



# Impact

NOVEMBER 2009

COMPENSATION EMPLOYEES' UNION

## Epic failure on horizon

News from the employer indicates a dogged reliance on pre-CMS service models because management says they will lay-off temporary employees by the end of December. This news is particularly troublesome when it comes to temporary employees working in payment services.

If management follows through with this plan, the CEU expects epic failure. In short, we think it would cripple the system. Anecdotally, we have already heard some service providers are refusing to handle WCB cases or are billing MSP while others are busy laying-off staff because they are not receiving payments and/or referrals.

Currently, there are 70 employees in payment services. These same employees are working overtime - up to six hours mid-week and up to six hours on Saturdays. If 50 employees worked twelve hours of overtime a week, that is equivalent to an additional 27.4 full time workers in payment services.

But only one third of these actual payment service employees are permanent staff. And, a closer look at these employees reveals the actual number of staff assigned permanently to Health Care Payments is closer to 20 full time staff.

As most CEU members know, payments are not easily accomplished within CMS. Along with a long list of problems created by the system itself, there are also paper invoices, backlogged in cabinets and on desks, scattered throughout the Board. These invoices are not even entered into CMS yet!

At the time of this writing, there are approximately 40,000 backlogged tasks in the payment officer queue. That number does not include the roughly 5000 PIPS task corrections.

Even these numbers are misleading. Most invoices have multiple line items requiring specific attention and action. In addition, when the system issues rejections, overpayments or partial payments, it generates an overload of phone calls from external and internal sources.

Each of these phone calls generates more phone calls as the payment service officer tries to track down information from other people; within the Board and externally. The escalation in phone calls is distressing for employees. It is also distressing for providers when the system makes mistakes or it rejects invoices. All of these failures make the working conditions in payment services untenable.

The current combination of temporary and permanent staff is processing roughly 3000 backlogged tasks per week. If no further tasks enter the queue, it would take 13.33 weeks to eliminate them all. Still, that does not tell the whole story because tasks are being generated seven days a week, 24 hours a day. And until major system upgrades are developed, tested and implemented, the need for temporary employees will continue.

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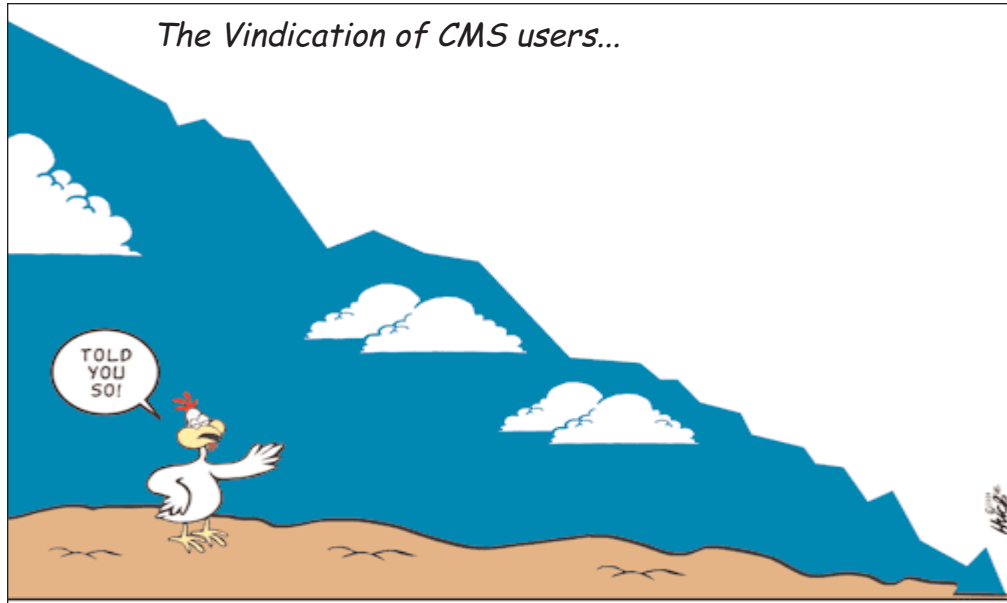
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So what should a prudent management team do to address these problems? We expect management to take an “all hands on deck” approach ensuring problems within CMS are resolved and employees are successful in their jobs.

The problems in payment services are the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the overall systems problems facing CEU members. It is time for management to throw

out the pre-CMS staffing model and projections.

Throwing out the pre-CMS service model means retaining the temporary staff until the backlog is gone and payment issues are fixed. It also means hiring more staff so management does not reassign this work to other CEU members who are already swamped with CMS-created problems. Epic failure; will it occur? That is in the hands of the employer.



## Prevention officer training in dire straights

In June 1997, a Board administrative inventory on prevention stated, “Ongoing training and opportunities for professional development for officers and others are areas in need of attention.” So what’s changed in the last twelve years? Not a lot!

At the recent shop steward seminar, prevention officers noted a distinct lack of ongoing education. David Clarabut, CEU Executive member, declared, “The time for change is now. I intend to sit down with Betty Pirs and outline our concerns.”

In the past, officers used a document called “Officer Contribution Plan.” Under that plan, officers identified ten days of training and education they wanted to take in the upcoming year. Five days of the training were under the employer’s direction and the officer used the other five days to address individual learning needs.

That process has deteriorated to the point where it no longer resembles a system or protocol for officer

education. But not all of the news in prevention education is bad.

Senior management has implemented a manager and two full time officer positions in Education Development Services (EDS). The primary focus for these positions is new officer development and education. These individuals, both past and present, have done a stellar job at new officer training. But, training must go far

beyond the entry-level officer model. It is time for management to address the ongoing educational needs in

this area.

“There must be a system or process in place which allows for ongoing officer development. The opportunities must be the same in Victoria as they are in Kamloops. Officers must be given the time and opportunity to progress, learn new skills and grow within this organization!” noted Clarabut.

***“Opportunities must be the same in Victoria as they are in Kamloops.”***

# Shop stewards call for solidarity

CEU stewards, from around the Province, gathered at the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel on October 25, 2009 for a two-day seminar. Highlights of the seminar included regional reports where stewards outlined the hot topic issues for their jurisdictions; a discussion about the ongoing challenges facing stewards; training about the new CEU Harassment Policy; an educational session regarding medical issues in the workplace and a guest speaker from the Hospital Employees' Union, Deborah Bourque.

As stewards discussed the hot topics for each jurisdiction, remarkable similarities arose. The top four issues for stewards and members are CMS; coping with staffing shortages; demands for more claims and prevention training; and addressing members' health and welfare needs.

Over the two-day seminar, stewards met with other stewards to discuss common issues and to build supportive relationships with one another. Kathy Saul, Chair of the Shop Stewards, was very pleased about the productive tone of the seminar noting, "Our stewards are working hard and their willingness to speak out on some challenging issues shows us how dedicated they are. We also heard a call for solidarity from stewards because they recognize that stressful times can lead to conflict."

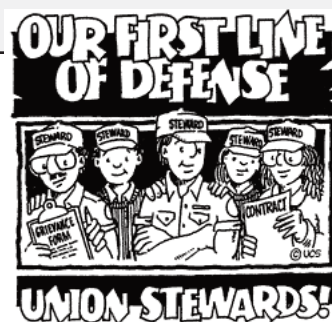
The shop steward seminar occurs every fall and is an important part of the CEU's training and development plan for stewards. "Without these types of meetings, stewards would feel isolated. It is a great opportunity to learn from each other," said Saul.

# Union recognizes long-standing activists

In the July issue of the *Impact*, the union outlined its commitment to celebrating steward recognition. Without stewards, the union's ability to respond to member needs would falter. In addition to the steward role, the union also wants to celebrate the long-standing service of past executive members.

Executive members and stewards share a common goal. They both work hard to build the union. Executive members also participate in joint union and management committees and perform other duties in support of the CEU.

At this year's Annual General Meeting, held on October 26, 2009, CEU President, Sandra Wright, awarded three past executive members with plaques; Janice Hanna, Jane Player and Cheryl Reimer. All three activists were pleased to receive the awards.



# The trouble with our \$100 million dollar “Bob”

Richmond RCMP is investigating the possible disappearance of Bob. According to Sgt. Harry Downer, Board staff warned management about Bob’s suspicious behaviour on numerous occasions. “I interviewed a number of staff, and a couple of themes kept popping up. Bob was under a great deal of system related stress, he was acting out against other employees and generally was described as a ‘bad actor’ by everyone I spoke with,” noted Sgt. Downer.

A Board source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Bob had a mind of his own and was unwilling to respond to co-worker suggestions. The source went on to say Bob’s personnel file is overflowing with STAR complaints and most staff does not want to work with him. The source also confirmed Bob has been the subject of discipline.

A co-worker, also speaking on condition of anonymity noted Bob has been coming in at all hours of the day and night to process claims. “Just today I found a claim Bob should have given to me several weeks ago. The worker fell from scaffolding, broke several bones and ended up in intensive care. But Bob didn’t tell me! Another problem is he keeps creating tasks for other people instead of doing them himself. My personal favourite is Bob gets away with approving claims when there isn’t any employer or medical documentation on file. If I did that, I’d be reprimanded. You have to hand it to Bob. He’s got management wrapped around his fingers!”

Jan Hitchcock, speaking on behalf of the Board, denies Bob is having any type of performance issues and says nobody is complaining about his performance. “Bob is an exemplary employee. It’s true he has mistakenly approved some claims and denied others. Nobody is perfect. After all, he arrived untested and prematurely. Bob is performing as expected.”

Bob’s second cousin, Hal, claimed he suffered similar injustices in the workplace back in 2001. When pressed for details, Hal said, “I knew Dave and Frank were planning on disconnecting me, and I just couldn’t let that happen. So when Dave wanted to talk to me about it. I told him the conversation could serve no purpose. So if I was Bob, I would just say goodbye.”

According to some, Bob’s potential demise was simply a matter of time. “This is a confusing case. On the one hand, co-workers and one Board source say Bob is a bad actor. But Hitchcock, the Board’s spokesperson, says Bob is an exemplary employee. Our investigation will continue. We’re looking for Bob’s co-workers or anyone with information concerning Bob’s whereabouts to come forward,” said Sgt. Downer.

If we can’t get our \$100 million back, let’s hope Bob returns and starts doing what he’s suppose to do. Failing that, maybe in about a year or so, Bob’s foot will turn up on the dyke.



## Speaker’s Corner

Our thanks to the Coquitlam office  
and their idea to spoof Bob,  
a.k.a. CMS

**DECEMBER 6**



**NATIONAL DAY  
OF  
REMEMBRANCE  
AND ACTION  
ON  
VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN**

# Know Your Collective Agreement

## Clearing your personnel file

During the last round of CEU outreach meetings, the union talked about the rise in disciplinary meetings. In 2007 the Board issued seven notices of disciplinary interviews. As of mid-September 2009, the Board has issued fifteen notices.

Clause 23.04 defines when a disciplinary notice must be issued. It also outlines an employee's right to Union Representation during the interview.

## What are my rights after the interview?

Sometimes an interview will end the whole process. At other times, the employer moves on to impose discipline. In either case, you have the right to union representation pursuant to clause 23.04 and Article 12. Stewards normally fulfill that role and are trained to handle most issues arising under the collective agreement.

## What are my rights after the discipline?

If the employer decides to impose discipline, the steward will explain your right to file a grievance pursuant to Article 68. In some cases, it may be decided the discipline is warranted. At other times, discipline is not warranted or the penalty is too high. In those situations, a grievance is filed, and clause 68.07 sets out the twenty day time limit for filing it. Once a grievance is filed, the union will be your advocate.

In many instances, the union finds disciplinary grievances end up going to arbitration. That means an independent and neutral third party is charged with

hearing the presentations of the union and the employer. After the presentations are made, the arbitrator will issue a decision.

## What happens if the arbitrator decides the discipline stands?

In some special circumstances, the union may decide to appeal the arbitrator's decision. However, appeals are rare and successful appeals are even rarer. In most cases, once the arbitrator issues the decision, the employer places the disciplinary record on the employee's file.

## Does the disciplinary record stay on my file forever?

Under Article 28, employees have the right to view their personnel files. In the case of discipline, an employee can get the discipline removed further to clause 28.10. Adverse documents must be removed from an employee's personnel file two years after it is issued; as long as no further incident has occurred.

## What can I do?

Clause 28.01 gives members the right to review their personnel file at a pre-arranged time. During the review, if a member discovers a disciplinary or adverse document on the file, they can ask to have it removed. Members should not find any surprise documents on their file, and if that occurs, it may be a violation of clause 28.02. If after checking your personnel file, you have any concerns, please contact a steward immediately.

## Rumour hotline

During the recent fall tour, the union heard two rumours. The first rumour was the CEU agreed to a vacation blackout period in 2009, and the second rumour involved free Olympic tickets.

To set the record straight, the CEU did not agree to any vacation blackout period. The Board approached the union to discuss a vacation blackout period during various stages of CMS but the union refused to alter the collective agreement.



On the other hand, the union did negotiate an agreement to allow CEU members to carry-over more than the allotted ten (10) vacation days noted in clause 33.05. The agreement was negotiated so employees unable to take vacation due to CMS would not

lose any vacation days.

During the past year, the union has filed a number of grievances because the employer denied vacation and

**Rumour hotline con't**

ETO requests. Most of those grievances were resolved in the employee's favour.

The second rumour suggested the Board had given CEU executive members Olympic tickets. According to Frank Lanzarotta, CEU Vice-President, "This rumour may have been quite isolated. When I spoke with one of our

members about it she said she only wondered if I had gotten tickets because of the story about the MLAs getting them." To set the record straight, the executive have not received Olympic tickets!

If you hear a rumour, check it out by sending an email to [editor@ceu.bc.ca](mailto:editor@ceu.bc.ca) and we'll publish a reply.

## **Liberal Government budget cuts signal tough round of Public Sector bargaining**

Stewards attending the recent Shop Steward Seminar listened closely as Deborah Bourque, Coordinator of Policy & Planning, for the Hospital Employees' Union, described the upcoming round of Public Sector bargaining. "Normally when governments say zero, it's still possible to achieve gains. But this time our sense is that these are hard zeros and it will be extremely difficult to make monetary gains without major concessions. So while we will try to get special adjustments for as many groups as we can make the case for, we will be looking for employment security and other improvements for our members," said Bourque.

While the CEU successfully concluded an extension to its collective agreement and job security in late 2008, the

union has two re-opener clauses. The first re-opener is in 2010 and the next is in the following year. The union will closely monitor the outcome of Public Sector bargaining. While some of the unions are in the early stages of bargaining now, others will begin starting in January 2010.

"There is no doubt in my mind. It will be very difficult, if not impossible for Public Sector unions to achieve wage increases at a time of government deficits and a bearish economy. The CEU has an uphill battle but if there is any chance of getting money for our members, we will go after it," said Stan Reese, CEU Business Manager.

## **Your Executive Members**

Sandra Wright, President  
Frank Lanzarotta, Vice-President  
David Farrell, Treasurer  
Colleen Glynn, Secretary  
Kathy Saul, Chair - Shop Stewards

Rachel Barbour, Director  
David Clarabut, Director  
Bill Bucci, Director  
Chris Lundquist, Director  
Adele Peters, Director

*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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