



Working for those that make  
Nunavut work

## A Message to NEU Members Working for the GN and to Nunavut Politicians

Dear NEU members,

On October 25<sup>th</sup> the Nunavut General Election will be held. That date will also mark the **three years, one month and one week since the last Collective Agreement covering Nunavut Employees Union Members (NEU) working for the Government of Nunavut (GN) expired.**

That means NEU members have seen no improvements to their working conditions and no wage increases for three years.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) North/NEU Bargaining Team began bargaining with the GN with hopes of reaching a fair agreement that would address the Members' needs. The Team was making progress towards that goal. Then the GN clawed back almost half of a previous offer on the Nunavut Northern Allowance and maintained on a wage offer well below inflation leaving the Team no choice but to declare an impasse and file a Bad Faith Bargaining Complaint.

Shortly thereafter, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. While the Union was in a legal position to mobilize for job action, we decided not to do so while there was a threat to the well-being of the people of Nunavut. Our Members, despite having received no pay increases, continued to work tirelessly on behalf of the people of Nunavut during this time of crisis.

The Union took another step to try to resolve matters while the pandemic continued to threaten Nunavut. It offered to refer all outstanding matters to arbitration so that an impartial third-party could render an award and put a new Collective Agreement into effect. It was a risk to make such an offer because there is no guarantee that an arbitrator will side with the Union on the key issues separating us from the GN. Still, we tried. The Government rejected our offer, and at that time, only one Member of the Legislative Assembly, Pat Angnakak (Iqaluit-Niaqunngu) demanded an explanation in the legislative assembly.

So why are we stuck where we are? Yes COVID-19 caused complications, but it also became clear that the GN is being allowed to shun its responsibility and Nunavut politicians are allowing this to happen through their deafening silence. Fair Collective Agreements are achievable when both parties are willing to work in good faith. This past July the City of Iqaluit sat down with the PSAC and reached a new five-year Collective Bargaining Agreement. Why can't the GN show the same commitment?

With Territorial General Election approaching, individual NEU Members need to realize that they can make a difference in getting the GN to negotiate in good faith. **Nearly 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the population of Nunavut is an NEU Member.** We are a sizeable voting group and the election is an opportunity to signal to your MLA that their hopes of winning are dependent on a fair agreement with the NEU for our GN Members.

So once again I am again urging you to contact your local MLA or your prospective MLAs to make it clear to them that we want the Government to return to the bargaining table, to bargain in good faith and to make a fair offer. During the coming election campaign, take the opportunity to ask prospective candidates specific questions about NEU Bargaining. Make it clear to them that it is an important issue.

### **Make it a central issue of the election campaign.**

We will continue to pursue our bad faith bargaining complaint in the Nunavut Court of Justice. We are developing mobilization plans because it seems that we may need to take job action to get the Government to come back to the bargaining table with a fair offer. Stay tuned for opportunities to get involved in mobilization activities. And do get involved!

In solidarity

William (Bill) Fennell President – Nunavut Employees Union