

UNION BARGAINING CONTINUES... Mediator urges additional meetings!

Negotiations for a new Union contract for PTI – Buffalo Metis Catering employees continued in Edmonton on November 10, 2010. Assisting the parties to the bargaining process was seasoned Alberta Government Mediator Klaus Opatril.

The mediation process, under Alberta law cannot be avoided, before a strike or lockout can occur. Your Union Bargaining Committee requested the presence of a Government Mediator for a number of reasons. Firstly we wanted to send the company a message that we are serious. Secondly, and as noted, we must have mediation before we can even consider a strike. Thirdly, as bargaining has stalled with the stubbornness of PTI, we felt there was no harm in utilizing the assistance of a mediator to try to kick start the bargaining process.

The company has made some small but important changes to their offer involving benefits and seniority. **Also, the company has promised that an improved overall offer will be put on the table in the New Year.**

Your Union Bargaining Committee has been left with mixed feelings. We are frustrated and impatient with delays. However, the stakes are high and we want to be cautious and reasonable. We want to be strong but not stupid. We are looking at carefully balancing the following factors:

1. We do not want to have a strike or lockout.
2. We may have a strike if it is necessary, but only as a last resort, Employees must vote in favor of a strike through a special labor board process for a strike to actually occur.
3. If we push too hard we could bring undue hardship to employees and the business.
4. If we do not push hard enough the contract will not be good enough and fair enough. You deserve the best contract possible.

Mediator Opatril has recommended that the company and the Union meet again in the new year.

Your Bargaining Committee has agreed. A meeting will be held when the union the company and the mediator have all agreed on additional dates to continue the process.

Bargaining has gone on for some period of time and we do not view a few more months as severely prejudicing the process. Put another way, if the result is a positive one, it is worth holding off on a strike for a little while longer.

On the other hand, we are suspicious of the company's motives. Untrustworthy management and downright sneaky corporate behavior behind employees' backs and the Unions back makes us feel very wary.

Because of this wariness we are going to commence preparations for a strike. While the company's intentions in their yet to be seen new offer may be good and additional meetings could produce a better offer we have to, unfortunately prepare for the worst.

Your Union has assigned an additional full-time Union Representative to assist in representing you and communicating with you at your workplace. His name is Don Crisall and he will be working with Lorraine Pilotte after Christmas.

Specifically and initially they will be talking to the almost 200 individuals who have signed up to help prepare for a possible strike through a special UFCW Local 401 strike committee.

In addition, UFCW Local 401 is also preparing, apart from the chance of the strike, an additional special campaign to advance your interests. Under consideration are a variety of tactics that will remain confidential for now to ensure, that, if utilized, they will be effective surprises for PTI and the oil industry. We need to bring them to their senses and reduce their arrogance. Without you and your critical work, housing and feeding thousands of workers the oil industry could not function. Even a small, entirely legal disruption could cause the loss of millions in profits!

The bad news is that a new contract is not imminent. The good news is that neither is a dispute. Strikes are ugly, and while a strike may be necessary, no one should be anxious to rush onto a picket line in a snow bank next to a northern highway.

A bit of news for MacKenzie and Kelsey employees – the company is now saying that those camps will continue to do business until March 2012. At least that's what PTI executives say.

At Conklin employees are grateful that their union has worked so hard to improve their travel allowance. A special thank you is owing to the bargaining committee members from Conklin Lodge for ensuring that the voices of those employees are heard by PTI.

We are now asking the Company to implement the travel allowance improvements immediately and retroactively!!!

Some say the Company will be cheap, and show their true colors and will say no. But your Union will continue to fight for immediate and retro active travel allowance improvements. Maybe the company will introduce the improvements now and retroactively to address the ridiculous injustice of having paid Conklin employees less. **There is no reason whatsoever that travel expenses for the Christmas season should be any less for Conklin employees. Tell PTI that Conklin employees are not second class!**

Watch our website for news or contact your Bargaining Committee members or Union Representative Lorraine Pilotte at 1-800-252-7975.