Message from the President
May 2011

Surveys, and getting the inside track on your point of view, is a hot subject right now. That is why we are doing a CEU Member Survey. We want to find out what CEU members think about the union and the employer. We believe this survey is important, and we encourage you to respond to our survey invitation if you have not already done so. You may ask why the CEU membership survey is important when the employer is also doing two new surveys.

The last full employer survey was done in 2007; and as the recent WSN article relates, employees raised a number of areas of concern. The employer’s FAQ piqued my interest as I read about what they have done to address our concerns. Back then, a major concern was the volume of work and your inability to handle it. According to the FAQ, “all but a few classifications are fully staffed today.”

Quite an achievement! But, I do not see any analysis of whether these full staffing levels are sufficient to handle your current work volume. The CEU survey asks about the number of people doing the work while the employer’s does not. We think this question is vital while the employer’s tact seems like “maybe if we don’t ask, we won’t have to address it” approach. Many members I speak to clearly identify work volume and appropriate staffing levels as a major concern because staffing shortages affects people’s health.

Another area of concern raised in the 2007 employer survey dealt with work performance. This is one of those areas where the Union says the wording of a sentence can be detrimental to an employee’s health! The survey asked you to agree/disagree to this statement; poor performers are managed so that their performance improves. Many of you disagreed.

We believe a better approach is, do you agree/disagree with the statement; the employer provides the support required to allow poor performers to improve and succeed. The CEU survey will ask this question. We all want members to be given an opportunity to succeed at their job! That support includes the right tools to do the job, the right amount of staffing and the right management support.

The CEU executive believes the difference between its survey and the employer’s is significant. Our survey has a number of questions about the union, including the issues you want us to focus on. This type of input from you is vital because it fits into our strategic objective of doing the best job we possibly can when we represent you.

I encourage every CEU member to fill out the CEU Member Survey. We look forward to gaining a clear picture of how you see the union and your workplace. And we will use your views to guide the union when we act on your behalf.

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Building union solidarity starts with making sure the union’s executive and stewards are prepared to advocate for union members. That is why the CEU’s executive and stewards met in Victoria recently to engage in two days of leadership education and exchange information on emerging workplace issues.

A strong contingent of 37 stewards took part in the weekend conference along with all of the executive and staff. Participant evaluations confirmed the conference goals were effective and assisted your CEU advocates to work on your behalf. The conference goals, achieved through hands on exercises and role play, included:

- Key elements for interpreting the collective agreement
- Communication techniques
- How to research your issue and develop a position
- Strategies for supporting our members and stewards when processing grievances

One of the most consistent pieces of feedback regarding the education piece of the weekend was the appreciation for the role play. All agreed the conference was a confidence builder, and a great place to network with other stewards. The importance of steward mentoring was also supported during a discussion about steward development.

Candace Philpitt, Chair of the Shop Stewards, noted, “time away from home and distractions, “helps develop team building and relationships; you need that when issues come up.” She added this environment allowed stewards to focus their attention because, “Stewards see and feel what grievances look like going into meetings with management” and in the course of the conference, “work through it, together.”

Candace knows what stewarding is all about. She became a steward in 2007 when she had an issue with her pay. She started asking questions, and one thing led to another. Candace’s enquiring personality, enjoyment of challenges, and her talent for organizing community events lent themselves nicely to her Chair of the Shop Stewards role.

One of the noteworthy facts about the stewards attending the weekend conference was the number of new stewards. “We had 14 new stewards come on board in the last year. Eleven were able to attend the conference. Now our steward group reflects a wide range of ages and ethnic backgrounds. It is great to see that our strategic plan to ensure the Union reflects the diversity of our membership is succeeding,” said Sandra Wright, CEU President.

The union is looking for members interested in filling the remaining six vacant steward positions. “They won’t be left on their own to learn this work. There’s always support from other stewards, the executive and advisors, and the staff. And at every opportunity, we offer education like this, to enhance and expand advocacy skills,” said Wright.

Stewarding takes time and effort, and sometimes personal time, but Christine Sher, one of our new stewards, thinks the effort is worth it. The conference helped her with stewarding, because, “It was really informative. I learned a lot about how to represent an individual when meeting with management. I also learned tools that will help me, and my peers, when dealing with union issues.” Sher says she did not know that much about handling workplace issues and “I have now learned that management has to be respectful and not cross boundaries.”

The conference also included two inspiring guest
New staff representative celebrates deep union roots

As a carpenter’s daughter, Kim Zander learned the importance of unions. Her father was involved in his union for many years, and when Kim graduated, she became a Shorowerker. As a member of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, she learned first-hand about the struggles of working people and how to advocate for them.

After leaving the Fishermen’s Union, Kim became the Coordinator of the Vancouver Unemployed Action Centre, set up by the Vancouver Labour Council. This work coincided with her involvement in the birth of the Solidarity Coalition. Through this work, she honed her advocacy skills representing unemployed workers. “All low income and vulnerable peoples, face many challenges when dealing with public services and resources, so I learned a lot about politics, lobbying, and organizing.

“Over the years, I got involved in many different things including the Peace Movement, the Women’s Movement, International Solidarity work for Latin America, South Africa and Palestine. I helped organize and attended two International Youth and Student Festivals. I was also part of the 50th Anniversary of the On To Ottawa Trek, organized by the Trade Union Movement in 1985. For this commemoration, we completed the Trek to Ottawa that the federal government of 1935 forcibly stopped,” said Kim.

Kim’s next challenge was working for the Tenants’ Rights Action Coalition for seven years; advocating for tenants, lobbying for legislative changes, developing promotional materials and the legal education program. She was also instrumental in TRAC’s successful court challenge where the discriminatory municipal laws against basement suites were overturned.

Prior to joining the CEU, Kim worked for the Hospital Employees Union for ten years where she did grievance handling, classification work, Section 54 processes, critiques of employer policies, work to manage constant restructuring, third party hearings, and facilitation for membership education programs. Kim brings a wealth of experience in advocacy work to the CEU, and we are very happy Kim joined our staff.

Welcome to the CEU Kim!
Taxes are what we pay to be Canadian, to have a high quality of life and to have an opportunity to reach our full potential. Our parents and grandparents invested in our future through their taxes for hospitals, public highways, schools, parks and libraries. Today all reap in the benefit of those investments. But we must also be responsible, and continue to invest in our children’s and their children’s futures.

Public services like health care and education are important to all of us, and they are a good value. If we need to pay little more for those services, then we should, or we may just end up paying more for them in the private sector. Fair taxes benefit us all.

That is the message of the "All Together Now!" campaign sponsored by NUPGE (National Union of Public and Government Employees, to which the CEU is affiliated). At the April steward conference we heard some interesting facts about taxes and public services from guest presenter Anna Morton, a long-time union activist with the HSA (Health Sciences Association). Morton volunteers her time for this work because of her passion and commitment to the NUPGE campaign and its three goals:

- Defending public employees;
- Promoting public services; and
- Fighting for tax fairness.

The campaign is about the need to support public services and fair taxation in Canada. Stewards watched a short and punchy video designed to counter the “we cannot afford public services” argument. According to Morton, public services are within our means. It’s a matter of making choices about where our tax dollars are spent; and who is, and who is not, contributing their fair share of taxes. The NUPGE campaign urges Canadians to support fair taxation so the pot of money needed to support the public good is properly funded.

Please see your steward if you would like more information, or visit the website at AllTogetherNow.nupge.ca.

It is with great sadness that the CEU recently learned about the passing of two past Presidents. Both past Presidents served two terms during the challenging 1980s. The CEU executive wishes to pass along our condolences to their families and friends.

K. C. (Kim) Jones served as CEU President, from December 1981 to November 1984. He also served as a shop steward and as the union parliamentarian for several years. K.C. passed away on May 1, 2011.

Les Corlett served as CEU President, from December 1984 to November 1987. Les passed away on March 10, 2011. The CEU is deeply grateful to both men for their hard work, and for their dedication to helping CEU members and the trade union movement. We are stronger today because of their contributions.
What is SHARE? SHARE stands for Shareholder Association for Research and Education. You might wonder what this has to do with you. Well, the CEU uses information from SHARE because we want to make sure certain ethical standards are met while we manage our investments.

SHARE describes itself as a Canadian leader in responsible investment services, research and education for institutional investors. By guiding us through the world of environmental, social and governance issues or ESG factors, the CEU executive can be confident the companies we invest in follow progressive social justice practices.

These ESG factors are recognized more and more by Canadian investors and can affect the long term value of the company. Positive ESG factors include environmental protection practices, extensive involvement in conservation and recycling measures and ethical employment practices; such as trade union recognition and fair treatment for workers.

Activities attracting negative ESG factors include involvement in armaments and nuclear weapons manufacturing, animal exploitation and testing, supporting oppressive regimes and pornography.

SHARE continuously lobbies companies to improve their social and environmental records. This service is linked to the shareholder engagement processes the CEU and other like-minded organizations use to make our ethical investment voices louder.

In a lot of ways environmental considerations just make sense. Companies making a positive contribution to the world, its peoples and wildlife are less likely to have problems with regulations, costly court actions, strikes or product boycotts. We would rather invest in a forestry company that plants more trees than it cuts down because that is more sustainable in the long term, both environmentally and financially.

“Say on pay” is another concept gaining public support. This idea relates to executive compensation packages and is gaining popularity in many countries. In England, it has legislative clout ensuring shareholders are not only aware of what is contained in an executive compensation package, they can also change it. This trend is also gaining popularity in Canada, but to date, there is no enabling legislation.

Say on pay may also help to improve corporate governance. If the CEO of a public company wants a bonus, shareholders can question the company’s environmental and labour practices. For example, a National Railroad CEO received the maximum bonus despite the company’s poor safety record. The following year, shareholder pressure ensured the CEO did not receive the bonus because the safety record remained poor. This type of shareholder engagement makes sense to us.

The CEU investment committee supports ethical business practices and that is why we work with SHARE. This service helps us to make sure the companies we invest in further positive ESG factors, including executive accountability and transparency for executive compensation packages.

As it turns out mom was right, when we SHARE it really does work.

Laura Snow is a CEU steward and member of the Investment Committee

We all win when we SHARE

Have you taken the Union’s on-line survey yet?

Last day to submit is June 1, 2011
What happens before a vacancy is posted?

Have you been waiting for a particular posting to go up? Under Article 15, there are a number of steps that must happen before any vacancy can be posted for competition.

Collective agreement language cannot compel the employer to fill vacancies. It is the employer's decision, and they are guided by their own business criteria for budget and operational planning. This is an area of labour relations law known as management rights. Once the employer decides to fill a permanent position, a requisition is completed and submitted to Human Resources. At that point, the pre-posting process under Clause 15.01 applies.

Under Clause 15.01, the vacancy is first offered to employees, by seniority, to a list of different categories of employees. The order of the list, as it appears in the collective agreement, is very important. The employer must carefully determine if there are any eligible employees in each category, before going on to the next. When the vacancy is not filled through one of the pre-postings categories it will be posted for competition under Clause 15.02.

Pre-posting placements can include reappointments and/or relocations under Article 70 (Reorganization), appointments by the Rehabilitation Committee under Article 22 (Long-Term Disability), placements under Clause 23.06 (Inability), special transfers, etc. In all of these cases, there are comprehensive approval criteria for both parties.

Pre-posting placements also include assignments under Article 51, status transfers and lateral transfers. It is also important to note the procedures employees must follow in order to be eligible for these pre-posting placements. Failure to complete the required electronic requests, or adding one’s name to the list before the requisition is received in HR, for example, could mean a missed opportunity. And when that happens, an incumbent is not permitted to compete in the regular posting.

The employer has provided detailed instructions and FAQs on WSN. If you hope to make a move in your own classification or apply for a new position, we encourage you to review the collective agreement with your Shop Steward.

Your Executive Members

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

Rachel Barbour, Director
Toni Murray, Director
Bill Hawkins, Director
Chris Lundquist, Director
Adele Peters, Director

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