



## MEDIA RELEASE

January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

On December 13<sup>th</sup>, the Strathcona Regional District (SRD) negotiator emailed the USW a revised settlement offer and indicated that the Union had until 5pm that day to get back to them with an answer.

The new offer the employer gave the Union only changed two provisions. It moved 0.25% from year four of their proposal to year two and offered a pro-rated signing bonus of \$750 that paid less to part time employees based on hours worked in 2021. A year in which many hours were missed due to the pandemic.

Essentially, the SRD offered the same wage offer the workers already voted down once and added a small signing bonus that many would only receive a small portion of and some others nothing at all.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, the SRD had written to the Minister of Labour's office to try to have the Minister intervene under Section 78. (6) of the Labour Code and order a Last offer vote on the members.

The USW had already met with their members and in a confidential survey found unsurprisingly that 100% of the members rejected the employer's insulting offer.

As well, the Union was aware that the SRD had no legal right by law to force a Last offer vote as the Union was already on strike and the work had been determined it was not an essential service, but the USW wanted to ensure our members had the opportunity to review the offer regardless of the fact it clearly had no chance of being accepted.

*USW Local 1-1937 Spokesperson Shelley Siemens stated, "No employer in this province should have the right to use the Labour Minister's office to force a vote on ANY Union under this clause, if they are not an essential service and certainly not in an attempt to circumvent the Union members' fundamental right to free and fair collective bargaining, when a Union is already on strike."*

*Siemens went on to say, "Recent comments made by the SRD that the USW got their lawyers to prevent their members from receiving the final offer from the SRD is complete and utter nonsense and could not be further from the truth. It is indicative of the type of arrogance and poor labour relations that the USW Bargaining Committee has been dealing with from this employer throughout this process."*

*SRD Employee & USW Shop Steward and member of the USW Bargaining Committee, Laura Boyle, stated, "The SRD Bargaining Committee has grossly underestimated the Unity and the Solidarity of our members. Now, more than ever, our members are committed to standing united together in order to get a fair wage and good working conditions for everyone in the operation. It just goes to show you how completely out of touch the employer representatives are with the workforce." "We do good work for the public, but we feel unfairly compensated and disrespected."*

The Labour Minister replied back to the USW and the SRD on December 30<sup>th</sup>, in response to the SRD's request to force a Last offer vote on the employees. Quoted here is the final paragraph of that letter, "**As a result at this time, I decline to direct a Last offer vote under Section 78 (6) of the Code. I encourage the parties to continue to make efforts to reach a mutually acceptable renewal collective agreement. The parties can continue to access the mediation services of the LRB as they see fit.**"

It is also abundantly clear that the Labour Minister is encouraging the two parties to continue to collectively bargain as well and we suggest the SRD heed his advice.

The USW Bargaining Committee is once again calling on the Regional District of Strathcona Gardens Board Members, the Commissioners, and the SRD Bargaining Committee to come back to the table and resume collective bargaining.

To view the full letter, please visit our web page found here at <https://www.usw1-1937.ca/srd-strathcona-gardens.html>

**Last, Saturday, the Strathcona Garden members were joined on the picket line by several other Unions and user groups for a Solidarity Walk to support the striking members. On behalf of all of the USW Strathcona Gardens members, we want to thank you for all of your continued support. We would like nothing more than to be serving you inside the facility.**

We ask the members of the community to continue to contact the SRD Regional Board of Directors and the SRD Bargaining Committee to ask them to please get back to the table so we can reach a fair and equitable collective agreement and allow the community to once again use the services our members are proud to deliver.

For further information please contact:

Shelley Siemens  
Business Agent  
USW Local 1-1937  
Cell: 250-230-9004  
Email: [ssiemens@usw1-1937.ca](mailto:ssiemens@usw1-1937.ca)

SS/jm  
USW 1-1937