



Impact

JULY 2010

COMPENSATION EMPLOYEES' UNION



Message from the President Sandra Wright

The last year, from the rollout of CMS until now, has been a troubling one for the union's executive and for our mem-

bers. The degree of stress and upheaval in the workplace has been unprecedented. To say the employer did not do a very good job of managing a huge technological change would be an understatement.

For the union, it has been a year for forwarding a steady stream of information, from our members, to senior managers. Some of the challenges facing us include getting the management team to address low staffing levels that are exacerbated by the CMS system problems. We have made some inroads on this front, but volume problems cannot be addressed overnight. For example, new staff need time to train and become proficient at their work.

Canada Revenue Agency rules

While CMS was the union's most visible work, it is not the only troubling issue facing us. With the new HST hitting your pocketbook, the Board has done an in-depth review of Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) rules. As a result, changes will be made to how the Board reports and applies many taxable benefits. For example, for CRA purposes, if you drive a Board vehicle to and from work, it must be claimed as personal kilometers. This issue is under grievance.

The CRA review may also result in changes to the taxation of meal allowances and a number of other items. The combination of the HST and CRA rules review will result in many of our members feeling "nickel and dimed to death"! We are pressing the Board to justify these changes because we do not believe they are necessary under CRA rules.

There may be an upside to this CRA review; however. The CEU is in discussions with the employer regarding the over-proliferation of contractors, particularly in the IT area, and this CRA review highlights the risk the Board may be facing due to some of these contractors.

According to the CRA, when consultants stay with the Board for 10 years, the Board starts to look like the consultant's employer. As a result, the Board is looking at how they contract consultants, and the CEU may be able to reach an agreement with the Board regarding the use of contractors. This is an important issue because

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sometimes contractors are used when our members want to do the work. The agreement would help our members to gain better access to training and career progression.

Wage and benefit re-opener

We are also facing a wage and benefit re-opener. I believe our union made a smart choice by going to the bargaining table in 2008. This tactic got CEU members more than \$200,000 in increased benefits, increases to moving expenses and mileage rates and job security until the end of 2012. All of these changes were achieved before the government imposed a “net zero” mandate for public sector unions (we are included in that group through a 1980s BC Government Order in Council).

We know the Liberal government has held firm to its net zero mandate and other unions, including the BCGEU, did not get general wage increases. Despite

these problems, we are prepared to challenge the Board to come up with a creative way to provide CEU members with some well deserved increases.

Future needs

In June, the executive met to set the union’s strategic plan for the next five years. The first step in the process was to review the steward feedback we obtained during the April school. We examined many issues including the need to grow the union and develop a diverse leadership team, so we are in a strong position to act on your behalf. Over the next few months, the executive will work to finalize the strategic plan.

No matter what issues CEU members face, you can be assured we have a strong and talented staff, executive and steward group who are working hard every day to represent CEU members in grievances, job evaluation, harassment issues and a multitude of other issues – all with the goal to make this a better workplace for you.

Environmental talk

The CEU’s environmental committee is in the process of drafting its terms of reference and setting up a preliminary budget. The committee will examine opportunities for the CEU to reduce its waste and energy use during union events and union business. Committee members are Daniel Chisholm, Peter Goyert, Adele Peters, Candace Philpitt and Susan Epp.

Meanwhile, in the broader environmental discussion, two leading environmental groups are taking stances on two different, yet high profile issues. The Wilderness Committee, founded in 1980, wants to educate people about waste incineration and has launched a campaign, ZeroWasteBC.org. According to the Committee,

burning garbage as fuel generates more CO2 per mega-watt hour than a coal-fired power plant.



The campaign <http://zerowastebc.org> also addresses the Metro Vancouver incineration plan.

On the subject of bottled water, Toxic Free Canada is urging Canadians to reject the notion that bottled water is better than municipal tap water. This campaign is intended to reduce the number of PET plastic

(petroleum based) entering municipal landfills and exposure to potentially toxic chemicals. You can pledge to reduce your use of PET plastic at www.toxicfreecanada.ca

Stewards attend Triennial National Convention

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) holds a constitutional convention every three years, and this year it was held in Vancouver from June 18 – 20, 2010. NUPGE represents 340,000 workers from all across Canada, including those from the public and private sectors. The convention's theme was: All Together Now.

Why is that significant? Through our affiliation with the BCGEU, a NUPGE component union, CEU gains affiliation with a national union, and as such, we have a voice on the national stage. Because the convention was in Vancouver this year, Michael Hess, from Prince George, and I attended the convention on behalf of the CEU.

This is the first time CEU stewards have attended a national convention. My first impression was set when the meeting started with 300 plus delegates singing a rousing rendition of *Solidarity Forever*, followed by a heart-felt singing of *O Canada*. That sure did get my mind and body set for active participation in the conference. Impressive!

Many of the delegates were from government employee unions from across Canada, and as the conference progressed, it became obvious that the concerns we have in the CEU are also national concerns. For example, at the last steward meeting, there was a discussion about the lack of childcare options for our members. This is a clear problem across Canada, not only for public service employees, but for society as a whole.

NUPGE National President, James Clancy, addressed the delegates, and it is clear he is a leader with integrity and drive; particularly when he states he "hates to lose"! Integrity and drive will be important in the months to come because in his key-note address, Clancy spoke about the threat to public services in the wake of the economic crisis. This is an issue that CEU members are not immune to.

Delegates also discussed resolutions such as Defend, Modernize, and Expand Canada's Public Health Care across Canada; Funding and Support for Post Secondary Education and Industry Training (Red Seal Program)

and Funding for Community Based Social Services.

Although the delegates recognized and raised concerns during the resolution debate, there was also excellent dialogue on what we, as unionists, can do to get the message out that the provincial and federal governments do not have a "spending" problem. They have a "revenue" problem; due to unfair taxation. To address this issue, delegates proposed a Fairness Test.

The Fairness Test is an attempt to get our

governments away from their practice of cutting taxes to the wealthy, and then, due to revenue shortfalls,

"It was amazing to be part of such a large group of like-minded people with the same cause!"

~Michael Hess

cutting public services that clearly affect middle and lower income families. This test would be applied to any planned public services cuts and must demonstrate that there is no reduction to the effectiveness of the public service.

If the government proposal did not pass the fairness test, the change would not be implemented. Additionally, any proposed cuts to high income earners or business taxes must not create an increase in taxes to middle and lower income groups either directly through taxation, or indirectly, through user fees. This discussion was very thought provoking, and it set the tone for many of the guest speakers.

Delegates were treated to two books written by two of the guest speakers. John Lanchester's, *I.O.U., Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay*, and Raj Patel's, *The Value of Nothing: How to Reshape Market Society and Redefine Democracy*. Both authors addressed the world-wide banking decisions that resulted in the 2008 economic collapse.

According to the authors, governments have yet to implement any real regulations to ensure the global banking system does not hang itself again, and then we, as the tax payers, bail them out, again! Yes, Canadians bailed out our banks as well!

We were also introduced to what, I believe, is a British

initiated idea of installing a Robin Hood Tax on all investment, brokerage and stock exchange transactions in the world (excluding personal banking transactions). The idea is to stop the unimpeded transactions, for example, derivatives, that contributed to the world economic collapse and to collect a tax on these types of transactions. Revenue from the tax would be used to improve social and public services.



Michael Hess

This tax is set at a very low rate (0.05%) but would essentially replace all the government shortfalls, in public funds, to maintain our public services. But to become a Canadian reality, it needs everyone's support! Check it out at www.robinhoodtax.org. It is an eye opener and

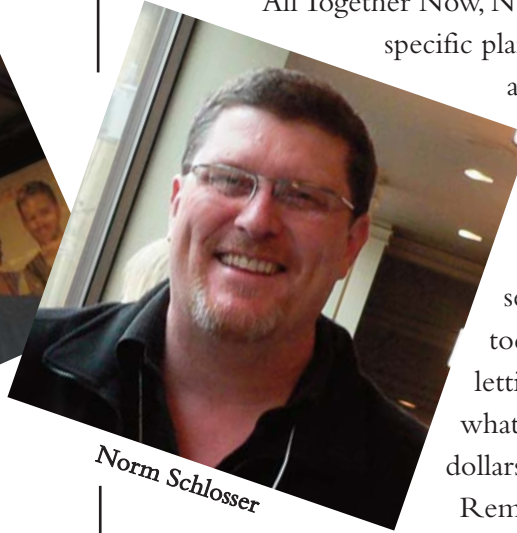
has some real potential.

Finally, going back to the convention's theme,

All Together Now, NUPGE has some specific plans to remind Canadians

about the values that

lead to the creation of public services, and why retaining those services, is important today. The emphasis is on letting the public know what they get for their tax dollars.



Norm Schlosser

Remember...it is not a spending issue for governments,

but a revenue issue! Implement a fair taxation process!

Norm Schlosser is a CEU steward working in Courtenay.

Business Agent retires

After five years with the CEU, Doug Mc Corquodale has left the union to begin the next chapter in his life. Doug has a long history in the labour movement and his experience will be missed. Prior to joining the CEU, Doug worked with the British Columbia Carpenter's Union and is best known for leading the fight to legally separate from the US-based International union.

Doug did not want the CEU to hold a public retirement party for him so the executive respected his wishes and held a private celebration of his work.

"It has been a wonderful journey working for the

CEU. You are a wonderful group to work with and for, and while it is always unanticipated where your last job will be, before one retires, I was extremely lucky to end my work life with all of you....my heart and feelings go out to you in your struggle to represent the members, in order to get justice and fairness for them," Doug's last e-mail to the executive.



*Have a
Safe & Fun
Summer!*

IT Technological Change Committee Update

The CEU IT Technological Change Committee was initially formed to deal with the 2009 reorganization of the IT department. This forum can also be used to bring forward any issues of concern to IT members. The current issues being discussed are the use of contractors and career progression.

Contractors

The union first dealt with the proliferation of contractors within the department in 1999, and a Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) was signed to resolve the issue. Over the last few years, it became apparent there were many contractors working within the IT department, and they were doing work that was of interest to our members.

In July 2009, the CEU served notice to the employer that the use of contractors as outlined in the MOS was not working. Coincidentally, the employer said it was not working for them either. Since that time, the parties have been working to resolve this issue.

Career progression

Closely tied to the use of contractors, is the ability for permanent CEU members to gain access, before contractors, to projects and work assignments so they can progress in the organization. The whole systemic structure for using IT contractors is frustrating to the CEU membership. It is clear that a new career path or progression process cannot be accomplished until the contractor subject is resolved. The two are irrevocably fastened together.

As a result of these discussions, there has been an acknowledgement from both the union and the employer that the current career advancement model does not work well in the IT area.

The CEU is concerned that one significant barrier to career progression in IT is the way contractors are used.

If we are to establish a fair career progression or career path system, this needs to be fixed. The parties intend to negotiate a new career path system for IT members so people believe they are being treated justly and fairly. That means getting the training and knowledge they need to advance in their careers.

Moving toward resolution

While discussions are ongoing and progress is being made, the CEU believes contractors are overused at the Board and that CEU members could be doing the work. It is also clear contractors will be needed in the future, but the CEU needs to be part of an oversight process designed to question and challenge how contractors are used. Currently, and from the CEU's and members' perspective, in some situations the employer is very quick to use a contractor when an employee could do the work.

Other issues

Recently, IT members were concerned about an "announcement" on a TELUS website regarding the provider portal. Board representatives indicated some statements in the announcement were premature, and a decision has yet to be made about what will be developed externally and what will be developed internally.

The CEU is also examining the use of contractors in areas outside of IT and will be addressing that situation in a different forum. It will be resolved.

IT Committee Members:

Sandra Wright

Adele Peters

Stan Reese

Kathy Perkins and

Adam Andrews

Know Your Collective Agreement

EFAP

Article 57 sets out the terms of the Employee and Family Assistance Program. In addition, there is a joint CEU/WCB committee overseeing how the program is administered. Recently, some CEU members voiced a concern that once they reach six counselling sessions, they are no longer eligible for counselling under EFAP. That is not correct. Members needing more than six sessions should contact CEU committee members Chris Lundquist or Colleen Glynn for assistance. All contacts will be held in strict confidence.

Once members no longer need EFAP services, the CEU encourages you to fill out an anonymous questionnaire. The information gained from the questionnaire is vital to the joint committee because it is used to evaluate the quality of the various providers used by EFAP. The current low questionnaire return rate has made this evaluation difficult.

If you have suggestions about how the service can be improved, please include your comments in the questionnaire.

Travel insurance worries

Article 56 identifies the various health and welfare plans available to CEU members. The extended health care benefit plan, EHC, is of particular importance for out-of-province and out-of-country travel because there is a lifetime benefit limit of \$1 million. Needless to say, with today's medical expenditures, it would not take long to reach that limit.

Many people purchase additional travel insurance for that very reason. However, many insurance carriers have a last payor clause in the event of an accident. That means the Pacific Blue Cross EHC plan will pay out claims to the established maximums before the

insurance company pays any money. That could result in you using up your lifetime benefit limit, and since many families use EHC to pay for pharmaceutical costs, that could become problematic.

A viable alternative to this potential problem is to purchase additional first payer travel insurance from Pacific Blue Cross or any other first payer insurer. That way, the EHC lifetime benefit limit of \$1 million is protected and available for other purposes. The additional first payer travel insurance is used to cover the costs arising from an out-of-province or out-of-country travel claim.

Your Executive Members

Sandra Wright, President
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Colleen Glynn, Secretary
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IMPACT is a publication of the CEU

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Printed on paper with 30 percent recycled post consumer waste

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