

CUPE 2950 LOCAL NEWS

JUNE 2011

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Nancy Forhan, President

Where is our summer? After a long and challenging winter we're all ready for the sunshine. Yet, here we are – cheering on the Canucks in the June rain!

In anticipation of the “lazy hazy” days of summer... your bargaining committee has taken a break from meeting with the employer. As you heard in our last bargaining update, we informed the University we were taking a break until the fall.

We felt we had canvassed all the tabled issues and signed off on all agreed articles and letters.

This break not only gives the committee the needed time for vacations and some summer down time but also gives us the time to regroup. Where do we go from here? What are our strategies?

We see the reality of our stagnant wages every day. When we buy groceries – or pay the rent – or fill up the car, it's painfully obvious that support staff at UBC has been losing ground for over a decade.

It's especially frustrating because the University claims to value and respect all staff (it says so right there in the Focus on People document). What's disappointing is that the value and respect doesn't seem to translate into real improvements in our working lives. I don't find anything respectful about zeros. Why is the University so resistant to giving their staff anything? Why is it so unthinkable that the University would ever once say – you work hard, we value your contribution as part of the “team”, you deserve a wage increase? Why are we the one group, year after year, that is forced to beg and still be denied the crumbs? How is that treatment expected to instil pride in our work? Respect for our employer? Dedication to the students and Faculty we support?

In just the year and a half that I've been in the union office I've seen an increase in the number of qualified, skilled staff that

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simply say, “I can not afford to work at UBC anymore.” We now have support staff actually refusing promotions because the \$68.00 per month wage increase doesn’t even come close to compensating them for the increased responsibility. We see support positions that go unposted or unfilled while the number of managers continues to balloon. The reality that more staff at UBC are forced to work second (and sometimes third) jobs to make ends meet was highlighted in our recent call for feedback to members.

As we told the University bargaining team at our last meeting, “We are not prepared to continue to subsidize the university’s operation on the backs of our members.” Zeros are unacceptable.

If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions for development.
-Kofi Annan

FINANCIAL UPDATE

By Cheryl Kinkaid, Treasurer

The last statements that I have are for February 2011. The local’s forecasted revenue is very close to the actuals while the expenses remain below the budgeted amount. Two conventions have taken place since these statements were issued. The CUPE BC convention was in April and we sent our full delegation of 8. The CLC convention took place in the second week of May and the President and one other member attended. Since both of the conventions were in Vancouver, there were minimal travel costs involved in sending the delegates.

The trustees have been in the office conducting their audit of the local’s records on your behalf. There will be a report in the future on their findings. The audited Financial Statements for 2010 from our auditors BDO Dunwoody should also be available shortly.

While I was attending the CUPE BC convention in April, I heard about an investment company that CUPE BC is now using with

labour friendly policies. The executive has asked me to contact them regarding switching our investments. I’ll report back when I have any information to pass along.

I also picked up a copy of “A Handbook for CUPE BC Members with Disabilities and their Allies” from the Workers with Disabilities table at the convention. It explains the Duty to Accommodate, the role of the union with some examples of accommodations. I’ve left a copy in the Union Office and, since the local office is not fully accessible, I’ll keep a copy in my office in Kaiser. If anyone would like to borrow or look at it but is not able to access the union office, please contact me and I can make arrangements for you to pick it up or to have it delivered to your office.



CUPE BC CONVENTION 2011

By Tahira Syed

CUPE Convention 2011; how did I end up going to that again? I definitely didn't know what to expect. I guess I thought it would be similar to our local union meetings, but on a larger scale—it really wasn't! This year's convention was held at the Hyatt downtown and was full of highly politically motivated people who are very socially conscious. There were a lot of topics covered in the 4 days but the one that caught my attention was the ten percent shift.



CUPE BC Convention Delegates: Andrew Riter, Cheryl Kinkaid, Harry Young, & Tahira Syed.

It's impossible to ignore the green revolution that is occurring all around us but sometimes it's difficult to know what is authentic and what will really make a difference. The ten percent shift campaign encourages individuals to act more socially, and environmentally responsible. This new agenda is meant to encourage citizens to shift only ten percent of their household budget towards purchasing local goods.

Our union emphasizes that this campaign will bring back a process of thinking more locally; thus supporting our very own economy. While supporting our local economy is an important issue, I feel that the conservation of our environment for both us and our future generations is as equally important. The ten percent shift will ensure that precious fossil fuels are not being wasted in the transportation of goods that we can easily make or grow in BC. Purchasing locally will allow us to steer away from mass produced products and it will reduce the excessive waste that multinational companies create. It will also considerably decrease the unnecessary amounts of packaging required to ship these products to us. When we grow or harvest natural resources in our own communities, we have a stronger connection to our lands, which makes us more accountable for what we put in them and how much we expect out of them. Buying locally has countless environmental advantages that we should all support and encourage.

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So how do we make the shift? First, we need to start thinking locally. When buying groceries, why not opt for the local farmers market instead of the supermarket? There are farmers markets all over our great city and they are probably a lot closer to you than you thought. Our farmers markets sell fresh produce, wild seafood, dairy, cheese, meat, and poultry. And everything is grown or harvested in BC. In addition to food, you can also find crafts, such as textiles, woodwork and much more.

Many of us forget that Vancouver is home to some of the best fashion designers. Just a quick stroll through Gastown will reveal all the talent this city is hiding. You can also try Portobello West, a monthly market whose mission is to "facilitate artists and assist them in developing a successful and sustainable business". With all the unique abundance of local options available to us, there should be fewer reasons to go to the mall where most of your clothes were made in the sweatshops of our developing nations.

In conclusion my impression was that the conference was a worthwhile event with many interesting topics and presentations. I felt satisfied having walked away with some insight into very valuable ideas, particularly the ten percent shift campaign. Not only will this program influence my personal day to day life, but this well presented topic, in my eyes, has become a worthwhile program that we can all get behind. The benefits, both to local economy as well as the environment, are countless.

For more information, please visit the following websites;

www.tenpercentshift.ca/

www.eatlocal.org

www.getlocalbc.org/

www.thinklocal.ca/

www.porobellowest.com

www.vancouver.com/shopping/specialty/local_designers/

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BCFed — BC Federation of Labour
CLC — Canadian Labour Congress
CPP — Canada Pension Plan
CUPE — Canadian Union of Public Employees
GMM — General Membership Meeting
HST — Harmonized Sales Tax
JE — Job Evaluation
JSTP — Job Skills Training Program
WCB—Worker's Compensation Board



Health and Safety Committee

Lunch and Learn Session: A healthier you at work and home

Presented by: the Birdcoop Fitness Centre
Wednesday, June 22, 2011, 12:00–1:00 pm
Room 185, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre



This seminar shows you simple and fun exercises, health breaks, and nutrition tips you can use at work or at home to be a healthier you.

Registration required for these popular Birdcoop sessions!
Contact Leslie at (604) 822-1494 or office@cupe2950.ca

WORKING FOR A LIVING WAGE

By Nancy Forhan, President

At our recent General Membership Meeting, representatives from First Call, a BC Child Advocacy coalition, came and spoke on their “living wage for families” campaign.

Based on the principle that full-time work should provide families with a basic level of economic security, the living wage is the minimum a family needs to earn in order to meet its basic needs. Calculating all government transfers (i.e. child care benefit) and deductions (i.e. income taxes and employment insurance premiums), the minimum amount needed for a family of four (with two parents working full-time) in the lower mainland currently sits at \$18.81 per hour. Starting wage for CUPE 2950 support staff at UBC is \$16.16.

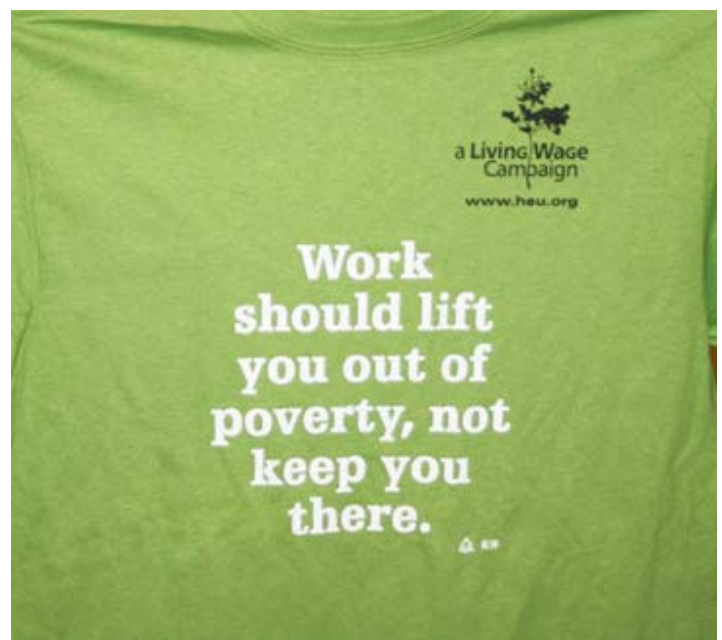
The living wage campaign is a call to private and public sector employers to sustain families – to pay wages to both direct and contract employees sufficient to provide their basic needs.

BC has the highest child poverty rate in Canada, and with over 20% of couples with children in Greater Vancouver living below the living wage level, it has serious consequences on childhood development. It’s been documented that 80% of the factors effecting childhood development improve as family income increases.

The City of New Westminster was the first municipality in BC to become a “Living Wage” employer. If you’d like more information, the full report can be found at www.policyalternatives/livingwage2011.

REMINDER

Please join us at our June 30th membership meeting where we will be having special guest speakers from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to speak on their national “Retirement Security for All” campaign. The CLC has been working hard to bring reforms to the Canada Pension Plan that will allow working Canadians to retire in dignity.



WHY FLEXTIME?

By Leslie Hodson, CUPE 2950 Administrative Assistant



Research shows that mature age job seekers, people with caring commitments and workers with disabilities are more likely to seek jobs with flexible work arrangements. Increased staff retention also reduces costs associated with employee turnover.

Studies have indicated that introducing a flexible work week has a number of advantages for employers, such as an improved ability to attract existing employees as well as people not currently in the workforce.

Employers generally want to employ the best staff they can and no employer likes to lose valuable staff. Replacing staff takes up resources in terms of time and money and there is a cost in loss of continuity and business knowledge.

In an organization without flexible work practices, the pool of talent may become smaller as potential job candidates opt out of the running, preferring to work for an employer which allows arrangements such a flexible work week.

Research has also indicated that the more experienced the staff member, the more it will cost to replace that person if they leave. As a rule of thumb, it is generally accepted that replacing an experienced employee costs around one and half times their salary. Costs are incurred through paying out a leaving staff member's entitlements, advertising a position, conducting a selection process and training the new staff member. Additional costs will be incurred through factors such as lost experience and knowledge, lack of consistent service and customer relationships and the general impact of staff turnover on the work environment.

Studies show that employers can significantly reduce their staff turnover and the costs associated with it by introducing and promoting flexible work practices.

Article 28 allows for the employee to choose their form of work week, subject to operational requirements. This is a benefit you, as a union member, fought long and hard for. It is not a "perk" UBC offered. It's the Union's position that flex time on campus

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should be the “norm” not the exception. If you are not replaced every time you are sick or take vacation - there is no operational reason for denying you flex time. In the past few years, new hires at UBC have been told that there is no flex time. Some departments are creating longer blackout periods or eliminating flex time altogether.

WHAT YOU SAID...

We recently asked members “If you did not attend the most recent General Membership can you tell us why?” Of the 128 responses correlated to date, over 35% cited unmanageable workloads as their reason for not attending union meetings on a regular basis. Over 20% cited conflicts with departmental meetings or events. Most disappointing for me personally was the fact that the majority of the 20% cited a HR wide “retreat” had been scheduled for the one of the nine days a year we hold our membership meetings. Just over 10% cited worked off site and felt they couldn’t afford the extra travel time away from the office. Another 20% were off either on vacation or personal appointments.

We’d to thank everyone that took the time to respond to our request. We will be responding to those that had specific questions concerns directly but here is a sample of the responses :

- I try to get to the meetings now and again, but they can be a bit frustrating. I don't understand how our contract negotiations haven't won us a single improvement in the last year. I get that there's a salary cap, but I think we need to be more creative in thinking about what we have asked for. Like the ability to use tuition credits for grad studies. Or an increase in JSTP funding. Or an increase in tuition credit allowances.
- I didn't attend today's meeting because I was worried my request to do so would have created problems for me with my manager. There seems to be a lot of concern around 'coverage' and I've had trouble when I've requested time off for any reason. Any requests related to contract issues seem to create a defensive reaction from management which I am then held accountable for, so I've avoided asking.
- I was on desk duty and didn't have anyone willing to change places with me.

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FOR MORE
RESPONSES, PLEASE
CHECK OUR
WEBSITE:
WWW.CUPE2950.CA

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- I figure these monthly meetings are just informational, and I can get the information either from the CUPE 2950 website or next month's newsletter. If this had been a meeting to vote on the new bargaining agreement, for example, I would have made the time.
- I work part time and leave the office every day at 11.
- I looked at the agenda and did not see anything concerning the bargaining; presently that is most important, when will we get an increase in our salary; from what I noticed in the previous emails, the government has mandated zero increase for the next two years; is the union going to accept that just like that, are we not going to do anything? Maybe if the union could come up with action plans on this, I will try to attend.
- I was in an all-day meeting and was unable to attend.
- I was planning to attend but would wish more people from my department would attend. Who would encourage other union members to attend. I will try making the next meeting.
- Although I appreciate the work of the union for the most part, I don't personally have an interest in most union affairs and usually do not attend.
- I just don't have the time, and there is not enough staff to keep up with all the work in this office.

Our monthly membership meetings shouldn't be considered an "extended lunch break" or "time off". They are university approved paid time. If you would like to attend meetings but feel you are too busy in the office, or other departmental requirements come up on short notice I would suggest you talk to your manager well in advance of the meeting.

We meet on the last Thursday of every month – except for July, August and December, when there is no meeting. That's only nine meetings per year. Mark them in your calendars now.

The University has signed off on Article 10 which outlines these meetings and your ability to attend. If you want help talking to your manager or department about attending future meetings, or you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the union office at 2x1494 or myself directly at 2x1478.

See you all on June 30th – 12 noon – in Ike Barber!

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Local 2950

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CUPE 2950 General Membership Meeting Thursday, June 30, 2011 noon—2:00 pm IBLC #182 (1961 East Mall)



- The June GMM will be held in Ike Barber #182
- Special Guest Speakers – CLC on Canada Pension Plan reform
- Please note the change in time for the meeting:
12:00-2:00 pm.
- To view the June agenda, go to:

www.cupe2950.ca/whatsnew/documents/agenda.pdf

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