

SOLIDARITY AMONG PTI EMPLOYEES GROWS!

UNION BARGAINING UPDATE FOR BUFFALO-METIS CATERING EMPLOYEES

WHAT KIND OF UNION DO YOU WANT?

The intention of this newsletter is to update you regarding the state of Union negotiations with your employer. But we should start by asking you the first and most important question: what kind of Union do you want? A few people have, unfortunately, answered this question in their own minds without the facts. Without involving themselves in Union activity they come to all sorts of conclusions about their Union and Union negotiations. From one side of their mouth they say the Union is weak. From the other side of their mouth they complain that the Union is too militant! One or two employees challenge Union Stewards and bargaining committee members without knowing what they are talking about. They come to conclusions about the bargaining process without ever having been there. Some even act on behalf of management, spreading rumors and outright lies to get ahead or, simply put, to “suck up”. We hope that people like this have a good lawyer as there can be little tolerance for defamation and breaches of Labour Law.

Let us tell you about the kind of Union that we are. We are a strong Union that will not accept bad contract offers. We are a strong Union that will use every resource we have to achieve a fair contract. There will be no quick and easy deals with UFCW Local 401! Finally, no contract will be accepted and there will be no strike **unless the employees themselves vote for these results. DEMOCRACY IS WHAT WE VALUE!!**

That’s the kind of Union we are. That’s the kind of Union that you have told us you want us to be.

A REJECTED OFFER

As you will recall, your Union bargaining committee rejected the offer the company made in August. The offer did not even come close to what an average employee would consider to be reasonable. It is the Union’s job, through its activists and representatives to stay in touch with you. We knew that an offer of nickels and dimes and take aways would not be acceptable. We chose not to insult you by bringing it back for a vote.

We will soon be distributing copies of that August offer around the workplace but we have already reviewed its features with many of you. Union polls and evidence gathered reveals that the offer, if voted upon by all employees in all of the lodges, would be rejected by an 85% or higher margin.

It is interesting to know that employees at another PTI company recently rejected a company offer by about 75%. At Travco in Edmonton, where PTI manufactures its trailers, employees overwhelmingly rejected a company offer.

You are not alone in your conclusion that PTI is not recognizing the hard work of its employees. Members of the Carpenters Union at TRAVCO agree with you.

WHAT HAPPENED THIS WEEK?

At bargaining in Edmonton this week the company refused to budge in any meaningful way from its August offer. A few contract clarifications and minor changes were made. Some of the clarifications were important, but the company did not put **one more cent** on the table. They quite simply think that they can continue to adopt a hard line. Company officials told the Union's bargaining committee that the lodges were virtually full. We know that employees are overworked. We wonder how arrogant a company can be that chooses to shun the legitimate needs and wants of its employees at a time when they need them so desperately. We want to negotiate. PTI is being stubborn. Why wouldn't they be? The work is getting done. For now.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

The company tried to convince the Union that it should look at other collective agreements like the one recently negotiated by HERE Local 47 at the BlackSand Executive Lodge. There, for example the travel allowance is a Red Arrow bus ticket (\$160.00) plus \$100.00 per month. There, contract language is not as solid as in your actual and contemplated collective agreement. There, employees work fewer hours and therefore receive less pay. There, employees are not permitted to stay on their site during turnarounds. There, the Union dues are higher.

In the **HERE BlackSand collective agreement, which spans April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2014**, the company says the wages are lower in many areas than what PTI is offering. The company says for example that under PTI's offer a first cook will immediately go to \$27.87 whereas the HERE agreement only provides for \$26.52 during the same time frame. They say that a camp attendant at BlackSand just went to \$21.93 per hour and that PTI's offer will take BMC employees to \$21.24 immediately, just .71 cents less. The company reminded the Union that under HERE agreements there are very high workload standards written right into HERE's contracts which give rise to employee discipline if such standards are not met.

The Union's response to this and other arguments was direct and comprehensive.

Our primary argument is that BMC employees are the very best. In a few short years the company has grown from having a handful of employees and a few trailers to having almost **900** employees and almost **10,000** beds. The CEO of your parent company, Cindy

B. Taylor, according to some quick internet research, has recently pocketed more than **2.5 million** dollars in compensation partly as a result of this growth. It is a matter of basic fairness that your hard work requires proper reward as well.

The Union has reviewed wages in most, if not all operations comparable to yours. It is our view that the HERE BlackSands agreement is not adequate. We see no reason to take too little because HERE has. In terms of wages we have argued that an initial increase of about \$3.00 per hour for every employee is appropriate.

In terms of other rights and benefits we are looking to increase the RRSP to \$4.25 per hour; we want to protect the 21/7 rotation plus give you other rotation options; we want double time for Sundays and stats; we want night shift premiums to be increased and a basic shoe allowance for employees; we have demanded improvements to the calculation of vacation and stat pay and improvements to vacation entitlement and pay. The Union has also proposed new job security features, especially for employees at Firebag and Conklin. We have asked for a \$450.00 per month travel allowance for every employee. We have told the company that Conklin employees can not be treated as second class citizens and we have insisted that their travel allowance and other rights benefits and privileges be no less than those provided to others. Your Union committee has fought for benefit cards, continues to fight for sick pay, and is pursuing special contract language to make sure that the company does not take away any of your rights once the contract has been concluded. In addition to Sunday and stat double time, we have asked for improvements to all overtime entitlements. The company, as a result of Union efforts has now at least said that Conklin employees will have an equitable improvement to their travel allowance.

Seniority and lay off matters are another focus for your Union. This area requires clarification in your contract and recall rights need to be improved. In addition, the Union is also fighting to make sure the company does not forget that they should not and cannot contract out your jobs to low paying non-Union employers. This is exactly what happened to PTI employees who made sandwiches (the Union will be fighting this issue at arbitration).

A few additional comments are appropriate on the issue of wages. Every employee deserves a fair wage with full retroactivity. Moreover, the Union is arguing that in addition to this some employees are suffering a particular lack of attention from the company. Janitorial workers, drivers who work at the laundry and elsewhere, shippers and receivers in the kitchen, employees at the front desks, senior housekeepers, coordinators in other departments, first cooks and many others, we have argued should have their wages evaluated with special consideration by PTI.

Union voice and visibility is another major concern. Your contract needs to be enforced by the "Union police". We want contract language so you can see Union representatives more often and so bosses are not tempted to violate your rights.

Finally, your Union bargaining committee has insisted that the company withdraw its take away and concessionary proposals. Right now they continue to insist that rooms be vacated after 7 days. They also continue to insist that your room rates go up. They also continue to insist that on very little notice they can completely rewrite your scheduling system.

WHATS NEXT?

Your Union bargaining committee and representatives are conducting a final review and scrutiny of all issues. We will be meeting with Union lawyers to prepare an application for mediation.

Mediation is a process regulated by an Alberta Law called the Labour Relations code. Under the law, it **must** take place before the Union can even really think about taking a strike vote. It is also mandatory before a company can consider a lockout.

Experts differ in their opinions about the value of mediation. A few mediators can bring parties together. Some are completely ineffective. Many Union leaders believe the process is frustrated and unduly delayed by mediation.

We believe that moving this process to mediation will, if nothing else, do one thing for sure. **It will be a major first step in showing PTI that you are serious and that you mean business!!**

Mediation, unfortunately, under our legal system will not happen soon and will not evolve quickly.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE LONG TERM? **WILL THERE BE A STRIKE?**

Bargaining is a process. We can tell you about the process, but no one can predict the exact result.

While the overwhelming majority of Union agreements are resolved without a dispute, a strike or a lockout is a real possibility.

The company has said that they will not give up their right to lock you out. A strike vote may be necessary as an act of self defense.

A strike vote may also be necessary later on to send the company a message. Union solidarity at the lodges is strong right now. Employees understand that **show of strength might be necessary to wake up PTI!**

Strike votes are supervised by the Labour Board and are secret ballot votes. They do not necessarily lead to an actual strike. They are intended to get the company to negotiate.

HOW WOULD A STRIKE BE CONDUCTED?

In the event of a strike or lockout, a plan will be effected to impact on PTI's pocketbook. It would likely have an enormous impact on the entire oil patch. Your power is very significant.

No one wants a strike. We want a deal. But as a contingency, we have set up a strike preparation committee. **PLEASE IMMEDIATELY CONTACT YOUR UNION REPRESENTATIVE LORRAINE PILOTTE AT 1 800 252-7975 IF YOU WISH TO SIT ON THIS COMMITTEE.**

SHOULDN'T WE JUST GET THIS OVER WITH?

Do you sign on the first mortgage deal that a bank shows you? Do you pay sticker price for the car on the lot? Are you a "yes" person no matter what?

Union negotiators are patient. It is our job to push, convince, argue, and grind. Alberta Labour Law is bad. It makes this process slow and difficult.

So what? Let's make sure we get the best deal we can before any possible strike. We'll decide then whether to strike or settle!

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Be strong. Inform yourself. Save your money. Support your bargaining committee. Tell your boss you demand a fair settlement or you will strike. The best way to prevent a strike is to threaten one.

IS THERE ROOM FOR OPTIMISM?

Yes! We always bargain with optimism. Indeed the company has made it clear that their offer is not their final offer.

We are committed to doing everything we can to get the best possible deal without a strike.

Sincerely,

Your Union Negotiating Committee
Watch the Union website: www.gounion.ca