



January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **STRATHCONA GARDENS MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **SRD REFUSES MEDIATION BY RESPONDING WITH UNWORKABLE CONDITIONS**

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the USW Local 1-1937 Spokesperson Shelley Siemens wrote again to the Strathcona Regional District. This time it was to invite them to mediation.

In the letter, Siemens wrote *“I feel it is prudent as spokespersons, to bring the parties together in order to reach a mutually acceptable renewal of the Collective Agreement. On December 15<sup>th</sup> you wrote to the BC Minister of Labour. In the Minister’s response letter, he noted that the Parties can continue to access the Mediation services of the LRB as we see fit. I write to you today to ask, will the Strathcona Gardens Bargaining Committee participate in accessing mediation services, as the Minister has suggested, in order to try and resolve negotiations?”*

The SRD’s spokesperson responded to the Union with more of the same gamesmanship they have employed, by refusing the Union’s offer of mediation, as suggested by the BC Labour Minister. Instead, they added conditions to return to mediation. They offered to return to mediation only if the Union ended the strike and would agree to a binding arbitration process if mediation failed.

The SRD knows full well that the Union will not accept binding arbitration as they continue to stall a return to the bargaining table with the assist of a mediator. The SRD has nothing to lose in returning to mediation that is not binding, yet their continued addition of unworkable conditions, including a binding process and now the additional prerequisite of the Union ending its strike, are unworkable.

The SRD is not considering the hardship it is putting on the residents of Campbell River in their decisions as they continue to refuse a simple request to engage a mediator to restart talks. With nothing to lose and only a collective agreement to gain it strains reason to understand such a problematic response from SRD bargaining representatives.

In response to the SRD’s continued refusal, USW Local Union representative Shelley Siemens stated, *“The SRD negotiator’s conditions laden response continues to keep the parties apart which is the opposite of what is needed to reach an agreement to resolve the strike. The SRD needs to simply return to mediation as we continue to advocate. We feel there would be great value in resuming mediation, but instead, they continue to play games that affect a great many citizens of Campbell River.”*

The Union is well aware that the SRD’s offer to mediate includes utilizing respected mediator Vince Ready, but it is only a lure to force a binding process the Union has already rejected. Siemens also stated, *“We know that the SRD would refuse to move in mediation and would just push the negotiations into their originally proposed binding process; knowing full well they have room to move in order to get to a settlement.”*

The type of behavior displayed by the bargaining representatives of the SRD is just another reason the USW does not trust the SRD negotiators and that lack of trust and game playing will only lead to prolonging the strike and inconveniencing the needs of Campbell River citizens in a truly unwarranted and unnecessary way.

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