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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No end in sight for Boilermakers locked out at CESSCO

Locked out workers prepare for cold, long haul on the picket line to preserve union

Edmonton, Alberta, (Dec. 8, 2020) – As Christmas approaches, Boilermakers locked out of their jobs since June 28 at CESSCO Fabrication and Engineering Ltd, aren't optimistic about going back to work any time soon. After nearly six months CESSCO still refuses to bring back the workers from Local 146 or even return to negotiations. The workers plan to continue to hold their place on the picket line through the cold of winter and beyond, if needed.

"I'd like to have optimism—I really would," said locked-out Boilermaker Jeff Burns. "But I think that ship's sailed. I believe it was CESSCO's intention from the beginning to break our union."

Workers who were involved in the bargaining agree it was clear the company's aim was—and continues to be—to break the union. The union had been in contract negotiations with CESSCO for over two and a half years—with no wage or benefit increases in over five years—when CESSCO served up "last, best and final" contract demands that would have reduced wages and pension contributions and gutted critical seniority language. Workers had hoped to continue bargaining until a satisfactory compromise could be reached, but CESSCO locked them out instead.

Boilermakers said their treatment throughout the negotiation process has been unusual compared their past experiences under different management.

"In the past, we had continuity in our collective bargaining," Burns explained. "No matter what the economy looked like and even if it meant no increases in pay or benefits, previous management always kept things moving forward."

Of note, Dave Hummel became CESSCO CEO in 2018, and Amanda Hawkins, CEO of CESSCO's parent company, Ontario-headquartered Canerector Inc, assumed the helm from her father in 2014. Hawkins has a history of unfair worker practice, as she was ordered by court in 2019 to pay a hefty fine and damages for firing an employee at an affiliated company based on false claims of just cause.

Boilermakers International Vice President for Canada, Arnie Stadnick, who is also a member of Local 146 and is an Edmonton resident, has sent letters to Hawkins in September and November requesting a meeting to discuss the situation at CESSCO. Stadnick has not received a reply to those requests.

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“We’re not just fighting for our locked-out Boilermakers,” said Hugh MacDonald, Business Manager/Secretary Treasurer of Local 146. “If we, the Boilermakers union, let this go, it opens the door for Canerector to pull this with all their nearly 60 affiliated companies throughout Canada, and it paves the way for other unrelated companies to do so, putting more of Alberta’s unions and workers at risk.”

The union has set up a picket line in front of the plant at 7310 99th Street, where members of the community, along with Local 146 families, have joined and participated daily from 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. since the lockout began. A website has been set up at www.EndOurLockout.org for updates, general information and information on how to support the locked out workers.

Boilermakers have had a union presence at CESSCO for more than seven decades. Local 146 was established at the same time the union formed at CESSCO.

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Established in 1880, the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers & Helpers is a diverse union representing workers throughout the United States and Canada who are employed in industrial construction, maintenance and repair; ship building; manufacturing; railroads; cement; mining and related industries. More information can be found at www.boilermakers.org.

Boilermakers Local 146 represents more than 3,500 workers in heavy construction, manufacturing, mills and other industries. More information can be found at <https://boilermakers.ca/>.