

Baffinland Workers Receive Termination Letters

Following is a press release issued by Local 793, regarding Baffinland workers receiving termination letters.

HUNDREDS OF SKILLED UNIONIZED WORKERS RECEIVE TERMINATION LETTERS DUE TO ONGOING REGULATORY DELAYS OVER INCREASE IN PRODUCTION AT BAFFINLAND'S MARY RIVER MINE

OAKVILLE - The International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793 ("Local 793") urges the Nunavut Impact Review Board ("NIRB") and the federal Minister of Northern Affairs to act immediately to approve Baffinland's request to allow the company to increase production to 6 million tonnes at the Mary River Mine through to the end of 2022. This urgent action is needed to ensure that the jobs of hundreds of skilled unionized workers, many of whom are residents of Nunavut, are protected.

On July 31, 2022, Baffinland took the drastic step of issuing hundreds of termination notices to employees. In an update notice to employees Brian Penney, CEO stated: "For a number of reasons, the regulatory process is moving more slowly than is necessary to meet Baffinland's operational requirements. As a result, Baffinland must continue to take preparatory steps to rescale its operation in the event that it is not successful in renewing its permit. Therefore, it is with a heavy heart that I am writing to inform you that in the coming hours, impacted employees will be receiving termination notices. These terminations are **NOT** immediate and will only take effect on two dates: September 25th and October 11th, 2022."

Local 793 represents workers in a wide variety of occupational categories in the construction, industrial and mining sectors. At the Mary River Mine this includes over 1,000 heavy machinery operators, haul truck drivers, millwrights, electricians, welders, mechanics, crane operators, labourers, warehouse technicians and other occupations. In total, Baffinland employs over 2,500 employees and contractor workers.

The Mary River Mine has long provided well-paying jobs for highly trained and skilled Canadian workers from across the country, including hundreds of workers from Nunavut who continue to be prioritized for training opportunities. The mine provides royalties and community benefits that directly benefit local Inuit communities. We understand that the mine represents nearly 23% of the GDP for Nunavut and is a vital component for Nunavut's future economic growth. Local 793's primary responsibility remains protecting the jobs and welfare of our members.

"We feel both anger and disappointment that our members are being let go, in our view unnecessarily, because of constant delays at the NIRB in making timely decisions, and also at the federal government with more delays on making decisions based on what we already know that it will cost our members their livelihood," said Mike Gallagher, Local 793 Business Manager.

"The whole regulatory process is unfair to the workers as their wishes don't seem to be important to anyone," said Gallagher. "The very fact that termination notices have now been sent has had an immediate and devastating impact on employees at the mine, including many Inuit, and their ability to provide for themselves, their families and their communities."

Losing skilled jobs when the cost of living has skyrocketed right across the country makes receiving termination notices even harder to cope with. "Recovery from the pandemic requires maintaining and more importantly growing quality jobs, not losing them, especially in the impacted communities closest to the mine," said Gallagher.

For the sake of the hundreds of skilled employees whose livelihoods depend on working at quality jobs at Baffinland's mine, Local 793 urges the NIRB and federal government to do the right thing and approve Baffinland's request to increase production to 6 million tonnes. Local 793 members need certainty of their continued and future employment at the mine.

Local 793 of the International Union of Operating Engineers represents more than 17,900 highly skilled crane and heavy equipment operators across Ontario. The union has a head office, banquet hall and training campus in Oakville, and another training campus in Morrisburg.

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