

DRAFT

Vancouver and District Area Council Meeting – April 7, 2021

Via Zoom due to Covid-19 pandemic

In Attendance:

Todd Smith (President, AGR 20044), Jen Horsley (Secretary, UPCE 20095), Crystal Isaac (1st Vice President, UTE 20027), Andre Bessette (2nd Vice President, UNE 20301), Warren Wulff (UCTE 20088), Terri Lee (AGR 20044), Alice Wang (MHGYWC Rep), Damir Moric (CEIU 20937), Shanti Amal (CEIU 20938), Navid Tasouji (CEIU 20949)

Monica Urrutia – Staff

Guests - **Sam Wiese, Diane Wood - BC FORUM**

Regrets: Marion McLarty (UNE 20088)

Meeting Called to Order at 6:20 PM

Agenda:

1. **Welcome & Indigenous Acknowledgement**
2. **Adopt the Agenda**
3. **Guest Speakers – Sam Wiese & Diane Wood – BC FORUM**
 - BC Federation of Retired Union Members
4. **Prior Minutes**
 - Feb 17 AGM Minutes, attached for reference (note: any necessary amendments should be raised at next AGM in 2022)
5. **Business arising from 2021 AGM or Nov 2020 meeting**
 - Planning for 2021
6. **Standing Updates**
 - Metro Vancouver Alliance
 - Phoenix
 - Covid-19
7. **Treasurer's Report**
8. **Affiliate Reports (3 Minutes)**
 - if you want it in the minutes please send a written report to Jen Horsley.
9. **Round Table**
10. **Next Meeting date**

Welcome & Indigenous Acknowledgement – Todd opened the meeting with the acknowledgement of the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh and invited the members in attendance to reflect on the territory they were calling in from.

Guest Speakers – Sam Wiese & Dianne Wood – BC FORUM

Before the official start of the meeting Todd introduced Diane and Sam from the BC Federation of Retired Union Members. They spoke about what the Federation offers to members and the work that the members carry on after retirement supporting union and community causes.

The BC FORUM is a partisan group who generally support progressive parties, in particular the NDP. The Federation is open to retired or near retirement union members who are 50 or better. Membership is \$20/year or \$49 for 3 years, most affiliated unions cover the first year of membership. With membership you have access to a \$2500 insurance policy, the quarterly magazine Advocate and the opportunity to stay connected to campaigns. The magazine is also sent out to all BC MLAs and MPs. BC FORUM knows that seniors vote and are still interested in labour issues and the Labour Council mailouts regarding candidate support.

What are they currently working on? Affordable housing, a pre-consultation submission on the Federal Budget, and they will of course be responding to the budget.

Sam noted that while most of our members have a good retirement package, there are some who don't work for the federal government who don't. The BC FORUM offers group benefits through WE Insurance.

Some past campaigns have been fighting along with CURC for Bill C-27, writing to the government on behalf of federal workers during bargaining, carrying on the Phoenix fight for retired members, and speaking out against the privatization of care homes.

Please share information about BC FORUM amongst your members, for more information their website is www.bcforum.ca

After the guest speakers the meeting was called to order. Todd started the meeting by calling on the participants to briefly introduce themselves as there were some new faces.

Adoption of the Agenda (M/S/C) -Warren/Crystal

Review Draft Minutes of AGM

The minutes were reviewed for omissions or errors, but will not be ratified until the AGM in 2022. It was noted that Sharon Cowie was in attendance.

Business Arising – Planning for 2021

Todd asked the members to think about what events may be going forward, likely virtually and which ones we could or would participate in so that we can start a framework for events for this year.

Jen mentioned that she had seen a Facebook post about May Day going virtual, May 1, 2021 10 AM. Details can be found at: www.facebook.com/events/161830665737605 . This one is out of Ontario, there doesn't seem to be anything currently planned in BC.

Todd asked if anyone had heard anything about events for Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, 2021? PSAC had done an online event last year. Andre said he hadn't heard anything yet, but would keep the Area Council informed if he heard anything.

Asian Heritage Month (May 2021) will be holding online events focusing on anti-Asian racism, more information to follow.

Labour Day (September 6, 2021) Todd was fairly certain that this would still be online this year and we can look into participating.

CLiFF Festival – Canadian Labour International Film Festival, usually takes place in November. We can look into hosting an online event, maybe co-hosting with other committees in the region.

Todd mentioned that we had discussed member engagement at the AGM and we should be thinking about different ways to connect and engage with members, how do we build 2 way communication.

Andre suggested that we should look into inviting another engaging key note speaker that will draw people in and that we need to find out how people want to us to communicate with them/how they want to be able to communicate with us.

Todd also mentioned that there is the potential for a Federal Election and we should think about holding a town hall again, virtual this time.

Warren suggested that another engagement topic we could hold an event around would be the future of work or working from home, especially when our main communication tool in the workplace has been the union board.

Damir mentioned that his employer has allowed a virtual union board, but that there is very little control over the content granted to the union, everything that goes up must go through an approval process as it is on the employer's website. A better way of doing this might just be to have the board hosted on the union platform and just have a link to it on the employer site, that would offer more control over content.

Monica noted that the virtual union board was a recent bargaining gain and that if the employer is creating barriers the local should seek support from their Component, in particular because this is a new right and it needs to be pushed so that it is maintained.

Alice asked for the CA reference in Chat, which Monica provided.

Navid also noted that the union (all levels) should jump on standards around teleworking before the employer establishes them without input. He mentioned that his local is having a hard time getting member data or contact information, especially for new members.

Damir asked if we use Facebook or other social media platforms and said that one thing he has learned is that you need to screen your membership on the page, can be more work. He's finding he doesn't post much on his Local's page.

Standing Updates

Financial Report

Aaron was not in attendance, so Todd gave the report. We have not received our yearly disbursement from the REVPs office yet, we have not spent any funds since the last meeting.

Metro Vancouver Alliance

Jen and Shane are the Area Council's delegates to the MVA. Jen described the work that the MVA engages in and told the Council that they are currently in the process of rebuilding. She mentioned that they had run a very successful Individual Donor Campaign which raised almost \$30,000 towards operating and the hiring of a new Organizer. The next fundraising phase has begun with engagement of leaders of member organizations.

Phoenix

Todd told the council that there has been no traction from the government on the taxability of damages and encouraged members to sign and share the PSAC petition. Todd opened the floor for questions and comments.

Monica said that there was a recent update from the REVP, Jamey Mills, that he had contacted all of the MPs from BC and had met with over half of them already seeking support for the PSACs assertion that the damages should not be taxable.

Todd encouraged members to contact their MP by phone. Because of the current practice of screening calls it is actually easier to leave a strongly worded message that emphasizes that you want someone to call you back. If we are tenacious, if we keep at it, we will win, as an example the occupation of Bill Morneau's MP Office at the last PSAC National Convention.

COVID-19

Todd opened the floor for the members to share what is going on in their workplaces.

Damir opened the discussion by mentioning that his employer has new occupancy plans for Harbour Centre, which are looking at hybrid work. Increased occupancy wouldn't start until September at the earliest and only if immunization is closer to completion. His department has hired 30% more people than they actually have space for and he believes that working from home is here to stay. Damir thinks that the majority will not be forced back to the office, at the most a hybrid model. The employer is taking the opportunity to implement Office 2020, which includes no personalized desks. There is already a desk reservation system in place.

Warren can see this happening a lot in office environments, a "hoteling" of stations. He is not sure how this will work in his group, most of the people he works with are scientists who work in laboratories and libraries, the Office 2020 approach is not a one size fits all, especially in science based environments.

Navid noted that there was already a hybrid model happening in his workplace before COVID with shared office space. He had previously been an advocate for teleworking, but now sees that it is not one size fits all and needs to be beneficial to those it works for. The financial savings of implementing teleworking or hybrid models should go towards work/life balance for those who the model doesn't work for. We need to be able to respond and input before this becomes a done deal.

Todd expressed concerns around Duty to Accommodate and working from home. Management from his employer have been saying no to accommodations if an employee chooses to work from home.

Shanti said that she has received a lot of feedback on what's been happening. Her employer is only allowing 10 employees on site at a time, no one is allowed to stay a full day. She agrees that DTA issues will come up.

Alice asked if anyone else has been notified when there is a positive case in their workplace. She was recently notified of an asymptomatic case at a worksite. She is concerned that the notifications don't specify where the employee works, just that "an employee" has tested positive. In her workplace about half the staff goes in at least once a week, those who are in the mailroom are there full-time.

Damir indicated that he has received a few emails as well, they discretely disclose the affected area in his building, without giving enough detail to reveal identity (privacy). In his workplace there are also some employees who specifically have to be in the office. The employer is providing masks.

Monica mentioned that the teleworking issue has also come up in the bargaining survey and that information should be used to craft what the workplace will look like. She also mentioned that members should be filing a WCB claim if they have contracted COVID at work, you have up to one year to file.

Jen spoke to her workplace being deemed an essential service and that very few of her members are able to work from home. There are screening practices in place, but there have been recent positive cases and exposures. There are not clear guidelines on what is required to return to work afterwards, one member who was returning after an exposure said they feared being treated like a leper. The employer is working on having employees vaccinated sooner.

Warren asked a clarifying question, should a WCB claim be filed if it is indeterminate where COVID was contracted. Monica answered no, there would be a requirement to have good evidence, in particular if someone is working from home.

Alice asked about the status of using 699 leave and the employer's stance that employees need to use up all of their other leaves before they can use this. Monica answered that if the request is based on any of the prohibited grounds a personal grievance should be filed. She also mentioned that there are still 2 policy grievances in process on this issue.

Jen mentioned that her employer will not pay anyone for time off for self-isolation unless they have tested positive.

Affiliate Reports

Warren Wulff (UCTE 20088)

- We held our AGM on 3 March and elected our new executive.
- Warren Wulff (Pres), Nicholas Pearson (V-P), Nina Parry (Sec), Hillary Taylor (Treas)
- The local has been relatively quiet although we won a grievance when a member was suspended for voicing his personal opinion online. A victory for freedom of speech.

New Business

There was no new business brought forward.

Round Table

Warren told everyone about a grievance win in his local over comments made on election day on social media.

Navid is participating in the upcoming virtual Workout to Conquer Cancer in May.

Damir expressed concerns over 2 upcoming workshops being hosted by his employer on political activity in the workplace. He asked if PSAC was aware of the workshops and who he should forward this information to? He said that the invitation was sent out department wide. Monica answered that he has a right to share with his union representatives in his component and the PSAC and requested that he

forward it to her. Todd mentioned that there is a 1 page poster about our political rights available on the PSACBC website, but Damir noted that the employer would likely be reluctant to put it up on their virtual union board.

Jen mentioned the letter writing campaign that is currently circulating to support the members of Unite Here 40! who are locked out at the Hilton Metrotown.

Alice said that she was having an issue with her employer not allowing Personal Selection Leave because the exam portion is being offered virtually in a take home format. The employer is interpreting the article literally that the member would be required to be physically present at an exam for the leave to apply. She personally has had to take a day and a half of her vacation to complete an exam. Todd replied that he hadn't heard of it being an issue in his workplace. Navid said that he had been granted the leave to attend a virtual interview. Damir noted that the article speaks to travel time, so it does not take into account the time needed in a virtual world.

Monica spoke about upcoming education in the region. There will be virtual offerings of Convention Procedures the following week. The PSAC has also released a self-paced Virtual Convention Procedures course. There will also be an orientation course offered to delegates to the upcoming PSAC BC Convention. Three virtual TUB (Talking Union Basics) courses have been scheduled, they occur over 3 days with frequent breaks, the Saturday is a half day attendance. They are on May 20-22, June 3-5, June 17-19. In recognition of screen fatigue there will be some compensation for attendance. There is a virtual Grievance Handling course in the planning stages and there may be more courses offered over the summer. Recordings of previous webinars are available on the PSAC BC website. Members are encouraged to contact their PSAC staff rep if they have suggestions for topics for webinars.

Damir spoke about challenges that he is facing in his local which has become more province wide rather than site specific. Managers and team leaders are now managing employees in many places which is creating confusion over local representation. With the current geographic divisions of locals some members are not getting representation or being represented by the wrong local. An example is a call centre that is located in Kamloops, but actually reports to a manager in Vancouver and should be represented by the Vancouver local. Todd said that Damir should speak to his Component who would have jurisdiction over the organization of locals. Damir responded that he hopes that his Component evolves to keep up with the employer and the changes to the workplace. The call centre mentioned is currently being represented by another local because the local for them has not yet been formed.

Todd closed by saying that he appreciated that there was not a packed agenda so that there was an opportunity for fulsome discussions.

Next Meeting

June 9, 2021

September 15, 2021

Adjourned 8:10 PM (M/S/C) Andre/Damir