

LEAD SHOP STEWARD/LABOUR RELATIONS OFFICER REPORT

March 17, 2021

Greetings!

There is no question the last two years of my first term was a roller coaster of a ride! Now we are in 2021 and the spring is springing and the light at the end of the Pandemic tunnel is starting to appear. When I started writing this report, I struggled wondering how I would fit two years of labour relations into a report so it's not so long you'd stop reading! So, I will try and keep it brief but also humorous to keep you engaged.

Like every good story, there is a beginning, a middle and an end...

2019 was all about bargaining. Bargaining prep, organizing for bargaining, meeting about bargaining, talking bargaining, drafting all things bargaining and then getting bargaining ready... oh and the daily business of the local, which is no small undertaking during non-pandemic times. Also, I found time to do some re-organizing of the union office, surveyed the enormous amount of paper documents needing to be digitized, 40 years' worth in fact, all while advocating for members on the daily, engaging in committee meetings weekly, etc. Who knew things could get busier and then we hit 2020...(insert *Twilight Zone* music here)...

COVID impacted our daily lives and our working community in countless ways. Starting March 2020, Keith and I engaged in discussions with the College about covid challenges and opportunities, worked to hollow out our campuses to support worker safety, all while trying to conclude bargaining for our new Collective Agreement...yes, the new CA is supposed to be coming, soon, I hope, or so I've been told, but I digress...

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Our sector made a valiant yet failed attempt to negotiate a Remote Work document with the *Public Sector Employers Association* at the start of 'lock down'. Not sure why, but they didn't like what the Unions were proposing, which was language that gave all of us remote work during covid, because why put something in writing if they don't have too, right? (Yes, I am being very sarcastic and yes, it was very frustrating and no, I do not know what they were thinking or why they wouldn't sign...)

So, without a guiding document for us, or other unions with no pandemic language, of which there are legions without...I accepted weekly covid meetings to accomplish the insurmountable. I am proud to say you've all accomplished the insurmountable! Camosun College delivered a full academic calendar of courses and provided support services during a Pandemic. Take that in everyone. It is a major accomplishment, and you all deserve huge credit.

Those weekly covid meetings are now on a bi-weekly schedule and are comprised of all 3 bargaining unit Presidents, plus me, college VP's and Sherri Bell as the chair. Some of these conversations have proven beneficial but some have also proven frustrating. We keep pushing College leadership for transparent and timely information and we remain committed to bringing forward your concerns and strive to provide answers. We are a large school, with two campuses now working remotely: reading information is necessary to stay informed, so please take the time to read communications.

Unfortunately, during 2020 we also experienced layoffs in our cupe community. While we have strong collective agreement language, the emotional impact of layoffs on those affected is very real. The College decision to close departments and reduce workers created ripple affects of worry and fear, at a time when we were already reeling from covid lockdown. Please know, CUPE 2081 does not lay members off. This is the sole right of the College/Employer. Our role is to ensure the application and enforcement of member rights, as outlined in the collective agreement.

By summer 2020, we completed the bargaining ratification process, implementation of retro-pay and conducted a member at large election: all remotely! This created a significant increased workload for me, but we now have a proven effective process for the future. Digital membership meetings transitioned us into the digital world. I hope this platform is accessible for you and you are feeling more comfortable meeting via ZOOM. I am personally excited about the utilization of technology and hope we see increased member participation at meetings as a result. Decisions are made by those who participate, and I strongly

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believe we make the best decisions with high participation rates. While the last two years have been some of the most challenging in my career, they have also been a source of pride: pride in our community, in all we've accomplished and in the strength of our Union. I am grateful for your many kind emails. I remain humbled by your supportive words and generosity of spirit.

Many work groups have done extremely well during covid and transitioned to remote work successfully, and many would like to see remote work continue. However, there were and are many issues that cropped up for those who remained on campus. Not everyone is working remotely.

We are a diverse community, and it is important for your union leadership to represent the interests of the whole, in a way that promotes equality, inclusion and access for all. This is no small feat in a local our size.

My last CUPE ALL email was in response to the latest Government announcement. We have been directed by Government to return to face-to-face delivery for the post secondary sector in Fall 2021. I respect I was the bearer of unwelcome news for some, but my responsibility and my commitment to you means, I will always give you the unvarnished truth: good or bad. My goal is to keep members informed. Too strive for fairness and opportunity for all, knowing part of my role is to mitigate potential negative impacts, as much as is reasonably possible. I'm basically the juggler at the fair, walking the tight rope, with fire wands, balancing on a semi-deflated ball, precariously perched just out of reach of potential disaster. You know, union labour relations on the daily during a Pandemic. So, if you've made it this far...I tried to keep it short, but two years is more than a page as it would turn out.

In conclusion, I am so proud of how we have rallied as a community, in the face of adversity, with unparalleled challenges and with some distance yet to go. I remain committed to being a voice for those too afraid to speak up. I remain committed to fighting for those too scared to fight, and I thank each and everyone of you for all your hard work, dedication, and support of each other. Together, we are getting through this and I look forward to the day we can safely meet again! I feel extremely honoured to serve this community, and if re-elected, it will be my honour to serve for another two-year term.

In Solidarity and with Warmest Regards,

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