



Media Release

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Lockout Forces Watson Lake Workers to take Strike Action Safety of members not guaranteed without collective agreement

The Town of Watson Lake locked out its 22 unionized workers on Monday, March 27 from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

This morning, citizens of Watson Lake were denied the full range of services they depend upon when municipal employees were told not to show up for work.

Now that a lockout has been declared, the town can arbitrarily choose to impose conditions it was unsuccessful in negotiating at the bargaining table. This means the terms and conditions of the employees' existing collective agreement are no longer in effect and workers have been stripped of the full protection of a contract.

The workers at the Town of Watson Lake have no choice but to commence a General Strike at 1 p.m. March 27. "With the collective agreement no longer in place, it is no longer safe for our members to return to work" says Jack Bourassa, PSAC North Regional Executive Vice President.

Over the past year or so, the union has done everything possible to avoid a strike and work out a fair and reasonable contract with the Town of Watson Lake. When talks first broke down, the Union applied for mediation to resolve differences. PSAC subsequently applied for conciliation and continued to bargain until the two sides had reached agreement on all but one outstanding item.

To resolve the outstanding disagreement, workers offered to accept binding arbitration. This means letting an independent and unbiased arbitrator review the information and make a final decision for both the Union and the employer. The Town of Watson Lake flatly refused the suggested solution.

"It's disappointing that the employer's response to our offer of binding arbitration was to lock out the workers" says Steve Geick, President of the Yukon Employees' Union. The employer's lockout at this juncture eliminates months of hard work at the bargaining table. Nonetheless, the Union and its workers remain open and willing to return to the bargaining table.

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