



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 reaches tentative agreement for striking Ekati diamond mine workers with Ekati owner BHP Billiton; union recommending yes vote to end strike that began April 7 to win first-ever contract at a Canadian diamond mine

Yellowknife – The Public Service Alliance of Canada has reached a tentative agreement for striking Ekati diamond mine workers with Ekati owner BHP Billiton and will be recommending acceptance to end the strike that began April 7.

PSAC National President John Gordon said Ekati workers can be proud of their fight to win the first-ever contract at a Canadian diamond mine against BHP Billiton, the largest mining company in the world.

“When less than 400 union members take on a giant multinational corporation with \$7.5 billion in annual profits to try and win a first contract, it’s hardly a fair fight,” Gordon said. “But our members can hold their heads high. They reached a tentative agreement against the odds in an extremely tough strike where the employer did everything it could to defeat them and failed to do so.”

The tentative agreement was reached with the assistance and direction of the Canada Industrial Relations Board at talks earlier this week in Edmonton. The CIRB imposed a communications blackout until noon June 23.

Jean-François Des Lauriers, PSAC Executive Vice-President-North, said the union’s local bargaining team will be recommending acceptance of the contract but not releasing details to the media until members are informed.

“The strike against BHP Billiton has been a major challenge for Ekati workers, many of whom have never belonged to a union before, and I am extremely proud of them for standing up for their democratic rights,” Des Lauriers said. “Now our job will be to build and strengthen our union local at Ekati.”

“With a collective agreement in place Ekati workers will have rights to exercise instead of asking management for privileges and workers will have a union grievance system to enforce those rights,” Des Lauriers said.

Todd Parsons, President of the Union of Northern Workers component of PSAC, which represents Diamond Workers UNW Local X3050, said the resolve of Ekati workers to win a contract was strengthened by a national and international campaign to support them and target BHP Billiton.

“It wasn’t just 400 workers taking on a giant company – it was our entire 160,000 member union along with the Canadian and international labour movement who were determined that Ekati workers would get a contract,” Parsons said. “Solidarity was a key factor in getting to a tentative agreement.”

Parsons said the union’s Dirty Diamonds campaign urging an international boycott of Ekati-produced Aurias™ and CanadaMark™ will end when a contract is in place. PSAC ran ads in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal and leafleted all Canadian jewellers selling BHP Billiton diamonds earlier in June.

The union will hold a ratification vote for Ekati members as soon as reasonably possible, Parsons added.

Ekati is Canada’s first diamond mine. It 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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