

April 7, 2006

MEDIA RELEASE For Immediate Release

PSAC to fight decertification application at Ekati

Yellowknife – The union representing 400 workers at the Ekati diamond mine will vigorously attack a decertification petition filed with the Canada Industrial Relations Board as a strike began today with nearly 100% support of its members.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada said Friday it is confident the CIRB will throw the revocation application filed April 5 out after the union outlines its serious questions about the validity of signatures, the possible role of the employer in the application, the timing and the way in which signatures were obtained.

“This is nothing more than a desperate attempt to defeat the will of our members to strike BHP Billiton in order to win a fair first collective agreement,” said Jean-François Des Lauriers, Regional Executive Vice-President for PSAC-North.

“Our members today showed their true wishes by walking off the job at the Ekati diamond mine and nothing could be clearer to BHP Billiton,” Des Lauriers said. “We are convinced that this decertification application in no way indicates the wishes of the workers and will be defeated.”

On Friday morning almost all PSAC members walked off the job and flew out of Ekati, Des Lauriers said. Those members were joined by other unionized workers employed by contractors hired by BHP Billiton, he added.

Nycole Turmel, PSAC National President, said Friday that the diamond workers have the full support of the national union’s 150,000 members.

“The PSAC is committed to support the Ekati workers’ right to win a first collective agreement,” Turmel said. “PSAC will not let BHP Billiton break the union.”

Todd Parsons, President of the Union of Northern Workers component of PSAC that represents Diamond Workers Local X3050, said the union is focused on strike action to gain a collective agreement.

“Our diamond workers know that this decertification application is yet another way of trying to stop them from winning a contract,” Parsons said. “We are completely confident in our membership and will remain on strike until we reach a collective agreement.”

BHP Billiton is a multinational corporation based in Australia with worldwide profits of \$7.5 billion in 2005. Federally mediated talks in Edmonton failed Thursday after the company made inadequate offers on wages and holidays and refused to address key issues of layoffs by seniority and job security, Des Lauriers said.

Ekati is Canada’s first diamond mine and 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.

For more information: Jean-Francois Des Lauriers - 867-765-8937 or 613-858-2367
Todd Parsons - 867-873-5668 or 867-445-8899 or Bill Tieleman, West Star
Communications – 604-844-7827 or cell 778-896-0964
Websites: www.unw.ca & www.psacnorth.com