



Clarification on the recent proposal from Wood Buffalo Housing

For Immediate Release

FORT MCMURRAY, AB, July 19, 2019 – Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH) wants to provide some clarification on the latest proposal we presented to our CUPE 1505 general collective bargaining committee. Since it is a very different proposal than the one that was originally on the table, and there has been some misunderstanding regarding what is contained in the proposal, we felt it best to break it down into the key points.

In this new proposal, WBH is recommending we move to a 'Building Superintendent' model. What this means is that each building would have a dedicated superintendent responsible for its maintenance and upkeep that is a full-time unionized employee. It also means that all of our maintenance workers, who were originally on the list of positions to be eliminated, would have a job to return to. We would give those wishing to take a severance the option to do so, and then that vacated position would be posted and would continue to be a full-time unionized position. In total we would require seven Building Superintendents to carry out this model.

The proposal also included bringing all of our Property Administrators, Leasing Agent, Finance, Administrative and IT positions back to work, and we would keep the wording of the contracting-out clause consistent to what is in the former collective agreement for all those employees for the rest of their career with Wood Buffalo Housing. The language of the contracting out clause would be softened to match the language that we currently have in our Marshall House collective agreement, and similar to what CUPE has with many of its other collective agreements, and it would only apply to any new hires.

“We are not asking to get rid of the clause altogether and are quite happy with the way it is worded in our Marshall House collective agreement,” says Henry Hunter, President and CEO of Wood Buffalo Housing. “The current wording of the clause is far too restrictive and does not allow us to manage this organization efficiently during peak times and meet the increased demands for customer service from our tenants.”

Maintained within the most recent proposal is a generous severance package for those employees whose positions would be eliminated and those maintenance employees wishing to take the severance option, which includes three and a half (3 ½) weeks for every year of service, in an effort to bridge them to their next employment.

“If the goal of the CUPE bargaining committee is truly to get as many of our WBH employees back to work as possible, then we feel this proposal outlines an opportunity to do that,” says Hunter. “Unfortunately, I feel like we are no longer negotiating with the local bargaining group. It is our hope that CUPE will provide our employees with an opportunity to vote on this proposal.”

This is the second proposal that Wood Buffalo Housing has put on the table since the lockout began on May 10. To date the members have not been given an option to vote on the proposal.

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