

EXECUTIVE REPORT – CHIEF SHOP STEWARD/OFFICE COORDINATOR

November 22, 2018

Greetings,

It is with mixed feelings I write this final report as our Local's Chief Shop Steward and Office Coordinator. I have no hesitation in recommending my extremely capable replacement, Erynne Grant, as she has been appointed to act in my stead, until the Annual General Meeting in late March 2019 at the end of my elected term. While I am sorely tempted to complete my second term, I am more strongly tempted to access my retirement at the first opportunity for an unreduced pension. My last day at the College will be Tuesday, December 4, 2018, the month in which I turn 60 years old. Fitting, in my childlike opinion, that my first day to enjoy unfettered freedom from work since age 13 would have been Walt Disney's 117th birthday! Now, if only all of my past work had been pensionable time!

Pension. That seems a good work item about which to share some advice. Check your MPP annual statement every year. Buy back any unpaid leave. Understand your pension - think about taking a course - then, share your knowledge. Experts within our ranks would be a valuable resource for our membership, in addition to helping themselves. Having said that, the College has knowledgeable, skilled, helpful employees working in Payroll and Benefits. If you have questions, do ask for answers. The earlier, the better. The MPP is a defined benefit plan. During bargaining, in addition to protecting this plan, we need better inclusivity for precarious workers.

What is a precarious worker? They are the employees who desire the regular, full-time work, which so many employees enjoy at Camosun and elsewhere in the workforce. Precarious workers can be casual, term, and/or multi-job employees. It has been many years since regular, full-time employment was enjoyed by all of the people in our communities, who have desired such work. Precarious work has hit Camosun hard. CUPE is one employee group at the College, the others being BCGEU, CCFA, and Exempt. While CUPE numbers approach 700, almost half are not regular full-time employees. Casual hours average approximately 3,000 hours per month. At 35 hours per week for 4 weeks, that is the equivalent of almost 22 full time jobs! You are the eyes and ears in the workplace. Let's support our precarious workers and work hard to protect and better their work situation!

You are your Union. It took me quite some time to realize the true meaning of that statement. While it does include attending general meetings, it was only when I was immersed in the regular needs of our Local, when true meaning dawned. Currently, those needs are being met by a handful of obliging volunteers. Generally, it is thankless work. Are you one of those members that sits back and thinks, so what, let somebody else do it, not my concern. Not true! Is your mindset critical of how something was done, or how something wasn't done? Worse still, do you voice your criticism in the workplace, or at meetings, and without offering solutions, stepping forward, or seeking true understanding? What if that handful of members had the same mindset and did not volunteer. Recognition of the resulting deficit would be near immediate. And taken advantage of. Remember, it is only you, who has something to lose.

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Take this report. Yet again, I am writing one on my personal time. The workload to meet the needs of almost 700 members is enormous. In no way is this statement a complaint. It is stated to ensure the membership is aware that your Executive members, your Trustees, and your Shop Stewards, volunteer considerable amounts of personal time to "keep things going." Imagine if everyone lent a hand, every area had at least one steward, every member understood the basics of the Collective Agreement. New ideas, new initiatives, new friendships! Think about helping out.

What might be the benefits for knowing your Collective Agreement? You would know it is the College's responsibility to purchase special equipment, clothing, and/or footwear, which are required in the workplace. You would know that you may carry forward vacation days at the end of the calendar year. You would know the different processes for performing work duties, which are not in your job description, by way of a stipend or job evaluation. You would know that working overtime is your choice in almost all circumstances. Also, it is your choice, whether the overtime is paid out or banked (and when you choose to use that banked time). You would know the variety of leaves for which you may apply and expect reasonable consideration and approval (in a timely manner). My driving belief is that members should enjoy the provisions within our Collective Agreement. It is your contract of employment with the College. Seek no less. Or more.

Often, I hear members state Camosun is a wonderful place to work. If you are one of those members, great. It may be that you have an X Manager, rather than Y. Given my experience over the last four plus years, however, I know the majority fall into the X category. More often than often, I hear members continually and repeatedly state how they are here for the students. Great. I am, too. Well meaning members work through their coffee and lunch breaks, come in early, stay late, access email before and after work, and on weekends. All on their own time and dime. Don't work for free. To do so is a disservice to everyone it affects, including, mostly, yourself. Chronic understaffing and excessive workloads are rampant throughout the College. When you work for free, you support the continuation of understaffing and create unrealistic expectations of yourself and anyone else who may follow. Meanwhile, the excessive workload continues to exist! It will always be there. The other employee groups enjoy generous vacation grants, exceedingly generous scheduled development provisions, and flexible work shifts. Their life insurance is three times their annual salaries. The lowest of those salaries is approximately our highest pay grade annual salary - doubled. Our life insurance is \$25,000, about half of that highest pay grade annual salary. Now, do you think it makes sense to put yourself into an early grave by working all that extra free time? Please correctly understand what I am saying here. Be the best you can be, while you are at work. Be respectful, professional, cordial, and civil at all times. Take your breaks. Arrive and leave work on time. Be proud of the work you do. Balance your work life with all the other things you are. Life is far too short for a job to be anything more than a job.

In closing,
With unity,
Dawn Svendsen

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