

## PSAC/NEU and Iqaluit Housing Authority in Conciliation – Union Demands Nunavut Housing Corporation Change Mandate to Protect Housing Employees



**For Immediate Release:** Iqaluit, November 16: The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)/Nunavut Employees Union (NEU) start conciliation on November 16 and 17 with the Iqaluit Housing Association (IQA) after reaching impasse last August. The parties will meet in the presence of a conciliator in an effort to reach a tentative agreement. A combination of concessionary demands, economic increases well below inflation as well as the 'threat' to withhold retroactive pay blocked the potential path to an agreement last summer.

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 Housing Associations.

"The NEU is calling on the Honorable Lorne Kusugak, the Minister responsible for the NHC, the NHC President and the Board of Directors to intervene and do the right thing," says NEU President Jason Rochon. "The right thing is to 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 NHC bargaining mandate. These numbers represent an actual and significant pay cut in the current economy. <u>Statistics Canada's</u> latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures (September 2022) place a 5% increase in prices for Iqaluit.

"To Members: we've got your back, always, we are fighting for fair wages and your Bargaining Team is strong," says PSAC North Regional Executive Vice President Lorraine Rousseau. "We will not accept any concessions that jeopardize the livelihoods of workers and their families. The employer wants, needs, to recruit and retain, concessions will not get them there!"

"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 for our employees 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 with the Iqaluit Housing", says Jordan Noseworthy a Financial Officer at the IQA and a PSAC/NEU Bargaining Team Member.

If a tentative agreement is not reached in conciliation this week, PSAC/NEU members will be taking the next steps.

"We are tired of being undervalued as employees. What the employer is offering is unacceptable and we are all ready to take action if necessary", says Nicky Nauyuk a plumber working for more than 10 years at the IQA and also a Member of the PSAC/NEU Bargaining Team.

PSAC/NEU are currently negotiating new Collective Agreements for various Housing Associations across Nunavut affiliated to the NHC.

"The negotiations with the IQA could have a domino effect as several Housing Associations such as those in Arviat, Clyde River and Coral Harbour are currently at impasse or in conciliation," adds Rochon. "More housing associations might join that list in the future if NHC doesn't do the right thing and change its mandate. The common points of friction between the parties continue to be the inability of Housing Associations to offer fair wage increases to its employees that account for high inflation, and the unwillingness to address recruitment and retention issues with better working conditions."

## For media inquiries, contact:

Yusur Al-Bahrani Regional Political Communications Officer PSAC North Phone: 867.669.0991 Email: <u>Al-BahY@psac-afpc.com</u>

James Kaylor Communications Officer Nunavut Employees Union Phone: 867.979.4209 Email: james@neu.ca