

Working hard for a fair deal

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Just last week I had the opportunity to celebrate Labour Day at Sombe K'e Park with many community members and their families in recognition of the important contributions the working people of Canada make to our economy. Times have changed significantly since the first parade staged in December 1872 in support of the Toronto Typographical Union's strike for a 9 hour work day. You must admit the labour movement has made significant gains over the years, no matter where you stand on a union debate. We now have a 7.5 hour work day, minimum wage has increased, unemployment insurance is available, health and pension benefits, respect and dignity within the workplace and the right to a safe workplace all exists now because of unions.

These items are just a few that drive the union to help make a difference for our members, and there is still work to do in order to help those working North of 60. Currently, the UNW is representing over 4,000 members across the North through bargaining or mediation with the Government of the Northwest Territories, Northwest Territories Power Corporation, AVENS, the Hay River Health & Social Services Authority, and many more, to ensure our members reach a fair deal for themselves and for future generations.

Traditional secure government jobs are not a guarantee for life anymore, and the ability to secure such a position is becoming even more difficult for some in the North. This is due to employers such as the GNWT eroding the current full-time indeterminate workforce and expanding on the use of precarious workers throughout the territory. Precarious workers are subjected to unstable employment, lower wages, lack of health and pension benefits, they are often unable to plan time with family due to shifts being scheduled at the last minute or changed, and often can't afford to ever get sick or turn down shifts, because they won't get paid. If you can't rely on a steady income and predictable work hours, how can you plan for the future?

Did you know that approximately 26 % of the current GNWT employees are already relief, casual, or term positions, and that the government wants to expand that into all facets and departments of the GNWT workforce? And within the NWT Power Corporation, there are many jobs that are contracted out, that could be stable indeterminate jobs. If the GNWT continues to

steer in this direction we will have many more families in the north struggling to keep up with the cost of living. Is this the legacy that we want to leave for our children?

Workers drive the territory and the local economy, and by virtue of having a job it does not automatically make you wealthier than another. The key to building a sustainable economy in the future is to invest in middle class workers. Fighting for fair wages for both our members and all workers in the North is something that the UNW is passionate about. All workers are entitled to a fair and equitable wage that enables them to keep up with the cost of living associated with living in the Territories. Workers need stability now and into the future and we are working hard to ensure that our members and all employees in the North receive a fair deal.