

Assurances Offered at Union Negotiations

In the shadow of a recent financial restructuring, Palace Casino Union negotiations finally recommenced in Edmonton from September 21st to 23rd.

At the Union's insistence senior company officials from Vancouver came to the bargaining table to address worker concerns in a face to face context. Darren Harding, Chief Operating Officer and John Watts, Chief Financial Officer met with Union negotiators and Employees of the Palace Casino who are on the Union's negotiating committee. The company revisited and again explained the process of the financial restructuring and its possible and actual impact on Palace Casino Employees. They reassured the Union's bargaining team that it was "business as usual" and that the company was committed to a positive future for the Palace Casino.

The attendance of these gentlemen was a positive sign. Sometimes senior executive avoid face to face communication with Employees and send messengers only to attend processes such as these.

Your Union bargaining committee utilised the opportunity to focus on working conditions and wages and benefits at the Palace Casino. Strong arguments were made that casino workers are underpaid and these senior executives were reminded of the critical role that Employees play in ensuring the success of the enterprise.

Union negotiators argued that there can be no excuse for low wages at the Palace and that Palace management could not blame the Alberta government for not chipping in their fair share for worker wages. In fact, the Union negotiators asserted that they did not care who paid the bill for wages as long as they were fair and that they would be happy to meet with the government with Palace Casino management to make this argument.

Bargaining was slow to get going after the long break caused by Palace officials turning their attention to the financial restructuring but it did develop some rhythm this week. Important issues regarding Employees who move in and out of managerial positions were discussed, negotiated and resolved.

Some Employees continue to ask bargaining committee members what is taking so long. Generally speaking, bargaining is never a rapid process. Palace Casino Employees asked their Union to canvass and fight for over 50 proposals. Mutually acceptable dates have to be agreed upon and it can take a day or more to resolve just one proposal. In addition, delays that have arisen out of the company's restructuring have been significant. Most importantly, bargaining moves slowly because you have asked your Union not to be "soft" or "easy". Indeed it would be very easy to get a quick Agreement. We could simply agree to company concessions and settle for whatever they offer.

As you know, you have a fighting Union. We will argue, consider, assert, talk, yell, coax, cajole and do anything else that it might take including pushing, grinding and utilising all the patience in the world in order to get the best deal possible. As you know, we have even used the strike weapon to achieve a fair Collective Agreement.

Bargaining continues during the week of October 4th.

We hope to schedule a special Union meeting with you sometime soon to address any further concerns that you might have and any issues relating to bargaining that might be on your mind.

Your Union bargaining committee