



Nunavut Employees Union (NEU) President Jason Rochon met with Federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh and MP Lori Idlout in late 2021 to discuss issues that impact Nunavut and took a moment to highlight the importance of Black History Month.

Since this is my first 'official' President's Message of 2022, I will start by wishing everyone a prosperous New Year. We survived 2021 thanks to our Members' hard work. Both front-line workers and those behind the scenes kept us safe and serviced while facing the challenges of COVID-19 – and for our Government of Nunavut (GN) Members - without a new agreement.

It might be a little late to share a New Year's Resolution, but your Union's resolution is to keep in touch with you through President's Messages, monthly "news and information" emails, www.neu.ca and our Facebook Page. We want to keep you in the loop as February is going to be a busy and exciting month.

First, this month is **Black History Month**, a unique opportunity to learn about the contributions of Black Canadians. Unions have a history of fighting racism in the workplace and our society. To learn more, about this, please visit psacunion.ca.

Later this month the NEU, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) North and other partners will be launching the Illunnata (All of Us) campaign. This campaign will shine a light of the devastating impact of food insecurity and the high cost of food in Nunavut and the North. The campaign will include the opportunity for Members to share their stories about food issues in their communities and lives (watch our Facebook Page for more on this). This exciting and important campaign will follow the December launch of the [Here for Nunavut](#) Campaign which featured the opportunity to send you Member of the Legislative Assembly an email calling on the GN to provide stable employment, fair wages and to bring the Nunavut Northern Allowance (NNA) into the modern age.

The NEU's battle with the GN is a fight for all of us. GN workers have been working for us all for almost three and a half years without a new agreement. The GN is the largest and most influential employer in Nunavut and they are failing to set an example for other employers in our Territory. This is why this fight is so important to us all. There are three "sticking points" in reaching a new agreement with the GN: wages; the NNA and paid domestic violence leave. The NNA is tied to food insecurity and needs to be adjusted to help residents of Nunavut be able to afford to feed themselves properly.

The main reason we have not been able to reach an agreement with the GN is because the GN keeps refusing our offer to sit down and resume talks. In late January I was quoted in the [Nunavut News](#) as saying **"At this point the NEU has one statement to make to the GN: name the date, location and format to restart the bargaining talks and we will be there in good faith."**

The GN has put forth a lot of excuses and everyone is getting a little tired of this. In late 2021 we managed to sign three new Collective Agreements with other employers. Earlier in 2021 we reached a fair deal with the City of Iqaluit that included a provision for paid domestic violence leave. We have also set dates to sit down with the QEC and start talks and we believe that this employer will come to the table and bargain in Good Faith.

So where is the GN and why do they think it is acceptable to leave their employees without a wage or living allowance for more than three years? The GN workers not only provide us with service, but they drive the economy. What is the GN thinking?

COVID, the cold long winter and work can all leave us feeling down, stressed or even worse. That is why, as part of our late New Year's Resolution we will be doing our best to provide you with information and resources to maintain a healthy work-life balance and to maintain and address your mental health.

That is why I invite you to check out our Facebook Page so that you have the opportunity to take advantage of opportunities to participate in the [National panel on remote work and work life balance](#) on February 24th from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm EST.

I also urge you to watch our Facebook Page throughout February for how you can participate in two more events: Pink Shirt Day (February 23) and a Health and Safety Contest (coming soon) to raise awareness of this important workplace issue.

In Solidarity, Jason Rochon President Nunavut Employees Union