



newsletter

Environmental, Technical and Operational Services

Issue 1 — Fall 2014





VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

George Buis

This is my first report to you as Vice President of the Environmental, Technical and Operational Component (Component 20) and I hope this is the start of something you find beneficial and informative.

Let me begin by introducing myself. I am currently in my 33rd year with the provincial government — a career that began in 1981 at the Kispiox Forest District (Hazelton BC) then to the Kamloops Forest District. After a year at the Kamloops I took a position with the Kamloops Forest Region. Job duties and reporting relations continued to change as legislation and ministry structures changed over the years.

In 2010 my unit was moved from the ministry of Forests to the Ministry of Environment Conservation Officer Service, where my base position currently resides. After being elected the Chair of Component 20 this February I now find myself being booked off work full time doing Component Chair duties.

When I began my career 33 years ago I never thought my roles as a civil servant would change as much as it has over the years. I also never thought we would have to put as much time and energy into defending the role of the civil service to our employer the Provincial Government.

While this is my reality, we all need to keep in mind how broad and diverse our Component is. We represent approximately 5500 members in both direct government in-direct government service; regular/part time/auxiliary and seasonal.

One of the goals of this newsletter is to introduce to you the jobs we all do for the provincial government and the private sector. Our membership is so broad we have enough material for 10 years of newsletters, so let's get started!

This newsletter can become whatever we want to make it. Naturally we will try to make it a place to update you on some of the business of the Component and what is important to you.

In this edition you will be introduced to the editorial staff and they will let you know how you can contribute. We will also provide information about our recent 49th Tri-Annual Constitutional Convention.

In each edition, we would like to profile at least one career area as well as provide hi-lights of happenings around our Component. So if you have news worthy stories you would like to share please pass them on. We will also blend in general information from the union perspective that you as members should be aware of.

This fall the union will embark on Shop Steward elections for each worksite. I cannot stress enough how important it is for each worksite to have a shop steward and in some locations multiple stewards. We all need to recognize the work our stewards put in on a continual basis. I want to thank the stewards that have not decided to let their name stand for the next three year term, THANK-YOU.

I encourage you to consider if this is the type of role you could fill at your worksite. If you have questions about this opportunity please check with your shop steward or local chair-person to find out more.

Finally a few words of thanks to some of our members that have stepped up to serve this province providing emergency response over the past few months.

First of all, to our Wildfire Management Branch - Wildland Forest Fire Fighters and support staff you have done an outstanding job responding to the third worst fire season we have had in our province.

Secondly the ministry of Environment staff responding to the Mt Polley disaster. Even though devastation has occurred in the forest, lakes and streams you all have done admirably to protect the resources of this province and ensure the protection and safety to the public.

This is not minimize the jobs done each day by so many of our members on behalf of the people of this province your service is outstanding!! Kudos and keep up the great work! Enjoy this newsletter and let us know what you think about it.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! Email feedback, articles and photos to: bcgeu2010@gmail.com.

Contributing Editors: Hank Glover, Glen Gibson, Colleen Loguisto, Heather Lilburn, George Buis.

History of Component 20

Also known as the Environmental, Technical and Operational (ETO) Component of the BCGEU, it is made up of a wide variety of public service and public sector employees who work in many fields. Many are employed in the natural resource sector ministries, but members work in other ministries and other certifications as well.

From Labourers and Technicians to Professional Biologists and Conservation Officers, one might guess that members are assigned to Component 20 because they don't fit into any other component, but if you look at the history of the component, the reasons start to become evident.

Component 20 was formed in 1994 with the merger of two former components. The Environment, Resource and Operations Component (Comp 9) and the Engineering, Technical and Inspectional Component (Comp. 11) were combined (9+11=20).

An interesting note, the new component was actually named Environment, Technical and Operations, but a printing error on the 10th agreement led to the adoption of the longer name.

At this time, all employees were public servants. Over the years, some of the groups were devolved from government into other organizations such as the BC Safety Authority and the Freshwater Fish-

eries Society.

They remain members of the BCGEU and they also remain in Component 20, but bargain separate collective agreements. (To keep it easier, administrative service component members were moved to Component 20 when their organizations left government).

Component 20 has probably the most diverse set of occupations in the BCGEU. With members located across the province, it can be challenging to meet everyone's needs. The component executive has a long history of listening to members and working with partners to bring forth their concerns to the BCGEU, employers and the general public.

Understanding the ETO Component Agreement

Component 20 members in the Master Bargaining Unit (direct government employees for the most part) have two volumes of the collective agreement. All employees are covered by the Master Agreement and ETO members also are covered by the ETO agreement.

The ETO agreement can be confusing to read, as some of the language only applies to selected employees, in three groups: Appendix 2 classifications, Appendix 3 classifications and Appendix 5 classifications. They are listed on pages 98-100 of the 16th Component Agreement.

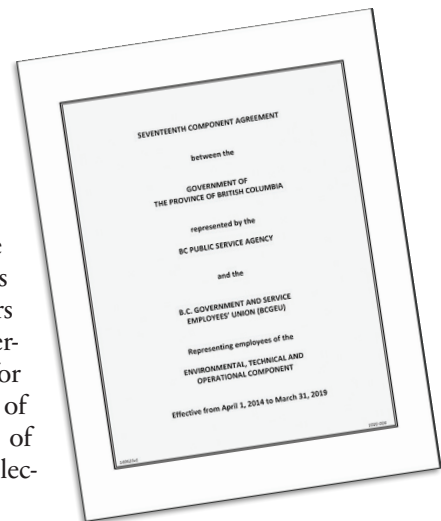
These divisions were intended to preserve the rights of members that were unique to previous agreements. Over the years different groups came together and formed the ETO component, bringing their contract language with them. At each and every round of bargaining, attempts were made by the union to move all members into superior provisions, but the employer did not want to do so.

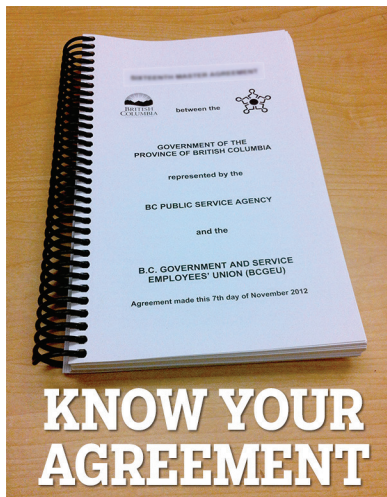
The employer did offer to remove the superior provisions from the members, but the union insisted that

no one lose a benefit by moving to the ETO component. The compromise was that members would have different provisions for things like point of assembly, hours of work, vacation selection, etc.

To use the component agreement, first determine your group appendix designation. Contact your steward for assistance. Once you figure out your appendix number, read the whole contract clause and see which sections apply to you.

Of course, collective agreements have been interpreted differently over the years. Sometimes the meaning of an article has been changed by past arbitrations. Contact your steward and staff members for assistance. Your component executive are also available to help.





Public Service workers are seeing their workloads increasing more and more each day. Ministries are constantly re-organizing the work our members perform.

The current hiring freeze has resulted in employees being asked to “substitute” and take on duties that are normally performed by higher

Master Agreement Clauses 27.4 and 28.3: Substitution Pay and Classification Issues

rated classifications. In some cases the substitution is directly into a position at a higher classification, but in other cases, the substitution is the assignment of only some of the duties of a higher classification.

What is sometimes not made clear at the beginning of the assignment is the compensation, if any. Employees, and Supervisors, often make the assumption that there will be a higher rate of pay for the substitution and/or additional duties.

During or after the assignment members may not feel they have been compensated fairly for the work performed.

There is often disagreement between the member and the Employer as to whether, or to what extent, they are performing the

“principal duties” of a higher paying position. If there is disagreement on the pay for the substitution assignment, the member may file a grievance under Clause 27.4.

If the assignment has concluded a member cannot file a classification appeal under Clause 28.3 because classification appeals can only relate to the position that is currently being occupied.

Before accepting a temporary assignment or substitution, members should ask for and receive written confirmation from their excluded manager what wage rate they will receive.

If you have questions or problems regarding substitution or classification appeals contact your Shop Steward.

Forest Practices Board investigation exposes unsafe bridges on forestry roads

A Forest Practices Board (FPB) report on the state of forestry road bridges, released in March (<http://bit.ly/FPB-report>), highlights systemic problems with the ‘professional reliance’ governance model in the forestry sector and may be threatening the safety of forestry workers.

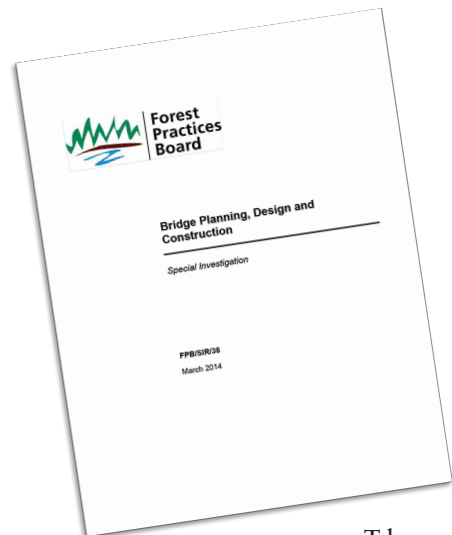
An investigation of 216 bridges on forestry roads across the province showed that 19 bridges were obviously unsafe, 13 were questionable. Forty per cent did not have complete plans and 74 bridges did not have the required sign-off by a forestry professional.

The FPB news release states: “what we found is highly disturbing, given the emphasis government and industry have placed on safety in recent years... The problem is that

some professionals are not performing to the standards government and the public expect.”

Since 2004, when the BC government introduced legislation that created the ‘professional reliance’ regulatory model in the forest sector, the union has warned that the combination of staff cuts and self-regulation would have a negative impact on compliance and enforcement.

In a 2011 report, ‘BC Forests in Crisis: A Community Call for Reform’ (<http://bit.ly/forests-in-crisis>) The BCGEU concluded: “Deregulation and deep cuts to the B.C. Forest Service have eroded forest stewardship, causing a groundswell of alarm about the current and future health of our forests and a disturbing lack of public oversight in the woods.”



The FPB investigation calls on “professional associations that govern foresters and engineers take action to improve performance by their members.” The BCGEU believes the responsibility for monitoring, compliance and enforcement should be returned to the public service, with appropriate staffing levels to ensure the safety and environmental sustainability of BC’s forestry sector.

BCGEU makes submission on Area-Based Forest Tenures

On May 23, 2014, the BCGEU made a submission to the B.C. Liberal government's consultation on area-based forest tenures, which ran from April 1 to May 30.

The B.C. government was proposing to change some volume-based forest licenses to new or expanded Tree Farm Licenses (TFLs) – granting some existing licensees exclusive, long-term rights to log trees in a defined area, essentially extending private rights to public land.

The BCGEU disagreed with the government's claim that the changes would result in better forest management and increased investment in local processing facilities. There is little evidence to support the government's position, and no guarantee that the stated benefits would materialize.

The union believes the proposal would primarily benefit B.C.'s big-

gest forest companies, which control the majority of logging land and does little to enhance community involvement in the land use process.

Our submission said tenure conversions alone cannot address mid-term supply issues or ensure best forest practices. More fundamental change is needed to ensure long-term viability of B.C.'s forest industry.

Strong public oversight should be restored, to ensure forest companies are living up to their legal commitments. Forestry regulations need to be strengthened, with less reliance on industry self-regulation. Comprehensive land use planning and a more open log market must be established, to encourage increased community involvement and diversification.

Rather than passing off forest management to industry, the BCGEU believes that government should reassert its leadership role and re-invest in the professional

stewardship of B.C.'s public forests.

The BCGEU urged the government to broaden the public consultation on this important issue, to develop a comprehensive, publicly supported action plan for our forests.

At the end of August, the final report on the consultation was released. Many of the issues and concerns raised in our submission were reflected in the report's recommendations. At the same time the report was released, the government announced that it would not be proceeding with legislative changes to enable forest license conversions in fall 2014 or spring 2015. Although TFL conversions are off the table for now, the government did not rule out the possibility of bringing forward legislation forward at some point in the future.

<http://bit.ly/TLF-submission>

<http://bit.ly/ABFT-final-report>

Member Focus: BC Safety Authority

The BC Safety Authority was devolved from government in 2004. It enforces the Safety Standards Act and BC Railways Act and employs over 250 BCGEU members. BCSA is an independent, self-funded organization that oversees the safe installation and operation of technical systems and equipment. In addition to issuing permits, licences etc, we work to reduce safety risks through assessment, education, enforcement and research. We oversee safety in:

- Electrical equipment and systems
- Boilers, pressure vessels and refrigeration systems
- Natural gas and propane appliances and systems, including hydrogen
- Elevating devices, such as elevators and escalators
- Railways, including commuter rail
- Passenger ropeways, such as aerial trams and ski lifts
- Amusement devices
- Complex and integrated technical systems involving several technologies

Member Focus: Operations Officer

As OGC Operations Officers, we inspect all oil and gas activities for which there is appropriate legislation (Oil and Gas Activities Act; Drilling & Production Regulations; Environmental Protection & Management Regulation) This includes wells, facilities, pipelines, seismic programs etc.

Operations Officers are the boots on the ground from the start of project construction to when the site is producing. We also respond to incidences and complaints. The role of inspector is best understood if you examine the job description for this position.

Our response to fracking is limited, in that most of the activity is below ground. We have visited sites where active fracking is going on and have checked for basic issues such as spills, odors, secondary containment, grounding, signage etc.



WHAT WE DO – Conservation Officers

Conservation Officers (COs) are sworn peace officers, providing environmental police services to the Province of British Columbia. Officers protect our fish, wildlife and environment by helping to ensure healthy game populations and clean land, air and water for our future generations.

- You probably know we are the lead agency that is mandated to deal with dangerous wildlife and human wildlife conflict in BC.
- We also initiate complex investigations, conduct surveillances and carry out covert operations to put a stop to many types of environmental crime.
- In addition to the core policing legislation that COs must know, we also have to know the following areas of law: Parks, Land and Forest Crimes, Off Road Vehicle Use, Safe Boating, Fish and Wildlife, Water Protection, Pollution, Mining and Resource import and export laws.
- COs are first responders and are often called upon to do water rescue and search and rescue. We locate missing persons.
- COs provide assistance during natural disasters such as fires, flooding and extreme snow events.
- COs provide investigational and technical support and expertise to a myriad of enforcement agencies.
- COs receive specialized weapons, equipment and training in order to protect the public and our natural resources.
- COs arrest criminals, make drug seizures, recover stolen property and deal with impaired drivers

and boaters.

- BC Conservation Officers have the most diverse resource law enforcement job in Canada. Being poorly paid and compensated is hurting our recruitment and retention of officers. Wages are rarely able to compete to other enforcement agencies, which provide additional challenges for training and recruitment.

Member Focus: **Meat Inspectors**

The component executive would like to welcome meat inspection staff to Component 20.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken over the inspection of provincially licensed abattoirs, and have hired Scientific Technical Officers (STO's) to inspect poultry and red meat facilities. As we haven't previously had inspectors assigned to facilities, a number of issues have come up around how inspectors fit into the component agreement.

The union had concerns around the points of assembly and hours of work for inspectors and met with the employer to discuss these issues. Some progress has been made, but we've only reached agreement on a few items to date. We hope to resume discussions soon. Schedules may need to be adjusted to accommodate employee and employers.

Contact your local chairperson and/or Component 20 vice president, George Buis. Contact info is available at address posted on the bottom left.

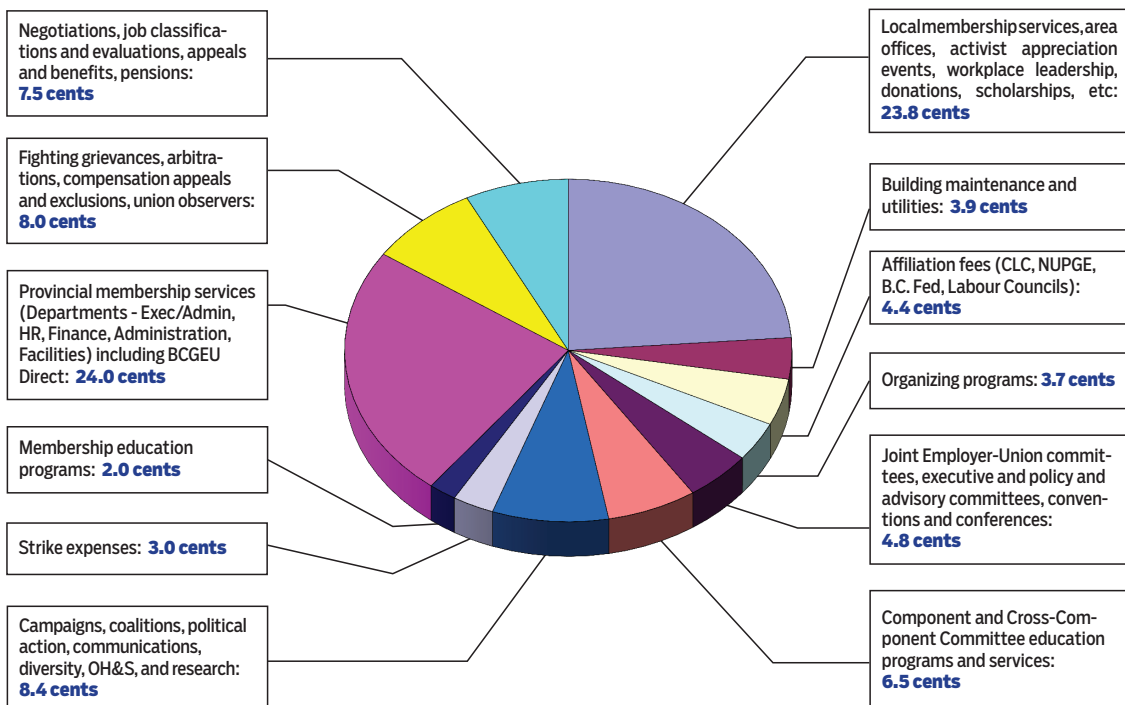


CONVENTION 2014 – 1. BCGEU pres. Stephanie Smith and Darryl Walker with Component 20 life member Dean Draper. 2. Smith and Walker with Comp. 20 life member Ken MacKenzie. Smith and Walker with life member George Butcher. 4. Component 20 delegates on the convention floor at the 49th Constitutional Convention at the Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver.



How your dues dollar works for you in 2014

BCGEU Constitution & Financial Manual: www.bcgau.ca/Constitution_and_financial_manual



Unifor 467 / cope 378

www.bcgau.ca/components/20

CAMPAIGNS

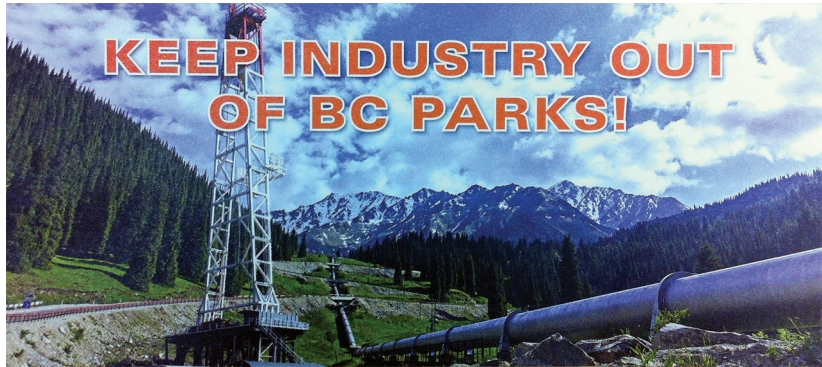
BCGEU joins environmental groups to Stand Up For BC Parks

On July 18, the BCGEU joined representatives from Sierra Club of BC, the Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society and the Wilderness Committee at a press conference in Vancouver to announce BC Parks Day of Action on July 19.

The group used the occasion to unroll a giant petition containing more than 167,000 names, demanding the BC government repeal the Park Amendment Act, which allows industrial activity in BC Parks, making it easier to remove land from parks for industrial purposes.

“Minister Polak admitted this legislation provides legal cover for industrial permits they had already granted in B.C. parks,” said BCGEU president Stephanie Smith. “It is unacceptable that such destructive public policy is being drafted on the fly, without any consultation with British Columbians.”

On July 19, volunteers spread out to BC parks asking visitors sign postcards calling for the repeal of the Park Amendment Act. Events took place in Lac du Bois, Sasquatch Provincial Park, Bridal Veil Falls Park,



Mount Seymour Provincial Park, Juan de Fuca Provincial Park, Golden Ears Provincial Park, Ruckle Park, Drumbeg Provincial Park and Lakelse Lake Park.

The BCGEU also set up a Facebook campaign page where people can email the Premier and Environment Minister.

- News Release and video of pres. Stephanie Smith: <http://bit.ly/BC-Parks-Action>
- President's blog post: <http://bit.ly/parks-blog>
- BCGEU Facebook campaign page: <https://www.facebook.com/saveBCparks>

For The Record: Correcting the minister's comments on staff cuts

In an August 20 CBC interview on the Mount Polley tailings spill, Environment Minister Mary Polak was asked what has changed since the Auditor General's critical 2011 report on compliance and enforcement in the Environment ministry.

Minister Polak said: “We haven't dropped the number of people we have in our conservation officer service, and the numbers that work in Natural Resource Operations.”

Here are the facts: Staff reductions in FLNRO and other ‘dirt ministries’

- **4 per cent (138 FTE)** overall staff reduction in FLNRO ministry

between Jan. 2012 – Feb. 2014.

- **43 per cent cut (123 FTE)** in Natural Resource Officers in FLNRO since 2009 according to a 2013 report by the Forest Practices Board.
- **11.2 per cent (107 FTE)** cut in Ministry of Environment staff between 2012 and 2014.
- **10.3 per cent (14 FTE)** reduction in conservation officers between 2002 and 2014, according to union seniority lists.
- **28.7 per cent (2047 FTE)** cut in staffing levels of resource ministries since 2001.

In 2010, the Conservation Officer Service (COS) scope of work was expanded, with no additional staff resources allocated by government.

A 2011 report by then-Chief Conservation Officer Edward Illi, concludes: “The COS does not have adequate uniformed officers deployed throughout BC. The study suggests an increase of 40 officers is necessary, in the short and medium term.”

Staff reductions since 2002 has had dramatically reduced government's ability to provide adequate monitoring and enforcement. Environmental disasters like the Mount Polley tailings spill should come as little surprise to voters.