

CHIEF SHOP STEWARD'S REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2015

While I was processing the results from our survey in May, it struck me that a lot of basic information about our union exists, yet is not so widely known among our members. Also, that if you have taken the time to ask a question, you deserve an answer. Now that I have an even better understanding of "how things work behind the scenes," I will do my best to set out below some information in layman's terms, for wider understanding. Also, please see my article, "*In Your Words*," in the Fall 2015 edition of *The Pressure Point*.

“How do you get something onto a meeting agenda?”

If you have something you would like to add to the agenda in advance of a meeting, send an email to cupe2081@camosun.bc.ca, or send a written note to our office. Also, you can add something at a meeting, although quorum and notice periods may apply, depending on the subject matter of the addition. Please contact us, if you need assistance.

“What does my attendance at meetings achieve?”

Your Union is a democratic entity. We have certain business we are required to conduct, which often requires quorum. Your attendance enables us to do our business. It follows that the more voices, the better. Healthy discussions promote informed voting decisions. Your perspective on a particular issue may be the very one others need to hear. Your Executive Board is a group of people working hard to represent you. We need to have your input. We need to have your vote. We need to have your support. It is the best way for your Union to be what you want it to be.

“If there is food, I guess I would come [to meetings].”

Is food the factor, which determines your attendance at meetings? Traditionally, food has been provided for evening meetings, yet food has not been provided for recent lunchtime workshops and meetings. Let us know if this factor is important to you. It may be that other members share your opinion, so we could consider adding a food factor to our midday events.

“Why does CUPE waste money on charitable donations?”

Simply put, our Union has a collective social conscience, which is a common tenet of a labour organization. As such, our membership has seen fit to financially support certain causes within our community. These charitable donations of money, among other useful resources like time, labour, and skills, are used to help others in their time of need. Donating money to a charity is one of the most human things we can do.

“Why do the same people go on course after course?”

Generally, at any given time, we have a core group of participating members in Executive positions, Committee positions, and other volunteer positions. Often a member has more than one position. Occasionally, a current participant exits the core group. Occasionally, a new participant enters the core group. A limited number of participants means we do see the same people at meeting after meeting, event after event, and, yes, course after course. Our preference is for all of our members to participate, to access the educational opportunities being offered. and to become more knowledgeable. Learning is lifelong!

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“Why doesn't CUPE make a fuss about all the new exempt hires?”

We do! We continuously monitor information around the College, including CamNews, job postings, even rumours. Any possible concerns are raised with the Employer for resolution. We can always "ask the question," and hope for a satisfactory answer. If not, we conduct further investigations, until resolution is attained.

“Why does CUPE staff development cover only 50% of conference costs?”

The fundamental purpose of the CUPE Staff Development Fund is to assist members in the pursuit of additional educational and professional development goals. The Labour Management Cooperation Committee (LMCC) establishes the guidelines for the administration of the Fund. Four management representatives and four Union representatives sit at the LMCC table. CUPE SD activities are distinctly categorized, that is, course/project/workshop (learning outcomes), and conventions/conferences, and recreation (leisure). Maximizing the greatest amount of money for the greatest number of members is the objective. Resources are finite. Management is responsible for funding certain activities, which can include conferences and conventions. Funding 50% of conference costs provides the opportunity to meet the purpose of the fund, while partially assisting members pursue their goals.

“Why are meetings formal and regimented?”

The CUPE National Constitution requires our meetings be conducted per proper parliamentary procedure. Our Bylaws impose certain requirements, too. Business can be formal and regimented by the very nature of what it is and what we must do.

Your survey feedback provided some other interesting ideas for consideration! For example:

- online discussion board, online voting, online forms, online meetings
- timed agenda items
- adjustable desks (sit-stand desks)
- a meeting to throw out ideas and understand limitations [of bargaining?]
- negotiate paid leave for CUPE staff development
- negotiate paid union leave for meetings during work hours
- a free or nearly free bus pass, instead of free parking

With unity,
Dawn Svendsen
Chief Shop Steward