

TFEU President's Report : Fall 2011

Overview

With BCTF in the middle of negotiations for a new contract, TFEU members have been working incredibly hard to support many new initiatives and projects. I believe that we have gone more than the "extra mile" in this support which is proof of the quality and strength of skills and dedication of our members.

At the 3 month mark I have had an interesting, busy and varied introduction to the job of President. I have been helped tremendously by a strong and dedicated team within the Executive and the Committees. I especially want to thank Christine Choinski for her unwavering support and hard work on so many fronts – and her sense of humour. The work is mostly mediation and problem solving, trying to find the win-win in what can be a traumatic and complex situation.

Liaison and Mediation

This is the day to day work and follows some very standard routes. I meet with members daily to discuss workplace issues; lack of accommodation for medical needs; local conflicts; special situations that often don't have solutions in the Collective Agreement. These issues or requests are taken generally to the HR Liaison weekly meeting, the TFEU Executive weekly meeting or are resolved immediately. Most of the time we can find a good solution by negotiation or discussion.

Examples include determining bonussing; dealing with work outside of the Job Description; extending probations to allow for a better evaluation; arranging Term position "swaps"; interpreting Collective Agreement articles with the Employer and many other similar situations.

Grievances

Until 2 weeks ago there was little to report on the formal Grievances front. We were able to get some of the older Grievances re-opened in exchange for closing some other "out of time" ones but otherwise no Grievances were handled.

The last 2 weeks, however, have been much busier. A Step 1 grievance meeting was held, followed by my filing another Step 1 grievance and a Step 2 grievance. It is likely that another Step 1 will be filed shortly.

I have also been working with our Labour lawyer on several cases – some with formal grievances and some that are related to Independent Medical Exams, sick leaves, long term disability or other functions. I am currently working very closely with the lawyer on one particular case and will shortly be bringing him 3 more.

This is the more complex and time consuming aspect of the work. Some of these cases take years to resolve and at any one time there are 7 or 8 of them.

Bargaining

I have been actively involved in the Coquitlam Teachers Association bargaining with our sub-local. We are hoping to develop a first contract by February 2012. The process can be quite slow and involved but years of bargaining within BCGEU and CUPE have helped to understand the process.

We have had incredible support from Jean Rands in this work. Our strategy for the other contracts, including the BCTF one, is four-fold:

- A member survey – Charlie Naylor will lead this
- Grievances will be compiled – Christine Choinski
- We will develop Common Language – hopefully across all contracts – Jean Rands
- Training on Negotiating skills and contract language will be arranged.
- Benefits will be reviewed.

We will probably not get into serious bargaining until late summer but lots of preparation work needs to be done in the meantime. Sub-local contracts may start earlier based on demand and local needs.

Sub-Locals

I have been meeting with sub-local staff and working on local grievances and issues. We have 4 sub-locals: Coquitlam, Vancouver Elementary, Vancouver Secondary and Surrey.

I plan to meet with all staff by Christmas. We will then have an extended network and better communications.

Jean and I will be preparing a small handbook for sub-locals over the next few months.

BCTF Liaison Committee

We have a number of key items for this high level committee. I am hoping that a meeting will be scheduled shortly. The items are:

- **No Less than Minimum postings** : This is the "hottest" topic for us. Equivalent skills, experience, knowledge and seniority are not always evaluated as alternatives to specific certificates.
- **Computer Loan Program** : I have been informed that there may not be budget for this year but it should be pursued as a requested benefit.
- **Contracting Out** : There have been several consulting contracts where the Union has not been informed; in fact Human Resources is often unaware of these consultants. We will be taking a very firm stance on contracting out as this is directly taking work away from our Members who are fully capable of doing this work. There are 5 contracts that we are aware of currently.

Other Work

We are looking at the concept of appointing a Privacy Officer to sit on the Executive. This may be one of the current Executive members or a new appointment. We want to develop policies regarding confidentiality, privacy and other related needs.

Committees

Several Committees are operating and some new ones will get started at the end of October including the Appendix K and No Less than Minimum committees. I have also asked management to initiate the technology working group in a new format and potentially some other joint committees.

Committee work is the lifeblood of TFEU and enables us to deliver services and support across a wide spectrum. You will regularly see me asking for volunteers and we have always had good responses.

Thank You, Peter Valbonesi

President, TFEU