



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada



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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Public Service Alliance of Canada issues warning to BHP Billiton as talks on Ekati diamond mine strike to continue on Tuesday May 30

Yellowknife – The Public Service Alliance of Canada, the union representing striking Ekati diamond mine workers, issued a warning to mine owner BHP Billiton today as both sides agreed to a third day of talks on Tuesday May 30 in Edmonton.

PSAC says that a provocative news release issued by BHP Billiton today will only serve to make reaching a first collective agreement more difficult.

Jean-François Des Lauriers, PSAC Executive Vice-President-North, said the union still remains hopeful that a deal can be reached to provide workers with a fair first contract but is concerned that BHP Billiton has been disrespectful of union members just as new talks are planned.

Des Lauriers said claims in the BHP Billiton news release that the union “doesn’t understand” the Northern mining business or private industry labour are outlandish and counterproductive. Mining operations with unionized workforces have operated in the North for almost sixty years. BHP Billiton’s statement that it will table a “last and final counter-offer” Tuesday simply indicates its unwillingness to bargain.

“Negotiations implies two sides talking with each other to hear concerns and respond in order to reach a deal – unfortunately, in two days of talks the PSAC bargaining team saw BHP Billiton’s team directly for all of five minutes,” Des Lauriers said. “We need to hold a real negotiating session, not have one side fail to participate and then issue orders from on high of take it or leave it.”

Todd Parsons, President of the Union of Northern Workers component of PSAC, which represents Diamond Workers UNW Local X3050, said the union’s bargaining committee is surprised at BHP Billiton’s behaviour.

“It is disappointing that after the union made important movement to meet the concerns of BHP Billiton, the corporation reacts in such a high-handed way,” Parsons said. “If they want to reach an agreement, end the strike and forge a productive relationship for the mutual benefit of the company and its employees, they should start negotiating and stop pontificating.”

Ekati produces 6 per cent of the world's diamond supply by value or 4 per cent by weight and yields 3 to 5 million carats annually. It is located 300 km northeast of Yellowknife and 200 km south of the Arctic Circle.

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