

Union Asks Management to Put Pride Back in the Palace!

Union negotiations for a new Collective Agreement affecting Employees at the Palace Casino continued in Edmonton during the week of December 14 – 16. The overall theme of collective bargaining advanced by your Union's bargaining committee related to the future of the business and Employees' perception of that future.

As you are aware a recent financial restructuring has led to a sale of the Palace Casino. New investors have said that the sale would not result in layoffs or otherwise have any negative impact upon the Employees at the Palace. They have said that, simply put, it would be "business as usual".

Your Union bargaining committee has accepted the company's representations that the approach has been business as usual. However, your Union bargaining committee is asking very pointed questions about the future of the business. From our point of view "business as usual" is not good enough.

"Business as usual" in recent months appears to have given rise to the perception that the Palace could be a "sinking ship". Some Employees are saying that the only customers who are present are those who are, at times, "left overs" from other casinos. Employees are complaining of customer aggression and abuse and an increasing failure on the part of Palace management to put Employees first and to tolerate customer improprieties in the blind short term pursuit of profit. Your Union is continuing to repeat complaints of Employees regarding deteriorating physical conditions in the casino. Some complaints even involve serious ongoing and emerging health and safety problems. Under these circumstances a negative feeling is emerging among Employees and pride in the operation is being eroded. Before Employee spirit is completely lost, your Union is insisting at the bargaining table that your company rejuvenate the Palace and adopt a fresh perspective.

From our point of view, Palace Casino enjoys a number of competitive advantages. The casino can draw from a large pre-existing customer base in the west-end generally and in the mall specifically. But how do we get more customers? We are arguing that physical improvements and a re-thinking of the environment and the product is necessary. Simply put, money and managerial creativity and initiative are much needed. By having a Union, Employee input is possible and it indeed has been provided to the Employer through the collective bargaining process.

Another competitive advantage that the Employer does have is their Employees. There can be no doubt that a rejuvenation in the Palace could only improve Employee performance by augmenting pride in the Palace. Of course, wages and proper overall remuneration are critical to any plan. The attraction and retention of Employees in this lucrative business requires a re-thinking of wage and benefit packages to get Palace Employees to where they should be. A bigger pay cheque has just got to be there. There can be no pride in the Palace unless Employees feel a sense of economic fairness.

We anticipate having a Union meeting with Palace Casino Employees very soon. Bargaining has gone on for some period of time but progress has been made. In addition, some unfortunate delays were unavoidable while bargaining was suspended during the time frame in which the sale of the business put your Union in a position where we had to threaten legal action to get the Employer to refocus its attention on the bargaining process.

Watch for a notice of an important Union meeting. That posting will be provided soon.

Please accept our best wishes for the holiday season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Your Union bargaining committee