

CUPE COMMUNIQUE

Canadian Union of Public Employees **CUPE.ca**

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Union: Houston Government offers poverty wages and expects gratitude

Nova Scotia - Bargaining negotiations between long term care workers represented by CUPE and the Houston government broke down yesterday, leading the union to begin the process to file for conciliation.

"It's frustrating and frankly disappointing," said CUPE Long Term Care Coordinator Tammy Martin. "We've been negotiating in good faith, demonstrating that we're willing to compromise as long as it means these workers are paid what they deserve, and instead of working with us, they've offered the bare minimum and refused to look at our proposals."

Union proposals include wage adjustments to bring Nova Scotian long term care workers up to par with the other Atlantic provinces, long service adjustments to improve worker retention, and recruitment initiatives. They are part of the coordinated bargaining process which unites workers from over 50 long term care homes, who have been working with an expired contract for two years. These classifications range from nurses, such as LPNs, to support staff, such as laundry and dietary. Most long term care classifications are currently the lowest paid in Atlantic Canada with some nearly \$10 below the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Nova Scotia's estimated living wage.

"The fact that any classification in this province is paid the lowest out of the Eastern provinces is embarrassing," said CUPE Nova Scotia President Alan Linkletter. "It's even worse that these specific workers are the ones responsible for caring for one of our most vulnerable populations. They give our seniors a home, a friend, sometimes even family. In return, the Houston government offers them poverty wages and expects gratitude."

"'Lowest paid in Atlantic Canada.' The first time I heard that, I thought it couldn't be possible," admitted CUPE Long Term and Community Care Chairperson Christa Sweeney. "I couldn't believe that Nova Scotia would come last in something as vital as paying the people who take care of our seniors properly. But it's true, we are last, and it seems the Houston government is fine bearing that title because their recent offer doesn't fix it. If anything, it makes us sink even lower as the cost of living will continue to increase over the life of this agreement."

CUPE long term care workers continue to take strike votes province-wide, with over half of them already scheduled, in progress, or being counted.

For more information, please contact

Tammy Martin
CUPE Long Term Care Coordinator
902-577-2463

Taylor Johnston
CUPE Atlantic Communications
Representative
tjohnston@cupe.ca
:so/cope491