casual employees to the statutory entitlements in the Labour Standards Act and exclude them from many provisions in the agreement, including: Acting Pay, Hours of Work and Civil Liability. Both term and casual employees are NEU/PSAC members.

The employer is also seeking to include language that would limit future entitlements to bilingual bonuses for workers who speak English or French in addition to Inuktitut. While the employer has proposed increases to the amount of the bilingual bonus, they are also seeking to include language that would ultimately limit the number of employees who would be entitled to receive the bonus. It is easy for southern Canadians to forget that Nunavut is an Inuit territory and English is a second language to the people here - with Inuktitut being the first. All community members who speak Inuktitut and live in public housing should be able to communicate with workers in the language of their choice. But all workers are required to speak English to communicate with upper management. Speaking Inuktitut to community members may not be required or valued by the employer, but it is fundamental to reconciliation and keeping the language alive.

Other demands by the employer include switching employees to the Nunavut Northern Allowance from the current allowance system. The Union is seeking to grandfather current employees. The employer has refused, despite their claim that twelve of the fourteen current employees would have greater entitlements under their proposal, thus saving them money. The new allowance would also have an option of lump sum payouts to these northern employees, who according to the employer's representative, "are not always good at saving money."

Some employees at IHA make so little they live in subsidized housing. The employer wants language in the agreement to automatically deduct rent from these employees' pay. It is the Union's position that these employees have the right to self-governance and should be able to opt to have their rent deducted if they choose. They are not children who need to be taught to pay bills – they are functioning members of the community and deserve to be treated as such.

No further discussions were had on wages in this session.

Striking members received both a financial and a morale boost last week when delegates at PSAC North Regional Convention picketed the legislature and raised more than \$30,000 to assist them through this difficult time.

As the strike enters day 78, the Union is calling on the IHA, the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) and the Minister responsible for the NHC to step up and recognize the value of their local workforce. The parties were planning on meeting next week with the assistance of a third party, but the employer has cancelled these dates citing the noise from the 12 picketers as a hindrance to returning to the table! The Union remains committed to reaching a negotiated settlement.

In solidarity

Your NEU/PSAC North Bargaining Team: Pauloosie Gordon, Nicky Nauyuk, Jason Rochon (NEU President) and Frances Baroutoglou (PSAC Negotiator).