

CEIU National Vice President Manitoba and Saskatchewan Region Report to Locals 2019

I have been sitting here trying to think what would be most relevant for me to report on to you. There are so many issues in the WT Region. I wish I had better news all around for you but I'm sorry I don't.

Most people want the good news first so let's start with that.

The good news is that the people who are involved in our union, starting at the local level, including your local executive and stewards are dedicated hardworking people who don't get paid a dime for all the extra work they do on your behalf and the support they give to you.

They do it because they care. They believe in standing up for what is right, fair and just.

They realize that in order to progress in an organization that the organization first must be a fair, transparent, diverse, honest, safe, inclusive and respectful place to work and they have committed their own personal time and energy to educate themselves and work hard towards making our workplaces truly a workplace of choice.

They realize that in order to provide fair, just, equitable, diverse, inclusive and respectful service to our clients, the citizens of Canada, that our workplaces must reflect all these things first.

That sisters and brothers is the good news.

Now some of the not so good news:

Phoenix

Our pay systems continue to be a mess, don't get me wrong, our members that work in the pay system work hard at what they do, they all try their best to ensure we get paid what we worked hard to earn and paid it when we are entitled to be paid. The problem remains the system itself. Our members are fighting an uphill battle against an unwieldy system that just is not capable of doing what is expected of it. Everyday I hear comments and receive complaints from members regarding errors in their pay, overpayment recoveries that just should not be happening as well as many other types of problems that should have been corrected by now. The latest stat from HR Pay is that for every single person that works for ESDC we have two outstanding Phoenix issues.

We have had some success in dealing with Phoenix, we have a union escalation process for those not getting paid at all that we have had some success with and recently the employer has seen the light and introduced new legislation to change the tax laws so that our members who have been overpaid no longer have to pay back the gross amount. This amount by the way was never received but members will now only have to repay the net amount that they did receive. The other good part of this is that it is

to be retroactive back to 2016. We don't know yet how it is going to work for those that have already paid back overpayments or are in the process of paying back overpayments but check in with your local executive and stewards and we will share all we know when we know it.

The employer is working on a replacement for Phoenix and has scheduled demonstrations across Canada. You should have received an email from the employer about this already, try to attend, after all it is your pay.

Bargaining

As I am sure you have already heard there is NO good news from the bargaining tables. After many bargaining sessions without any results, Treasury Board has proposed an increase of 0.75 per cent per year for 4 years, NO retroactive payments and a full year to implement after any agreement is signed. So, what Treasury Board has proposed is in fact a TWO-YEAR WAGE FREEZE.

We have suffered through Phoenix, have not had a real raise to our wages in over twenty years, went through WFA, had our severance taken, fought to keep our basic sick leave and now are offered a wage freeze. So much for "a new relationship with public service workers", "one of respect", that was promised during the last election.

I encourage each one of you to support your bargaining team, when asked for help by your locals, stand up for what you believe in and to do the right thing by your fellow members.

I often hear from new members that hey, we have good wages and great benefits, well where do you think they came from, they come from the colleagues that went before you and from your union working hard on your behalf to get you those wages and benefits. Keep in mind, they can't do it alone. You need to stand up for yourself and your colleagues and get involved, if you don't fight to keep what we all worked hard to get and to keep moving forward then when we lose them, we only have ourselves to blame.

The Board has recently refused our Declaration of Impasse and has directed us back to the bargaining tables. Stay tuned for updates.

Now back to some good news, your regional ESDC leadership, starting with the ADM Sylvie Berube and all the business line's Regional Director Generals have committed to engaging and consulting with your regional union leadership in order to find resolution for the Issues in the region and to work together to make our workplaces safe, just, transparent and fair.

In October 2018 a JLP UMCC training course was held for the regional leadership, it was a terrific success and we all look forward to building on its results. All the union leadership is committed to ensuring that the commitments made at the regional labour management table are implemented and that we work together to make the workplace a better place for all of us as well as for our clients.

Staffing

We have been working hard at the regional table to address the many staffing issues that you have brought to our attention. A big concern was those members that worked hard to qualify for a pool only to have the pool expired before they could be offered a position from the pool. We have brought your concerns to the employer and hope that soon that the employer will agree to automatically transfer any members currently in a pool to any new pools created for the same position where the SOMC and work description has not changed, hopefully no one will be abandoned.

Currently we are also looking at non-advertised acting appointments. The employer of course has the right to manage and that includes making a four month less a day appointment without putting out a poster or a request for expressions of interest. We believe that this is the employers right.

But.. if the employer wishes to extend that acting opportunity beyond the four months less a day, then the employer should be required to put out a request for expressions of interest to the initial area of selection. This is only fair.

You have told us that you want the opportunity to gain the experience from an acting opportunity, which will give you the possibility of applying on a poster for whatever position it is. That it is only fair that everyone has the opportunity to know where and what positions are available and the opportunity to express your interest in being considered for an acting opportunity in that position. We will continue to fight for this for you.

You have also raised the issue of the use of Casual employees by our department. Casual employees have a place in ESDC, they are meant for short term projects where there are no other staffing options. You have identified to us that Casualls are being hired in some of your workplaces to do what you believe is regular jobs that are usually done by our members or that could or should be done on an acting basis. We will raise your concerns to the regional table and ask the employer to provide statistics for casual employees hired for 2019 and a breakdown of the work they are doing in and for each business line.

In October 2018 I attended the PSAC Federal Public Service Labour Relations Board staffing complaints training in Ottawa and look forward to putting the training I received into practice.

Health and Safety

The main issues with Health and Safety continue to be with our regional health and safety committees, they are responsible, together with the regional ADM to ensure that ESDC's OSH programs and policies are implemented and followed in the regions. Hopefully a resolution to the current issues will be forthcoming. Stay tuned.

The other key issue in our workplaces is OSH training; think hard, when did you last take the mandatory health and safety training? Under our current legislation health and safety training is mandatory for all managers, supervisors, committee members AND employees. Once our regional committees are back fully functioning this should be our first order of business. Once everyone is trained many of the other issues in the region will disappear.

Grievances

I have been working with many of you directly to answer questions and to provide explanations about your rights regarding DTA's, PMA's, discipline issues, classification, leave issues, staffing issues, collective agreement questions, phoenix issues and your right to grieve.

I often am discouraged by the direction some of our business lines are heading in relation to their employees and shocked by the lack of compassion and empathy shown towards some of your issues and concerns. But then, a Manager or Director stands up and either presents a solution or is willing to accept a solution and we can avoid having to file a grievance; this is what keeps me going.

Frankly I feel that we as union reps have failed when we must file a grievance, that we should have been able to work out a solution, come to an agreement or a resolution acceptable to all instead of having to file a grievance. In some cases that is just not possible or may have already been taken out of our hands and we have no choice but to file a grievance to protect our members rights and employment.

I know that many members are afraid to talk to their union about their issues or about filing a grievance, they fear hidden retribution or that they will damage their career progression. These fears are just that, fears. As I have stated in most cases issues that are brought to the union are dealt with and a resolution that is acceptable to both management and the member is obtained without ever having to file a grievance.

Having said that, the right to grieve is yours and is a part of your collective agreement so don't be afraid to talk to your local rep and to seek their guidance and assistance, unhappy members in the workplace hurts all of us.

Regional Presidents Council

September 17-21st 2018 the second annual Manitoba Saskatchewan Regional Presidents council was held in Saskatoon Saskatchewan. All Local Presidents across Manitoba and Saskatchewan are members of the regional council and your Local President attended three days of training and a day and a half of council meetings.

The training was a day on Women's Issues and Allies and focused on issues in the workplace and how we, both women and men can work together to address the myriad of issues that women face in today's workplaces.

A full day was dedicated to Health and Safety training including rights, responsibilities and roles. The Canada Labour Code and regulations were reviewed, and many discussions were held on workplace specific issues.

A half day was dedicated to a roundtable where your local president presented the issues specific to your business line and workplace. This was eye opening for us all and our National President Eddy Bourque and National Executive Vice President Crystal Warner took many notes to take back to Ottawa to address.

As your NVP for Manitoba and Saskatchewan it was heart warming to see that all Local Presidents were willing to give up a full week of their time, their family, friends and personal commitments in order to attend the training so that they can better serve you, their members.

June 4-9, 2019 our next Presidents Council will be a joint meeting of all local President across the WT Region, the first ever for CEIU. Local Presidents from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan will attend in Winnipeg in honor of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. Two full days of training is planned with six different workshops. A day has been set aside for an employer's panel and the ESDC ADM and RDG's as well as IRCC ADM and the Chair of the IRB have been invited to present to the local presidents as panels and to answer questions raised by the Local presidents. A gala dinner is planned for Saturday evening at the Human Rights Museum.

My wife tells me that I write too long-winded reports that no one is going to read anyway so I will end it here.

I do want to close with the fact that your union is only as strong as the support that you provide it. That it is made up of people. Some of us with much knowledge, some of us just learning. None of us are perfect and we don't have all the answers. But we do have one thing in common; we are here for you, the members and nothing more.

Get involved; make your union and your workplace a safe, fair, respectful, inclusive, diverse and just place to work and an example to all of what a union and a workplace should be.

Respectfully submitted
In Solidarity

Dwight McLeod