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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

BHP Billiton's credibility shrinks dramatically along with admitted 36% drop in diamond production at strike-bound Ekati mine, says union – on April 21 BHP Billiton claimed “full production” at Ekati and “best production week since August 2005”

Yellowknife – Ekati diamond mine owner BHP Billiton's credibility is shrinking dramatically along with an admitted 36% drop in diamond production at the strike-bound mine, says the union representing 400 striking workers at the Ekati mine.

BHP Billiton claimed in an April 21 news release that the: “Ekati Diamond Mine continues to operate at full capacity. In fact, this past week the Ekati mine has recorded the mine's best production week since August 2005.”

But yesterday BHP Billiton released a production report that shows diamond production at Ekati has dropped by 36% to 512,000 carats for the three month period ending March 31, 2006 compared to the same quarter in 2005 and that it has also dropped 26% in the year to date versus 2005 production.

“BHP Billiton should be ashamed for putting out deliberately misleading and downright incorrect information to the public, shareholders and the media,” said Jean-François Des Lauriers, Executive Vice-President-North for the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents striking workers.

“Production of diamonds at Ekati has dropped enormously and BHP Billiton already knew that but it still put out a news release claiming exactly the opposite,” Des Lauriers said. “This new information should have anyone questioning BHP Billiton's credibility on what it claims about Ekati and the strike.”

The BHP Billiton production report can be found online at: HYPERLINK "http://www.bhpbilliton.com/bbContentRepository/Reports/BHPBProdnRpt26Apr06.pdf" <http://www.bhpbilliton.com/bbContentRepository/Reports/BHPBProdnRpt26Apr06.pdf>

The BHP Billiton Ekati diamond mine news release can be found online at: HYPERLINK "http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/April2006/21/c6590.html" <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/April2006/21/c6590.html>

“BHP Billiton is full of something and it isn't diamonds,” said Todd Parsons, President of the Union of Northern Workers component of PSAC, which represents Diamond Workers UNW Local X3050. “But it is disturbing to see how low BHP Billiton will stoop to mislead reporters, northerners and its own employees about what is really going on at Ekati and with our strike.”

“The plain truth is that Ekati diamond mine production has been dropping for months and now that 400 workers are on strike, how could anyone in their right mind claim that production is going up?” Parsons asked. “BHP Billiton's willingness to mislead people also shows how hard it has been for PSAC and UNW to try and reach a first collective agreement when statements made by the employer at the bargaining table can't be believed.”

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.