

October 7 2021

ADDRESSED TO: Mayor Mike Savage; Councillor Cathy Deagle Gammon; Councillor David Hendsbee; Councillor Becky Kent; Councillor Trish Purdy; Councillor Sam Austin; Councillor Tony Mancini; Councillor Wayne Mason; Councillor Lindell Smith; Councillor Shawn Cleary; Councillor Kathryn Morse; Councillor Patty Cuttell; Councillor Iona Stoddard; Councillor Pam Lovelace; Councillor Lisa Blackburn; Councillor Paul Russell; Councillor Tim Outhit; Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Jacques Dubé

CC: Jen Heddon, General Manager of Cole Harbour Place (Community Builders)

RE: **Open-Letter to HRM Council re: exclusionary Living Wage policy**

As members of NSUPE Local 22, we are dedicated HRM employees in operations, housekeeping and security at Cole Harbour Place, a community recreational space within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), and one of its eight multi-district facilities (MDF).

In September 2020, [HRM Council approved a Supplier Code of Conduct including Living Wage requirements](#), meaning all employees of HRM sub-contractors would be paid at least \$21.80/hour (effective April 2021). HRM Council referred to the [2020 Living Wage calculations by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Nova Scotia](#), which concluded that HRM residents must be working full-time at \$21.80/hour, in order to ensure that workers and their families can meet their basic needs and the rising costs of living.

Cole Harbour Place is an HRM-owned facility, managed by Community Builders Incorporated. When HRM passed the motion approving the Supplier Code of Conduct we were ecstatic about what a Living Wage could mean for us and our families. As low-wage HRM employees making as little as \$13.12, we know that a Living Wage standard would bring more decency, dignity and fairness into our livelihoods. We were shocked and disappointed that HRM Council left us behind to fall through the cracks, and that employees in MDFs (employed directly or by a subcontractor) would be excluded from a Living Wage increase.

Amidst the precarity and exposure-risks throughout this pandemic, we have continued to work around the clock in order to keep our community clean, safe, and maintained.

Our work is considered essential, and with this exclusion, HRM Council is making a statement that our work and role in the community are worth less than a Living Wage.

We call on HRM Council to continue their principled commitments to provide a Living Wage standard for all employees of HRM facilities, inclusive of MDFs like Cole Harbour Place and inclusive of employer or sub-contractor status. This must include:

1. The implementation of a Living Wage standard for all employees of HRM facilities that increases consistently with the rising costs-of-living in Halifax
2. Consult with Community Builders who manage the MDF Cole Harbour Place and provide the funding necessary to pay HRM employees a Living Wage.

On September 23 2021, CBC released [an article](#) as well as [a video-journalism report](#) investigating how Local 22 members are falling through the cracks of HRM's exclusionary Living Wage policy. Councillor Lindell Smith was quoted to say that the exclusion of MDFs was an *oversight* of HRM Council. Our lives and wages should never be an oversight; we should not have to wait one more day without a Living Wage for the essential work we do for our community.

Sincerely,

Members of NSUPE Local 22
Nova Scotia Union of Public & Private Employees (NSUPE)