



## **Negotiations end as CUPE reiterates their position of status quo**

### **For Immediate Release**

FORT MCMURRAY, AB, May 31, 2019 – As the third week of the lockout comes to an end, so do the negotiations between Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH) and the CUPE 1505 general collective. The two sides came together yesterday for the first time since the lockout at the insistence of WBH through its bargaining committee.

“We were getting frustrated that they were spreading all this inaccurate information to the community, even purchasing paid ads that were full of untruths, stating they had presented us with ideas of how they can save us money and reduce our deficit,” says Henry Hunter, President of Wood Buffalo Housing. “The insinuation by CUPE that we are refusing to hear their ideas and have only been offering lip service is disheartening and simply untrue.”

WBH contacted the mediator through their senior negotiator to request to see any proposal or ideas that CUPE had to put on the table, since they had stated publicly in the media that they had ideas that could save the corporation nearly \$1 million of the \$1.5 million deficit. We also asked that the meeting be more of a discussion forum so we can answer any questions at the table, to avoid time being wasted with email communication.

“Once again, we were hopeful going into this meeting and we even came up with some new ideas on our end for how we could save at least seven of the eliminated positions and provide job security for the remaining employees in the organization,” says Hunter. “But it was clear as soon as our bargaining team sat at that table that CUPE was not willing to consider anything other than status quo.”

CUPE did not put forward a new proposal. Their only position after negotiations is zero job eliminations and no contracting out. However, they did finally agree to take their request for a wage increase of 12-16% over three years off the table.

“As I said, we were hopeful going into this meeting and eager to hear any new ideas they had to put forward, but that didn’t happen and its obvious that they do not appreciate the reality of our financial situation and that of the local economy,” says Hunter.

WBH did include a new idea in their proposal that could save the maintenance positions by using a site superintendent model, and also providing the original severance packages to some of the employees in their other collectives that are close to retirement and replacing them with the staff whose positions are eliminated.

“At the end of the day, we want a deal that sees us retain as many people as we possibly can and we are actively looking at ways we can do that,” says Hunter. “I can assure you we are taking this matter very seriously because those are our staff out there and we want to bring as many of them home as we can financially afford within a balanced budget. First we need the union to get on the same page as us.”

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