

**Press Release:** Low-wage workers call on HRM Council to address Living Wage exclusions

**Tuesday, October 7 2021**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia** — On October 7, Local 22 members of the Nova Scotia Union of Public & Private Employees (NSUPE) released an open letter calling on Halifax Regional Council to uphold a Living Wage standard for all Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) employees. NSUPE Local 22 includes employees in operations, housekeeping and security at Cole Harbour Place, which is a HRM-owned facility managed by Community Builders Incorporated. The open letter was launched following [a CBC article](#) and [corresponding video-journalism report](#) investigating HRM’s exclusionary Living Wage policy that left hundreds of low-wage workers to fall through the cracks.

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 afford to meet basic needs and the rising costs of living. NSUPE Local 22 members at Cole Harbour Place make as little as \$13.12/hour and are excluded from the HRM’s Living Wage policy.

Robert Styles, President of NSUPE Local 22 and overnight security worker of 11 years at Cole Harbour Place, said: “We were immensely let-down to learn that Council excluded us from the Living Wage increase, even though we are doing the same essential work as those making \$21.80/hour. HRM Councillor Lindell Smith went on record and said that our exclusion from the policy was an oversight, so our open letter calls on them to address their oversight. They need to fix this.”

“HRM Council made it a moral imperative to mandate that sub-contractors pay their employees a living wage while working in HRM facilities. The questions we’re asking: Why does that principled commitment not apply to all HRM employees? Why are some deserving of a Living Wage, and others not?” said Farrel Huculak, Business Agent of NSUPE Local 22. “The exclusion, as it stands, points to a smoke and mirrors act. If HRM Council wants to proclaim themselves as leaders for providing a Living Wage, then we need to see them work with Community Builders to ensure NSUPE members aren’t left behind.”

The open letter to HRM Council was signed by all members of NSUPE Local 22, none of whom are earning a Living Wage. NSUPE is committed to improving the material and working conditions of its members as well as all workers, which includes at minimum, fair wages, job security and workplace safety.

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