

Hamlet Workers in Kinngait Set Strike Deadline of November 22



For Immediate Release: Kinngait, November 7, 2022: Talks have broken off between Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)/Nunavut Employees Union (NEU) Hamlet Members working for the Municipality of Kinngait. A strike deadline has been set for November 22, 2022. Workers voted overwhelmingly to take strike action after the parties failed to reach a tentative agreement with the assistance of a Federal Conciliator last month.

Key outstanding issues are concessions being demanded by the Employer that affect the working conditions and livelihoods of employees. The Employer is seeking to remove rights to about one-third of the Collective Agreement articles for employees accepting positions directly funded by the Government of Nunavut (GN).

"They are attempting to do this regardless of how much money is in the funding contract between the GN and the Hamlet," says NEU President Jason Rochon. "This is simply an unacceptable situation."

In addition, the Employer is insisting that management should get to decide if and when workers can go hunting when a harvesting opportunity presents itself.

"In communities across Nunavut, access to country food makes the difference between having enough to eat and going hungry," adds Rochon. "Workers in Kinngait have been using the current discretionary leave language in the Collective Agreement to go hunting to feed themselves, their families and the community for many years. It seems like current management wants to re-colonize the community instead of accepting the needs of its people and their traditional culture. They should be ashamed."

The Employer's final offer to increase wages comes to only 1.6 per cent a year over a five-year deal. This does not match the current levels of inflation. Statistics Canada's latest CPI figures (September 2022) place a 5% increase in price for Iqaluit. The inflation is expected to be significantly higher in other remote communities in Nunavut, including Kinngait. While the employer has offered some market adjustments over and above the proposed general economic increase, no additional monies are earmarked for positions held by the Hamlet's female employees;

"We will not accept any concessions at the expense of the livelihoods of our members and their families. Workers must be able to thrive," says PSAC North Regional Executive Vice President Lorraine Rousseau. "Women workers, who are the main source of income in a family unit, tell us that they have to make difficult choices when buying groceries and essential items for their families. This is unacceptable."

The current Collective Agreement expired on March 31, 2020, leaving employees working two-and-a-half years without a contract.

For media inquiries, contact:

Yusur Al-Bahrani Regional Political Communications Officer PSAC North

Phone: 867.669.0991

Email: Al-BahY@psac-afpc.com

James Kaylor Communications Officer Nunavut Employees Union Phone: 867.979.4209

Email: james@neu.ca