

## **Palace Casino Union Bargaining Committee Troubled by Suspension of Negotiations!**

Collective bargaining meetings were scheduled between your Union negotiating team and management officials this week. The management team did not show up!

On the afternoon of Friday July 9<sup>th</sup>, the company contacted your Union and said that they would be unable to attend negotiations that were to commence just a few days later on Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>. The company indicated that they had to suspend bargaining for this week and could not yet explain why. Questioning by Union officials did not cause the company to be forthcoming with an explanation. The company did, however, indicate that they would still be attending bargaining on August 3 – 6.

Your Union bargaining committee chose to meet for caucus this week. Time was spent reviewing outstanding proposals and counter proposals that have been presented during negotiations in the last number of months.

The bargaining committee also attended upon a UFCW Local 401 picket line in Edmonton. Employees at a company called McKesson have been on strike for about 3 weeks. McKesson warehouses and distributes products and pharmaceuticals for drug stores. Everything from chocolates to shampoo to Valium, laxatives and Prozac is stored, assembled and shipped out of two McKesson locations in Edmonton. Approximately 240 Employees are on the picket line for fair wages, benefits and dignity and respect in the workplace.

Palace Casino Employees on the Union bargaining committee joined McKesson strikers at 2 picket line locations on Thursday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. Firstly, Palace Employees were there as an expression of worker solidarity. No one knows the importance of standing up for worker rights better than the Employees at the Palace Casino. Secondly, the picketing experience was an important one for those on your negotiating committee who had not been Employees and strikers at the time of your dispute. We believe it is important that bargaining committees have hands-on experience with picketing in order to understand how high the stakes really are at the bargaining table. And finally, our solidarity with McKesson Employees should be a reminder to Palace Casino management that your Union will always consider any options available to it in pursuing a fair contract.

To return to the issue of the so-called “suspension” of bargaining, there will be considerable speculation as to why this has occurred. Some will believe that the business has been sold. Some of this is fuelled in the Edmonton area by the efforts of a group to bring a new hockey facility to the downtown core where the Baccarat Casino is located. Some believe that Baccarat and Palace could end up in the hands of that developer. Some might worry that the business might close. Others might say that the company might be undergoing changes in B.C. and therefore they simply couldn't bargain in Alberta this week as they had to turn their attention to pressing matters in that province, details of which they are not in a position to yet reveal.

Your Union's position is clear. The legal obligation to negotiate is ongoing, and there best be a proper reason for the suspension of bargaining. If there is a sale, lease or transfer of your business, the law talks about something called successorship. This means that a new business inherits the Union, the Collective Agreement and the obligation to negotiate. In the worst case scenario of the business facing closure, we will make every effort to use our resources to push for notice, accommodation, funds for adjustment and severance.

There is clearly reason to be concerned and troubled. However, there is no reason to panic. Palace Casino Employees have faced employment challenges in the past, including a strike of nearly one year in duration, and any challenges that need to be faced will be faced with strength, solidarity and success.

Remember, more bargaining dates are currently scheduled in August.

Your Union bargaining committee