



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



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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Union asks retail jewelers who sell Ekati Canadian diamonds to express concern about ongoing Ekati strike against mine owner BHP Billiton that will impact sales and supply of trademarked Aurias diamonds

Yellowknife – Retail jewelers who sell diamonds produced at the Ekati diamond mine are being asked by the union representing striking workers to express their concern about the dispute and its impact on sales and the supply of Ekati diamonds to BHP Billiton, the mine's owner.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada has written to more than 33 jewelry stores in Canada and the United States that specialize in selling trademarked Aurias diamonds from the Ekati mine. Each Ekati diamond is clearly identifiable through a laser inscription and comes with a certificate of origin.

"We want all retail jewelers who sell Ekati diamonds to know about the dispute and hear directly from the union about why we are on strike for a fair first collective agreement," Jean-François Des Lauriers, Executive Vice-President-North said today.

"The union is not asking jewelers to take sides but we do want them to express their concerns about the potential impact of this dispute on their ability to sell Ekati diamonds and on the significant reduction in the supply of Ekati diamonds that would result from a long strike," Des Lauriers said.

Todd Parsons, President of the Union of Northern Workers component of PSAC, which represents Diamond Workers UNW Local X3050, said retail jewelers are marketing the Aurias brand diamonds as "conflict free" diamonds and not "blood diamonds" produced in war-torn countries like Sierra Leone and the Congo.

"The union would ordinarily support selling Ekati diamonds as 'conflict free' but right now we are in our own major labour conflict – and jewelers should be told about that conflict too," Parsons said. "I wonder if retail customers would have second thoughts about buying diamonds being produced behind a picket line by a company that won't negotiate a fair contract with its own diamond workers?"

The letter to jewelers sent by PSAC National President Nycole Turmel outlines the diamond workers' situation and why they have gone on strike over the issues of wage increases, job security and vacation time.

PSAC represents 400 diamond workers the Ekati mine on strike since April 7. 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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