

USW/City of Kimberley Negotiations USW 1-405

Mediation fails; labour dispute imminent

Employer doesn't change position; concessions still on table

Following two days of mediation with the Director of the Mediation Division of the BC Labour Relations Board, Grant McArthur, the two parties have failed to come to a collective agreement.

It looks now that a labour dispute between the two parties is now an eventuality.

"It's extremely disappointing," offered Jeff Bromley, lead negotiator for the United Steelworkers Local 1-405 that represents the unionized workforce at the City of Kimberley. "Our Bargaining Committee was cautiously optimistic that mediation would be able to remove the obstacles. That didn't happen."

Standing in the way of a new collective agreement were the concessions placed on the bargaining table by the employer in the form of new hours of work language; training language for the operations yard; losing earned vacation and the elimination of the job evaluation system.

"Those are the four biggest issues but it seems that the job evaluation system is the biggest hurdle. Late last year the employer lost the software that the system uses along with wiping clean the laptop computer that enables the system," he added. "We've put the wheels in place to fix those issues but it will take some time. The employer isn't interested in that and wants to impose its own wage grid that we can't agree to."

A strike vote of **99%** was returned by the members in late June in advance of the mediation process.

"The bargaining committee is wrestling with the disappointment and what the next steps are," said Bromley. "As most everyone in Kimberley, and in fact the region, this weekend is the biggest festival of the year. Julyfest means a lot to a lot of people in this community. Picket lines would disrupt that festival. As a result, the bargaining committee has decided to look at some other options prior to issuing 72-hour strike notice."

"It doesn't mean it isn't going to happen, it's just not going to happen just yet.

If you would like more information via e-mail, please send a quick message to Jeff Bromley at jbromley@steelworkers1-405.ca