



For immediate release

Thursday, April 6, 2006

## **Ekati Mine: Another Reason Workers Demand Anti-Scab Legislation**

OTTAWA – Some four hundred workers at the Ekati mine in the Northwest Territories are the latest to suffer the lack of anti-scab legislation to protect the rights of those whose employment is regulated by the Canada Labour Code. Their employer, BHP Billiton, owner of the diamond mine 300 km northeast of Yellowknife, stubbornly refuses to bargain in good faith a first collective agreement with its 400 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

“The absence of anti-scab legislation makes it too easy for certain types of employers to try to evade their duty to bargain in good faith, regardless of the consequences for workers and community,” explains Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress. “Given the painful memories of the Giant mine conflict which still haunts the northern communities, one has to denounce the fact that BHP Billiton sent a letter to its employees stating its intention to continue the operations at the Ekati mine in the event of a strike.”

“With anti-scab legislation in place, they would not have dared such intimidation against workers who choose to exercise their democratic and legal right to form a union and bargain collectively.”

The workers and their union had set a strike deadline because after 14 months of negotiations the company has yet to make an offer that is acceptable. The issues are wages, job security, seniority and vacation.

“BHP Billiton is enormously profitable with worldwide profits of \$7.5 billion last year,” says Nycole Turmel, PSAC National President. “We expect BHP Billiton to put a reasonable wage increase and settlement offer on the table so our members don’t have to walk off the job to get the respect they deserve.”

The Ekati mine produces between 3 to 5 million carats of diamonds annually – a production value of 6 per cent of the world’s diamond supply.

Concludes Georgetti: “Anti-scab laws have been in force for three decades in Quebec and over a dozen years in British Columbia. Not only have they resulted in more tranquil labour relations, they’ve brought with them a significant drop in the statistics for days of work lost due to lockout or strike. Using scabs often prolongs disputes and has provided the flashpoint for violence and injury on picket lines.”

The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 3 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 135 district labour councils. Web site: [www.canadianlabour.ca](http://www.canadianlabour.ca)

Contacts: (Canadian Labour Congress) Jean Wolff, 613-526-7431 and  
613-878-6040  
(Public Service Alliance of Canada) Denis Boivin 613-560-4280  
[communications@clc-ctc.ca](mailto:communications@clc-ctc.ca)