



CEU "Breaking the Silence" Bulletin #8

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Management admits system problems CEU members identify growing worker tasks and claimant woes

Last week, the union met with the employer to discuss IT program and WES operational issues arising out of CMS. During the meeting, we were advised e-file cannot be retrieved. We were also told the system is reacting in unexpected ways. It creates many tasks because the workflow isn't getting through as planned. The employer is trying to address these issues.

The union asked the employer to provide matrix information regarding the number of tasks each classification can expect to receive in the new world. That information will be generated by the employer soon. At present, they do not have the answers.

IT discussion

Both parties made a commitment to continue further IT meetings so our CEU analysts can identify, and work with management, to resolve some of the big picture "structural" issues related to CMS. The main focus of the union and our IT members is to ensure "rigour trumps timelines".

From our viewpoint, there is a danger the tension between operations (users) to have a functioning system, and the time it takes to ensure proper rigour occurs, could lead to untested fixes being put into place. Untested fixes would likely lead to further unforeseen consequences for users. While the employer agrees rigour must trump timelines, our IT union members insist we must work hard to ensure that happens. Meanwhile, there are many other issues confronting our members.

During the first week of CMS, the system was completely shut down on two different occasions. Last week, the system did not go down, although many users experienced computer "freezing." This freezing can have multiple root causes that will take time to analyse and fix. One of the major causes of freezing is record locking.

Record locking occurs when two or more users attempt to update the same database records. A user can experience record locking when viewing or changing a file. Record locking affects multiple users at the same time since the records behind the scenes are interconnected. The bottom line is the user will experience an inability to access the file and/or the system.

In an earlier WSN message, management reported freezing as a server issue. That message caused quite a bit of anger amongst our IT union members because they experienced the message as blaming. Now we know that particular issue was actually caused by the application code. CMS faces many complex issues – they will only be solved by people in different roles and departments working together. Identifying one area as the cause of a problem is entirely unfair in such a complex environment.

Despite the best efforts of the IT department, these challenges cannot be fixed in the short term. In an effort to mitigate these record locking challenges, the IT department is recycling the system every morning. The downside to this

Please turn over

recycling process is it slows user computer response. These delays will occur primarily in the morning.

As noted above, the parties will continue discussions in an attempt to identify best practices for the future.

Operations discussion

On the operations side of things, management acknowledged the stress members are working under. For example, in the Richmond office, management has agreed to retrain four EOs who, once retrained, will act as coaches for others. Management has also agreed to provide EOs with a second screen and they've fixed the problem with primary and secondary users.

Management has also redeployed TAs so they can assist with things like filing. We've also asked them to consider how OA3 and Medical Secretaries can be redeployed to help with the backlog of issues and tasks. These requests are under consideration.

In Nanaimo, union members rallied together because they were experiencing so many problems. This act galvanized their concerns and put the responsibility squarely on management. Their intent is not to lay blame. Their intent is to ensure staff is well supported and not succumbing to the stress everyone feels.

In Prince George, the CM met with management to identify what work can be accomplished – what's a priority and what isn't. If other offices have solutions, let us know and we'll share that information. If you are still struggling, please contact your steward and let them know.

Thanks to the many CEU member emails we've been able to communicate your concerns to management. We have a fairly clear picture of what's happening on a per classification basis, and we will continue to meet with management.

Why did the CEU allow management to roll out CMS?

Some of you have asked why the union allowed this to happen. Let's be clear. Management created CMS and now it's up to management to fix it. The union, and many of our IT members, tried to warn management about the roll out date. In our view, it was an artificial drop dead date because there were too many system problems popping up. There was too much pressure on our members.

Our IT members also believed the problems experienced in the lead-up to go-live were sufficient to postpone the implementation date. Regardless of what the union's thoughts about CMS were, two old labour relations dictums remain. First, management has the right to manage, and second, the employer owns the work.

We may never know why management went ahead. At this point, the reasoning is moot. What we do know is there is no turning back, and we must find ways to make CMS work. Thank you for your emails.

