



ST. JOHN'S
International Airport Authority

For Immediate Release

News Release

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Airport Authority Claims PSAC is Intent on a Long Strike

PSAC's actions indicate it is more interested in extending the strike at the St. John's International Airport than reaching a settlement

ST. JOHN'S, NL - Monday, October 1, 2012 – Employees of the St. John's International Airport Authority have been on strike for the past 3 weeks and, since that time, the Authority has observed PSAC putting most of its efforts into maintaining its strike position rather than towards reaching a negotiated settlement.

“We have seen parades through the terminal building and a storming of the Authority's offices, heard reckless statements from union spokespersons about having a long strike, and have been informed that PSAC is paying striking employees a substantial strike pay to keep them on the picket lines. This conduct, coupled with the union's lack of flexibility on its unrealistic demands and its refusal to engage in negotiating the Authority's business proposals, clearly indicates a desire to prolong the strike rather than to seek a settlement,” said Keith Collins, President and CEO of St. John's International Airport Authority.

The Authority is concerned that PSAC is targeting St. John's International Airport for another long strike, similar to the one PSAC has had ongoing at Fredericton airport since February of this year. PSAC is the largest public sector union in Canada with over 180,000 members and has the financial resources to sustain a lengthy strike.

Of particular concern to the Authority are the actions by PSAC to undermine and frustrate the essential services order of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Under the union's direction, employees have been refusing to comply with their obligations under the Maintenance of Activities Agreement and are interfering with the Authority's responsibility to ensure that the safety and security of the public is maintained. As a result, the Authority is asking the Canada Industrial Relations Board for an order to direct PSAC to comply with its obligations to perform essential services.

"It is completely irresponsible for the union to direct its members who are tasked with providing essential services during this strike to be non-compliant with the Maintenance of Activities Agreement. Safety is our number one priority and it cannot be compromised," added Mr. Collins. There have been informal discussions between the parties, as well as with the federally appointed Mediator. Despite the Authority indicating its flexibility on all issues, PSAC continues to refuse to lower its demands or to negotiate on the business issues presented by the Authority. After three weeks of being on strike, there has been no effort by the union to reach a settlement. Approximated 85 Authority employees are impacted by this strike and include firefighters, airfield maintenance and heavy equipment operators (snow and ice control), heavy equipment mechanics, electricians, building maintenance staff and administrative personnel. These employees are represented by PSAC Local 90916.

The employees have not had a wage increase since the collective agreement expired in 2009 because the union requested that a joint Job Evaluation Plan be completed prior to starting negotiations on a new collective agreement. The Authority agreed to this request. Both parties completed the Plan and commenced bargaining in June 2011. Negotiations ceased and the employees went on strike on Tuesday, September 11, 2012.

St. John's International Airport Authority is a private, not-for-profit organization with the mandate to provide the region with a safe, cost-efficient transportation facility that is a catalyst for economic growth. Under the provisions of a long-term Ground Lease with the Federal Government of Canada, the Airport Authority is responsible for the airport's operations on behalf of the community it serves.