



Bargaining Communiqué To All UNW/PSAC Members who are GNWT Employees

January 21, 2019

You received a document today from the Government of the Northwest Territories titled “Questions & Answers GNWT Position on Pay Increases.”

This was a very unusual document and we were not consulted before it was sent to you. It contains a misleading figures and a number of falsehoods.

First, what they call a “Q & A” is in fact a modified version of their offer at the bargaining table. During mediation they made a commitment not to bargain in bad faith or through the media, but today they did just that, taking negotiations from the bargaining table and putting it into the public.

The document also took their offer and, for the purposes of trying to make their numbers appear larger, based it on a five year agreement—something not even considered by the Union.

They then proceed to further confuse the issue with misleading numbers, confusing pay increases with step increases, in parts of the document. Step increases are earned by gaining experience in a position and reflect the fact your work gains value. Pay or “economic” increases apply differently, to all employees, and are often tied to the cost of living.

By including step increases in their calculations, and then averaging out over all employees, they also fail to mention the fact that for 2000 of the Territories most experienced government employees, there is no step increase at all. So regardless of the spin the GNWT tries to put on their offer, for thousands of employees zero really does mean zero.

This dishonest attempt to mislead their own workers is shameful. They want you to accept worsening job security and are refusing to even offer cost of living increases. And they seem to think their best strategy to get a deal is to try and weaken the union, so you’ll agree to an unfair deal. This is just wrong. Rest assured, your bargaining team doesn’t buy into their rhetoric.

The document they sent today also almost completely ignores all the other key issues being talked about—most importantly the fight for **better job security**. Right now, too many public service workers are being treated as relief, casuals or terms, with terms and casuals often being extended over and over instead of properly staffing. This leaves too many workers outside of benefit and pension systems, and often unable to negotiate a mortgage or loan. Some workers have been treated as casuals for decades!



And the Employer wants to EXPAND the use of relief workers to the entire GNWT workforce. The government must fix this if we're going to get a fair agreement.

We have been hearing from many of you today frustrated by the government's actions. We understand. Negotiations have dragged on for over three years. We have tried to find middle ground and compromise but the government isn't meeting us half way.

For example, our current pay offer to the government was almost exactly halfway between where we started and what the government first offered. While we have sought out middle ground and moved halfway, the government is still offering 0% for the first two years. In three years they have not moved one inch on the 0%.

We have respected the process all along, because that's the way you get a fair deal. In fact, months ago we offered to try and settle this immediately by going to Binding Arbitration with the GNWT. Binding Arbitration is an even-handed process used for settling difficult labour disputes and we felt it could have helped us reach an agreement, avoiding the risk of a strike. The GNWT flatly refused.

And now they make matters worse by acting in bad faith, going around the collective bargaining process altogether, to bargain through the media with dishonest numbers. They are hoping they can use these heavy-handed tactics to bully you into accepting an unfair deal. But it won't work.

We know you're worried and families are worried about the possibility of a strike. We understand. We have tried to avoid a strike and will continue to do so.

Tomorrow, we will be sending out a public offer to the GNWT a press release tomorrow asking the government to agree to Binding Arbitration. If the government is serious about reaching a fair agreement and avoiding a strike, they will stop their attempts to provoke, and agree to our offer of Binding Arbitration.

In Solidarity,
YOUR UNW BARGAINING TEAM

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