

MARCH
2019



The Members' Voice

The newsletter of CUPE Local 15, Vancouver Municipal Education and Community Workers



Welcome new stewards!

Photo - Left to Right Front Row – Bo Gembarsky, VAG; Benita Spindel, VCH; Jared Tan, COV; Trent Gauthier, VSB; Peter-John Prinsloo (PJ), VSB; Radu Vasile, COV; Paul Li, COV; Brandon Cotter, VAG; Wendy Belado, VSB; Andrea Duke, COV; Julianna Torjek, COV; Zafrul Shahriyar, COV; Trent Martyn, VMMS; Maggie Chan, VSB; Evan Pownall, COV; Priscilla Santos, VSB; Celia Jong, VAG; Sally Bankiner, Secretary Treasurer; Gitanjali Gill, LC (not in Photo – Deborah So, LC)

2019 MARCH

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

March 27, 2019 - 5:30 p.m.
Room 5, Italian Cultural Centre,
3075 Slocan Street, Vancouver
(@ Grandview Hwy)

UNDER DISCUSSION:

- Nominations for the 2019 Executive Board Election
- Amendments to the CUPE Local 15 Bylaws
- Financial Statement

General Meetings provide all members with an opportunity to participate in decisions that affect the union. Child care assistance & ASL Interpreter will be available upon request.

by Sally Bankiner, Secretary-Treasurer

I would like to introduce our newest CUPE Local 15 Stewards to our 7,800+ members and express our sincerest thanks for stepping forward on behalf of your co-workers.

We had three full days of reaching a greater understanding around why being a unionized worker is so important and the gains we have made over the past 100 years.

We discussed what "management rights" are and how collective agreement bargaining limits those rights. We went over the 6 W's and when to apply them in interviews with members about their particular worksite issues and further used role-play exercises to practice what we learned.

We learned the "do's" and "don'ts" when speaking to members and ascertained through group discussion the qualities we intend to bring to the role.

We worked in group exercises to explore why unions have stewards and what their roles are and started to build our personal tool chests. We

talked about ways that our new stewards can introduce themselves at their worksites and did some problem solving exercises. Then we talked about grievances and how the union uses the "dispute resolution" or "grievance" process to resolve disputes around the interpretation of our collective agreements.

We now have a greater understanding of what "full redress" and "being made whole" actually means during a grievance and what the "duty to accommodate" is and is not. We spoke about doctor's notes and "attendance management programs" and the "protected grounds" under Human Rights legislation.

We spoke at great length about the meaning of true "solidarity" and what it means to each of us.

This Introduction to Stewarding course visited the essential basics of stewarding and representation thereby building solidarity through our steward network.

Please join me in welcoming our new stewards to this essential role. This is the beginning of a great experience!



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CUPE Local 15
545 W. 10th Ave.
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 1K9



International Women's Day - March 8

By Warren Williams, President



WARREN WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

International Women's Day has come and gone. The truth is we should celebrate the accomplishments and contributions women have made and continue to make in society every day.

I had the honour of attending the City of Vancouver's International Women's Day ceremony which was held at the

central branch of the Vancouver Public Library.

Mayor Kennedy Stewart addressed those in attendance and acknowledged the many contributions made by so many women to our city



and society. He then read and presented the official proclamation on behalf of Vancouver City Council, many of whom were also in attendance.

What really resonated with me was the message of the presenters and the moderator for panel presentation. It's not that this was the first time I have heard these messages of belonging, worthiness, and pride denied. What stayed with me was a message of hope, one of opportunities revived, stories of perseverance and victories, and accomplishments of family and strong matriarchies.

What also resonated with me was voice. These women had found their voice because of all of those that

came before them, and due to the lessons learned and knowledge passed from one generation to the next, such experiences and insights are now being passed forward by these loving, caring, powerful women all around me attending the event. It was invigorating to hear their stories of self, dignity, and the pride of being visible. It is encouraging to know that although the fight continues on, positive change is also happening; a change called equity.

So if you believe as I do in the power and importance of the contributions of women to our community, society, and this planet we call home, then add your voice to theirs. You will find as I have that you will benefit from the positive change.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

by Sally Bankiner, Secretary-Treasurer

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all our newly trained stewards for putting their name forward to help their co-workers defend their collective agreement and human rights in their workplaces (see photo elsewhere in this issue).



SALLY BANKINER
SECRETARY-TREASURER

On February 20th - 23rd, we welcomed our 22 new stewards to take on this challenging and rewarding role and every one of them stepped up! It really is encouraging to see the incredibly positive changes within our local over the past few years and within our membership generally.

As Henry Lee and I facilitated the course

for our new stewards, I was reminded of my first few months and of the people I represented as a steward some 14 years ago when I was a "newbie". I was able to share those examples and experiences with our new stewards and express how much I miss that part of my activism and my appreciation for each and every one of them.

These new stewards are our future leaders as stewards, bargaining committee members, and elected members on your Executive Board. The experiences and lessons they learn along the way will shape all of our futures.

I also appreciate each of our Bargaining Committees from all of our sectors. Those who have stepped into this role are our future leaders. There is nothing more important than representing our members' interests in the workplace and developing better language and benefit proposals to put across the table to your employers. Again, thank you to everyone who put their name forward for these vital roles.

Now, each of us has a job to do as well. Our job is to assist them with our own bargaining priorities. Bargaining Committees are meeting now in their caucuses and developing member surveys that are vital to the bargaining process, and this is where each of you come in. The surveys that are being developed will soon be available for each sector currently in a bargaining

year. Survey links will be advertised and posted on our website and via whatever method the committees deem appropriate. These surveys need to be answered by each of you and require the widest possible circulation among your co-workers and worksites. Traditionally we have a lower response rate than we would like. Your participation in the bargaining process by bringing forward issues of importance for you and your families personally is key for successful proposals being put across the table.

There are many misunderstandings or conflicting opinions within the membership about this process that I would like to generally clarify (noting that all sectors are slightly different).

You, as a member of CUPE Local 15, elect your bargaining committee through a democratic election process. The union does not choose them for you. The union, through the elected Executive Board, decides which staff person will be the lead negotiator on each committee. This person is the one that will engage in direct conversation and negotiation with the employer. The employer chooses whom they appoint to their side of the table along with their lead negotiator.

Each collective agreement dictates how many members are on each committee and whether meetings are paid by the employer or by the union and how these members will be released from their work to participate in bargaining. Once elected, the Bargaining Committee operates by consensus and decides whom their chairperson and committee secretary will be. If the committee does not agree, a vote is taken wherein each elected member gets one vote (this does not include the staff lead negotiator).

The committee discusses a "Protocol Agreement" that they will develop with the employer which will determine how they will proceed at "the table" or when face to face negotiations begin. Both parties sign this document once it is agreed upon. This document then forms the basis for how the Bargaining Committee will function.

Caucus meetings take place when the union meets as a committee without the employer present. Face to face meetings are sitting at the table as a full committee with both union and employer representatives. Caucus meetings are where proposals and counter-proposals are developed, and where the committees develop their surveys, deciding what questions will be asked of our members. Usually, members who do respond indicate that the most important issues to them are "wages" and

"benefits". I encourage you to really think about the questions and respond fully to the questions asked.

Think about how your working conditions affect you every day at work and about things that perhaps you wouldn't normally think of, and include this information in your answers. Do you have a sick leave plan? How does your "attendance management" program work? Think about things like health and safety standards and enshrining them into your collective agreement. Have you been affected by personal bullying and/or harassment? Perhaps include your wish to have bullying and harassment language included and think about your daily working environment and workloads. Think about your access to breaks, coverage, retirement benefits, pension plans, vacation, and sick leave coverage. Take a look at your collective agreement and all of the things that your union has negotiated over the past hundred years and how far we have come and where we need to go for our future and generations to come. Think about the rights of our auxiliaries, temporary or part time members and their working conditions as well. Think about postings and promotions and leave entitlements and sick benefits and whether or not you have an LTD plan.

Whatever you do, support your bargaining committee! They are knowledgeable and are elected by you to work for your best interests. Your employer does not come to the table with "gives" and great increases to benefit packages or wages. Your committee negotiates those things on your behalf and they must have your support to run a successful negotiation process. Take the very recent example of the Vancouver Art Gallery and the "solidarity" and support they showed for each other and their Bargaining Committee, collectively pushing back hard on their employer's regressive claw backs and divisive tactics in an effort to divide and conquer.

Let your committee know you are with them by attending member information meetings for your sector and participating in the process by talking with your co-workers and thinking about the survey and answering all of the questions thoughtfully. Pass on the survey links to your co-workers and follow up with each of them to make sure they have submitted theirs by the deadline. The committees are your voice! These are your proposals! Each one of you is important and your participation in this process is vital! This is just the beginning... more to come.

In solidarity with all of our members and their respective Bargaining Committees.

Job Posting - Permanent Staff Representative I

CUPE Local 15 is accepting applications for a Permanent Full Time Staff Representative I.

Applicants must have considerable experience within the CUPE Local 15 jurisdiction, a strong commitment to trade union principles, and a thorough understanding of and experience in collective agreement interpretation and enforcement. The ability to deal effectively with members, and elected Executive Board, other staff, and outside contacts and organizations is essential. A valid BC driver's license is required. The formal comprehensive posting is available at cupe15.org.

Conditions of employment are set out in the collective agreement between CUPE Local 15 and the BC Union Workers' Union.

Applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. on April 5, 2019 at CUPE Local 15, 545 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1K9 marked confidential to the attention of Sally Bankiner or emailed to sbankiner@cupe15.org. While we appreciate your interest, only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.

VSB Job Share Opportunities

1. Job share partner wanted to work Monday and Tuesdays at Norquay Elementary School. Contact Stephanie Del Bianco via email me at sdelbianco@vsb.bc.ca.
2. SSW job share partner wanted to work Wednesday, Thursday, and Fridays for the 2019/2020 school year at Mount Pleasant Elementary. Contact Jen at jen.prasol@telus.net.
3. Job share partner wanted to work Thursday and Fridays at Lord Tennyson Elementary School starting September 2019 for the 2019/2020 school year. For more information please call Miriam Smiley, SSA, at 604-838-2867.
4. SSA job share partner wanted to work Thursday and Fridays at Maple Grove Elementary in Kerrisdale starting September 2019. Please contact Lindsay at lforsberg@vsb.bc.ca.
5. OOA substitute looking for a job share partner starting in September 2019. If you are interested in sharing your position please contact Rhoda at rhow@vsb.bc.ca.

Employment Precarity in Post-Secondary Education

By Susan Watt, Co-Chief Steward, Langara College

With the spring equinox (March 20, 2019) simply around the corner we look forward to daylight growing longer, colourful gardens emerging from dreary winter grey, and... bargaining.

This bargaining year for CUPE 15 at Langara College is about to spring to life and much like the dormant bulbs and seeds in our gardens, the bargaining committee is busy in preparation for nurturing a new collective agreement to fruition.

I've spent some time reflecting on the issues faced by our members at Langara College over the past few years and although a few themes sprouted, one such theme out-bloomed the rest - precarious employment. As for many post-secondary institutions across the country, precarious employment is a real threat - an unassuming weed that creeps silently across post-secondary institutions like morning glory in our flower beds. This practice may look "pretty" and innocuous at first, but slowly and inevitably chokes out permanent positions with temporary contracts.

Executive Board Elections

Nominations to be held at the March 27, 2019 General Membership Meeting

Another year has passed and nominations for Executive Board elections are on the agenda for the March General Membership Meeting. The term of these positions is two years (3 years for the Trustee). Up to half of the Executive is elected each year to ensure consistency on the elected board. This year there are nine positions up for democratic renewal. They are:

- President (full time paid position)
- 2nd Vice President
- City Sector Representative (1)
- Park Board Representative (1)
- College/University Sector Representative (1)
- K-12 Sector Representative (1)
- Cultural Sector Representative (1)
- Health Sector Representative – HSCBA (Community) (1)
- Trustee (1)

To be eligible for the President, 2nd Vice President, or Trustee positions you must have attended at least 50% of the membership meetings in the past year. Voting will be conducted electronically as it was in 2018. More information will be available in the April issue of the Members' Voice, at cupe15.org, and via email if you have provided the union office with a personal email address.

Notices of Motion

Bylaw Amendments

The Executive Board and Trustees recommend approval of the proposed bylaw amendments as per the document Proposed Bylaw Amendments posted at www.cupe15.org.

Explanation

The voting will take place on a section by section basis and as per section 23 of the current bylaws, an amendment can only be passed if two-thirds of the members voting vote in favour. The Proposed Bylaw Amendments document lists the current language, the proposed language with the changes marked, and how the new language will read if passed. The current bylaws are posted with the Proposed Bylaw Amendments document for your reference.

What does precarious employment look like? It is filling permanent jobs with short-term, temporary, and casual contracts. Sometimes contracting out permanent positions to temp agencies or other employers of precarious workers translates to lower wages and fewer (if any) benefits, and/or lack of a pension for the precarious worker, and from the employer's perspective, a quick and easy fix. Precarious workers suffer personally and professionally, and the post-secondary institution ultimately puts at risk the quality of education offered to students.

Help safeguard permanent, secure jobs at Langara College and other post-secondary institutions by becoming informed. Employment precarity is but one of several issues plaguing post-secondary education on a national scale - a reduction in federal funding, corporatization, and the burden of tuition fees and student debt to add just a few. It is now #OurTimeToAct (<https://cupe.ca/our-time-act>). At the local level, pay close attention to employment practices and question an employer's decision to transplant a permanent job with a temporary contract. Support your members and preserve our jobs!

decisions

The Executive decided:

At the Executive and Society meetings on February 6, February 19, 2019 the following decisions were made:

- To purchase theatre and brochure advertisements for DOXA (Documentary Film Festival).
- To send up to four delegates to the National Bargaining Conference in Saskatoon, at least one of which will be staff.
- That Sally Bankiner attend the memorial service for deceased member and former steward Emily Howard and brings flowers and a card at a cost of up to \$100.
- To uphold the decision of the Grievance Committee and not proceed to arbitration on a grievance in the Parks Sector.
- To instruct staff to accept an offer from the employer to settle a grievance in the Parks Sector.
- To book off the Local 15 OH&S Committee to attend the Day of Mourning 2019 event.
- To purchase 16 tickets to the International Women's Day Dinner hosted by the Vancouver and District Labour Council, reserving four tickets for Executive Board members with the remaining tickets being made available to the members.
- To book off a member to volunteer at an International Women's Day event on March 8, 2019.
- To send one member from Emily Carr and one member from Langara College to the CICan 2019 conference in Ontario as per policy (formerly ACCC Conference).
- To appoint Joy Tullos to the Vancouver and District Council Municipal Engagement Committee.
- To appoint Thomas Leung as Acting VSB Chief Shop Steward from February 28 to March 5, 2019.
- To send two kids to Camp Jubilee under the Send a Kid to Camp program.
- To appoint Courtney Gillen to the CUPE Local 15 OH&S Committee.
- To purchase a retirement gift for a member at a cost of up to \$200.

The Members decided:

At the General Membership Meeting on February 27, 2019 the members in attendance made the following decisions:

- To destroy the ballots from the Vancouver Art Gallery Strike Vote.
- To destroy the ballots from the Vancouver Art Gallery Ratification of Agreement vote.



The Members' Voice is published nine times a year for members of CUPE Local 15 - Vancouver Municipal, Education and Community Workers. The deadline for submissions is 9:00 a.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. All submissions may be edited for brevity and clarity. Signed articles and letters do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of CUPE Local 15.

CUPE Local 15

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Local 15 is a chartered affiliate of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and is also affiliated with the CUPE British Columbia Division, CUPE Metro District Council, the Vancouver & District Labour Council, and the BC Federation of Labour. CUPE 15 is a member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM).

CUPE Local 15 Executive Board

Table Officers:

President: Warren Williams
Secretary-Treasurer: Sally Bankiner
1st Vice President: Santino Scardillo
2nd Vice President: Debbie Mohabir

Sector Representatives:

City: Lorna Kao, Kamal Gautam
College/University: Gaye Fowler, Alex Fowler
Cultural: Noel Graves Macul
Health/HSSCA: Allison Bell
Health/HSPBA: Mia Nickel
Parks: Kyle Larson, Starla Bayley
K-12: Peggy Wong, Cynthia Schadt

Trustees:

Thomas Leung, Ravina Lal, Donna Petersen

Staff Representatives:

Kathie Currie, John Geppert, Steve Salsman, Gail Johnson

Office & Administrative Staff:

Mark Gloumeau, Accounting Coordinator
Rosemary Matheson, Office Manager
Barbara Simpson, Office Assistant
Nadia Thibault, Office Assistant
Nancy Strider, Accounting Assistant
Tia Tang, Office Assistant

Building Service Worker:

Elaine Duan

CUPE National Representatives:

Chris Losito, Tanya Paterson

The CUPE Local 15 office is very old and unfortunately not accessible. For our members with mobility challenges please note that the office is on the 3rd floor and there is no elevator. If you are attending an appointment or meeting with one of our staff, please contact them in advance to make alternate arrangements for the meeting place or call the Secretary-Treasurer at 604-879-4671.

We sincerely apologize and want you to know we are working very hard to rectify the accessibility issues with our building.

Power and Secrecy

by Darren Parks, City

It was said, "Power corrupts, and there is nothing more corrupting than power exercised in secret" by Daniel Schorr, a journalist of 60 years and a huge thorn in the side of the Nixon Whitehouse.

Our union has those who are in power, most are elected officers, and some are not. The means we use to constrain those who are in power, is with rules. These rules are the CUPE National Constitution, and our Local 15 Bylaws and Policies. I've previously written about this with "Policies and Procedures", in the April 2018 issues of The Members' Voice. The importance of these rules cannot be understated; it is our only protection from over-reach by the ones in power. The bylaws and policies have been reviewed and a motion to amend them is up for membership vote this month. The process that the people in power have used to get to this point bears examination. This process can only be described as power exercised in secret.

The Bylaw Committee is charged with the review of the Local's bylaws and policies, it is reported that the only members of the Bylaw Committee are the four table officers; President, 1st and 2nd Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. When the committee to review the rules is made up of the people the rules are meant to restrain; that should raise a red flag. As members can you recall any notice of meetings of the Bylaw Committee published? Can you recall any attempts at meaningful consultation with the membership by the committee? Transparency? Accountability? Any of the hallmarks of parliamentary procedure? That's one of our bylaws, by the way, Section 11. All meetings of the Local shall be conducted in accordance with the basic principles of Canadian parliamentary procedure.

In fact, the rules demand that our voices as members are part of committees. From our Local's Policies and Procedures, Sec. 3.1.6, The Committees should make every effort to involve everyone who shows any interest at all in the work of the committee. That's strong language, and I can tell you, resistance by the powers that be is immense against involvement by anyone. Allow me to recount an event that happened today (March 1st) to illustrate my point.

At the February Membership Meeting the President commented that the Bylaw Committee would be meeting with the Executive Board on Friday. There is nothing unusual about a committee making a report to the executive. In fact, Policy 3.1.7 requires the committee to submit that written report for inclusion in the Members' Voice. I inquired with the President as to what type a meeting and when is it scheduled. The President described it as an Executive Board meeting with only one item on the agenda, the bylaws. He wouldn't disclose the time, saying that it was a closed meeting for Executive Board only. Well that's odd, as Policy 2.2.8 says, All CUPE Local 15 members in good standing have the right to attend Executive meetings as observers. The

Executive may, however by majority vote proceed in camera when circumstances dictate. How did the President know the day before the meeting that the majority would vote to go in camera?

Generally "in camera" is used in areas where the immediate disclosure could lead to a deleterious release of information. Normally financial, legal or privacy is at issue. Not sure how bylaw revision is confidential. My opinion is that the use of the "in camera" rule amounts to an abuse of power in this circumstance.

Of course I went to the meeting and was promptly barred from attending by the 1st Vice-President. The VP stated it was a Bylaw Committee meeting that was, in camera. So much for transparency. Who was at that meeting? What could justify secrecy around a routine item like bylaw revision? Was it an Executive Board meeting or a Bylaw Committee meeting? I don't know, but if I was the powers that be, and I wanted to do a "power grab", this is what it would look like.

What should we do? We all need to look closely at any proposed changes. The President committed at the membership meeting to post on the CUPE 15 website the text of any proposed amendments. We need to read the changes with this in mind, even the most innocuous looking change can significantly limit our ability to constrain the power of the union's officers. We need to work together to affect change. I can be reached at darrenparks.local15@gmail.com. I invite us all to confer and work together. Lastly, we need to go to this upcoming March meeting. We need to debate, amend and vote for bylaw amendments that put the power back in the hands of the membership, where it rightly belongs.

Always remember that, "CUPE is a democratic union in which the members make the decisions, determine the policies, and set the direction of their union. At all levels, it is the rank-and-file members who determine by majority vote what the union does." 2017 CUPE Constitution pg: iii.

I can't do it alone, I need you there.

Ed Note: To provide clarification and a brief history, the committee was formed in 2011 originally as a sub-committee of the Executive Board. Later, regular members were also on it. The committee met several times over the next few years to do the work but for various reasons committee members dropped off until only the President was left. In the interest of completing this important work, the President brought in the CUPE National Representative assigned to Local 15 to assist and to ensure any proposed bylaw amendments were in compliance with the CUPE National Constitution. Over the past three months the proposed changes went to the CUPE Local 15 Finance Committee for review and recommendations, and subsequently to the Executive Board for review, further revisions, and recommendations. This has taken place over four all-day meetings. As reported at the February General Membership Meeting, the proposed bylaw amendments were posted on the union website at www.cupe15.org.

International Solidarity Report

By Kamal Gautam, International Solidarity Committee and City Sector Representative

Is Venezuela on the brink?

We have witnessed that across Canada, the United States and around the world people have been going to the streets in rallies, with pickets, demanding support for a political transition that doesn't threaten the old guard so much that it fights to the end.

Canada must join other nations that help a country that has virtually been destroyed over the past decade. This requires careful diplomacy, multilateralism, and quiet pressure, not a boast.

Venezuela also poses a challenge for the democratic party. There are worrying signs that the new democratic foreign policy could turn out to be from a reflexive isolationism that is not so different from President Trump's own America First instincts.

According to the United Nations' report, Venezuela's problems have been primarily caused by its own government. The Venezuelan people have not been allowed to determine their own future or pick their own leaders for years, going back to Hugo Chavez's rule. The current government has clung to power by rigging elections, crushing opposition parties, muzzling the media and using lethal force against protesters.

In January 2019 in a single week, pro Maduro forces allegedly killed at least 30 people and arrested at least 850.

The simplest, bleakest indicator of how bad things are in Venezuela is that since 2015 an estimated three million Venezuelans have fled the country. This is equivalent to an exodus of 33 million Americans based on USA population data. But millions more Venezuelans are staying back and fighting. They have come out in droves and are using a constitutional process to shift control of the government from regime to elected parliament.

Over the years the Venezuelan government has used its oil wealth to support anti-American movements throughout Latin America from Cuba to Nicaragua and not surprisingly, supported by a rogue's gallery of strongmen including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Venezuela will require tact, caution, regional engagement and more. To shield us from dangers of mistakes and bad actions, the answer is surely not resolute inaction.

The world is complicated. USA power can be misused, information is never enough, and the default position of the left has tended to be inaction, so it's best to stay out but these criteria could be a counsel for inaction at home as well. In a world beset by wars and civil wars, religious zealotry, terrorist attacks, far right nationalism, tyrannical governments, gross inequalities and wide spread poverty and hunger, the world requires intelligent leftist attention.

The International Solidarity Committee's deepest commitment is solidarity with people in trouble. Right now, there are millions in trouble in our hemisphere who are trying to help themselves. They deserve the active support of labour unions and the American left.