

CUPE Chronicle



The Editor's Soap Box

Welcome to Issue 2.....

Well, the CUPE Chronicle is officially on it's way to being the information central that you have been waiting for. This is the second issue and I am really enjoying being at the center of the information hub. My hope is that you are finding it both informational and educational and that it helps you stay informed about what the union does and how it can be of use to you. I also hope that as you become connected and aware of the issues that you will find ways to get involved and discover

what you can do for the union and your fellow workers. I know from experience that the union does not always make its way into our everyday lives and that it can get a bad reputation because most of what you hear about it is propaganda in the media. The occasions when the union is in the forefront of everyone's minds is when bargaining leads to strike action and the government is usually painting it in the worst possible light. Keep in mind over the next few months that the union is working hard to make your

work place a better place for you and me and our fellow employees. It is staffed largely by your workmates who volunteer their time to improve working conditions and defend your rights in the workplace. If you have a desire to be part of a great organization that works hard to help others, consider coming to your next general meeting and finding a way to get involved. And don't forget to vote in the May 14 election. Read how you can get involved on page 4.

Your humble editor,
Sylvia Lindgren

Upcoming Events

March 9 2013 - General Meeting in Oliver


April 3 Open House at the new Kelowna CUPE office - 2 - 5 pm

April 20 - General Meeting in Kelowna - vote for vacant executive positions



ORGANIZED LABOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Social Security
- The 8-Hour Work Day
- Overtime Pay
- The 5-Day Workweek
- The Employment Discrimination Ban
- Federal Minimum Wage Law
- Paid Vacations
- Cost-Of-Living Allowances (COLA)
- Employer Paid Health Plans (Fringe Benefits)
- OSH Act (Workplace Safety Act)



WHO BENEFITS FROM THE ABOVE? EVERYBODY, THAT'S WHO. UNION AND NON-UNION ALIKE.

WHAT HAS THE NON-UNION SIDE OF LABOR DONE FOR YOU LATELY?

A Word from your Education Committee

Your Education Committee consists of one representative from each unit and is chaired by the Second Vice-President of Local 523. The members try to meet as a group a few times a year and frequently use email to keep in touch. This committee has worked hard over the past year to develop the applicant selection criteria, determine how to advertise upcoming educational opportunities and prioritize educational needs throughout the local.

Our CUPE 523 Mission Statement is "to unite and encourage all members through Union Solidarity, giving us the power and strength to secure and defend our rights as workers." Your Education Committee firmly believes that one of the best ways to achieve this is through education and by educating as many members as possible. You can discover what opportunities are coming up in our region in the months ahead by checking the CUPE Bulletin Board at your worksite. If you see a

course you are interested in taking, please contact your Education Rep whose name and email address appear on the poster.

Whether you are an active CUPE member or thinking of getting involved, taking a short course can be a great way to spark an interest in what is going on in the workplace. Getting together with other union members in an educational setting offers the unique opportunity to learn, connect and support all at the same time.

For those members thinking ahead to retirement, please look into the excellent Retirement Seminar that CUPE has developed. Visit the CUPE 523 website at: <http://523.cupe.ca> and click on the heading 'Forms'. There you will find the link to download the Retirement Seminar Application Form. Once you have completed this form, you can forward it via mail to the CUPE 523 Office or email it to : jvanberk@hotmail.com .

Vacant Positions

As many of you already know, Colleen Weins has stepped down as a member of our executive and has moved to a new school district to further her career. We wish her all the best. Jose van Berkel has volunteered to fill Colleen's position temporarily until the elections in April. There are other positions to be filled as well.

Consider this to be your advanced notice and reminder that elections will be taking place at the general meeting in Kelowna on April 20. Make an effort to be there so you can cast your vote and be part of the democratic process. We need your help and we need a quorum to vote so mark it in your calendar today.



School District 83 enjoyed some great winter weather this year and took advantage of it while hosting their annual Christmas party. The sleigh ride is a favourite among both the kids and the adults.

Democracy Leads to Solidarity

By all accounts the special unit meeting of Feb. 1, 2013 was a very respectful meeting with full debate from both sides of the issue of separation. (I couldn't attend due to flight difficulties) I'm told there were many passionate speakers supporting the unit remaining within the local. I'm also told that those wishing to split were not limited in presenting their views and were given full opportunity to make their points.

That's the way a respectful meeting should work. Both sides present their views and the members decide which direction to go. This is one of the sacred tenants of CUPE. Democracy. It happened on February 1st in Salmon Arm. Democracy ruled.

Part of democracy is accepting the memberships' decision. For some time there have been some who have been holding the threat of separation over the heads of the local membership. We have expended much time and energy in trying to resolve internal matters instead of dealing with the Employers to improve our members' working lives.

Over a year ago the local held restructuring meetings and votes in all units. The result was 83% membership approval for the newly restructured local. When we considered the unit 83 members vote results and assumed the entire "no" vote came from that single unit (which was clearly not the case) the resulting vote results were in the high 70s percentage.

Now a second vote has been held and the result was the same. The members have spoken...twice.

I urge those that were behind the push to separate to accept the member's wishes and allow the local to come together. Allow those who are working on behalf of improving our members working lives, the freedom to do so in solidarity. We must put this behind us and move forward together. In good faith. In solidarity.

Rob Hewitt



Call to Political Action

Why the NDP?

CUPE is asking members to help elect the NDP in the provincial election on May 14/2013.

CUPE and other public sector unions support the NDP because of shared values. The NDP values organized labour and the work that public sector employees do. The BC Liberals adhere to the conservative values of cutting services and slashing public sector wages and benefits.

The NDP understands the economic value of supporting a strong middle class. They know that when spending power is in the hands of the many, and not the few, the entire economy, including business, thrives. The public sector is an important segment of the economic middle class. While the private sector goes through boom and bust cycles, the public sector stabilizes the economy with its consistent spending patterns. The conservative ideology drives us toward a third world type of economy, a few very rich and a high rate of poverty. The ever-

growing wealth gap is well documented. "Big Labour" - you and I - are made out to be the greedy villains.

The NDP understands the economic value of providing quality public services. Services are provided more efficiently when they are funded collectively, just like insurance. Providing public and social services is always less expensive than it would be if such were not provided. Services and regulations always exist to prevent problems that would be more costly. The conservative approach seeks to blame the less fortunate and the unemployed for their circumstances so as to focus on maintaining the privilege of a few.

These are simple facts that have been proven over and over and are continuously denied by the conservative ideologists.

An NDP government will not be in a position to give working people everything we want, but who will we sit across the bargaining table from; those who

value our role in society or those who loathe it.

CUPE members and our communities deserve a better provincial government. To achieve this we cannot merely wish for it; we need to make it happen. The winning formula is simple; make generous financial contributions which yields good tax credits: volunteer for a campaign because a small group cannot get all the work done in the short election period and because it is interesting, fun, and makes one feel good; and talk to people and get them to vote.

It is time for us to ignore the simplistic misleading assertions about 'uncertain economic times' the need to attract 'foreign investments' and 'the tax payers can not afford it now'. The reality is that we humans have the creative capacity to build the society we want to live in, and all related activities become 'the economy'. Just look at history.

Craig Pohorelic

Looking for Email addresses

Future Newsletters will be emailed.

Please send your email address to jvanberk@hotmail.com and indicate in the subject line "CUPE 523 Email".



Staff from the North Okanagan Youth and Family Social Services work the picket line in Vernon in January as part of the province wide rotating strike action in January....action that helped get the government back to the bargaining table. Thanks for your dedication, brothers and sisters.



CUPE 523 executive:

President Jean Frolek
1st VP: James Fox
2nd VP: Karsten Bellows
3rd VP(acting): Deb Johnson
Recording secretary: Jose van Berkel
Acting Secretary-Treasurer: Jose van Berkel

Unit chairs:

John Howard Society :
Larry DuPont
NOYFSS Craeg Pohorelic
SD 53 Sean Harris
SD 67 Mike Johnson
SD 83 Heather Reid

National Rep: Rob Hewitt

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