

## **XL Beef Management Bargaining Team in Disarray?**

Well after negotiations have commenced for a new Collective Agreement for employees at XL Lakeside Packers in Brooks, the management team responsible for Collective Bargaining appears to be in a state of disarray.

Your Union was advised today that Chief Company Negotiator and seasoned upscale labour and employment lawyer Gordon Hamilton from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan will be replaced by someone unknown to UFCW Local 401. In correspondence to the Union, the Company has advised that there was “a decision to change the main spokesperson for the Company”.

Put another way, “Mr. Hamilton is no longer with us” says Lakeside. It is hard to know what this means from the Company point of view, or what has caused this. We assume that lawyers hired by Companies to negotiate do as they are instructed to do by their clients. Bargaining has been frustrating and in our view, the Company has not met its legal or ethical obligations. We don’t want to blame Mr. Hamilton for this. We want to focus on XL Beef- the organization that is ultimately responsible!!

The Company is also frustrating the Union by breaking agreements on bargaining dates and by refusing reasonable and proper Union efforts to communicate with members.

At negotiations thus far, Paul Slater COO of the company, seemed to take a leadership role over and above that of their Chief spokesperson. We don’t know what kind of dynamic that created on the Company bargaining team. But The Union welcomed and celebrated the input of Mr. Slater. We always prefer to bargain with people who have a direct and personal interest in the companies which whom we have dealings. We do not know whether Mr. Slater will be able to fairly see the world from a worker point of view, but we do know that he is a key decision maker and we have suggested that he personally take over the role of Chief Company Spokesperson.

The Unions bargaining committee continues to be focussed on critical health and safety issues. There is a consensus on our worker based bargaining committee that standards of health and safety have declined since the XL takeover. There are also significant concerns about food safety and there is a similar consensus that food safety standards have also dropped since the XL Beef takeover.