

My last National Executive Vice-President (NEVP) report to the members of the National Executive (NE), and to all member and staff of the Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU), was delivered in October 2020.

As we continue, now passing the one-year mark of the Covid-19 pandemic, I will start by using this as an opportunity to continue urging all members and staff of CEIU to prioritize their own wellness and personal health and safety.

This report is going to be a bit different than my previous reports. It is my last formal report submitted as NEVP prior to the 2021 CEIU Triennial Convention. In the past, my reports have been focused on the mobilization of our membership. They have been focused on topics from labour/management tables. They have been focused on strengthening our locals. On equity. And on health and safety.

Since January 2017, I have served the members of CEIU in a wide variety of capacities. I have overseen six of the seven national standing committees of our union. I sit and/or co-chair at every national labour/management table with our three employers. I am the only elected member of the NE to serve our members at all three departmental National Policy Health and Safety tables with our employer. I have overseen and executed national campaigns. Assisted in co-developing our first ever national newsletter and overhauled our online presence. I have created new roles within our union to engage and serve our members. I have visited countless worksites and met countless members. And, I have overseen the representation section of our component.

I have done media interviews and sat across from Minister's advocating for the rights of our members. I have marched and lead countless rallies across this country.

And while I can advocate, and rally in my sleep. The most challenging work that I have done, is being a manager.

Along with this written report, as always, you will receive a copy of my activities report. As you will see since October, it has been challenging to find more than a day or two of consecutive rest. But I think, if I can be so bold, that my work ethic and commitment to our union, after four years, now speaks for itself. And I would invite the members of our NE to inquire about any of the meetings on my activity report. And remind you that I do my best to send updates on important and topical employer files asking to you share this information with the activists that fall under your portfolios or regions.

And because I have done these things and continue to do these things. This, my final report before convention, will focus on the staff of CEIU.

The CEIU national bylaws state that as NEVP, amongst many other responsibilities, I am primarily responsible for the staffing and allocation of work for the majority of the staff of CEIU. Along with the National President, I am responsible for administering the affairs of our union.

Some of my internal responsibilities have included co-chairing a working from home committee, an employment equity committee, and the health safety committee with our staff union. The Director of Representation and Labour Relations (DLRR), Guy Boulanger, reports to me directly, and I play the key organizing role, along with him as negotiator, in our staff collective bargaining process.

I write and update staff job descriptions, often oversee the classification and equity processes, and conduct the vast majority of staff interviews. I have re-written our staff policies and procedures that had

gone untouched since 2004 and have overseen the development and implementation of an SOP for Unionware, which as of January 1 2018 made CEIU a paperless union, as well as the development of an administrative manual on processes and procedures for members of our staff.

Over the years, we have fostered an incredibly dynamic team of employees. And where we have made mistakes along the way, it was almost always as a result of a lack of consultation, or a lack of transparency, or a lack of an equity lens. Two years ago, during a very challenging round of collective bargaining with our staff union, as an NE we voted to close and relocate the Ontario regional union office. And I believe, that at that time, the combined effects of a very difficult labour/management relationship with our staff union, challenges amongst the elected leadership coming out of our trusteeship and in many of our relationships around this table and with our staff, often made us struggle in our day to day work at CEIU. So much of our time, Eddy and myself, was consumed and focused on our employees, so much, that I was unable to find any work/life balance in my attempts to execute the full spectrum of my responsibilities as NEVP.

I think many of our staff would agree with me, when I state that many of these problems were long standing. That we inherited something that had been broken for well over a decade. And while we have created what I believe to be progressive changes to our unions structure and political composition in an effort to better serve our members, along the way, our staff's confidence in us wavered.

A lot has happened more recently, in the past two years. We have maintained for some time now, a very successful and collaborative relationship with our staff union. We have made efforts in consulting broadly, with employees, our health and safety committee, and our staff union before making decisions that impact operations. Without providing in camera details, this new round of collective bargaining we feel is going very well and we are optimistic about achieving a fair collective agreement for our employees. And I want to take this opportunity to thank the COPE 225 stewards for their efforts in this shift in culture at CEIU: Sylvain Archambault, Jeremie Leblanc, Pamela Meier-Duthie and Jessie Reis-Huggins. We don't always agree. But a tone of mutual respect has benefited our entire union.

We have been making significant efforts in doing our due diligence in using an equity lens, not only for staffing, but in work assignments. We are jointly taking employment equity training with representatives from our staff union as we collaborate to finalize our first Employment Equity Plan at CEIU. Our staff is more reflective of our membership than they have been in the known history of CEIU, with every equity seeking group represented.

But there is always more work to do. And not everything is going according to plan.

Over the past month, I have had many opportunities, as have members of the management team, to hear directly from our staff and our staff union, about the challenges faced by increasing workloads as a result of the pandemic.

These are things I know that the members of the NE can appreciate and have empathy with. Because you as well, are burning the candle at both ends. The pandemic has resulted in many of our local activists vacating their positions to prioritize their health and families. Along with this has come a new wave of CEIU activists, requiring additional support. Some locals are being left behind, as they struggle to just find new stewards. And this in turn, combined with a rise in administrative investigations, ongoing phoenix problems, job description reviews, workplace accommodation denials, and an overall

decline in the mental health of our membership, has created a surge in work for our representation staff.

In order to address this pressing concern that is affecting the wellness of our employees, we have agreed to form a joint committee with our staff to address workloads. I am committed to bringing this information forward to the NE as soon as the work is complete, so that decisions can be made about how best to support our staff. In the short term, working with Guy, we are providing new training, new tools, and re-assessing existing workloads as priorities continue to shift during these challenging times. The additional staff compliment in our Ontario region specifically has been beneficial in addressing our long-time grievance backlog, lessening the burden on current staff.

Additionally, as I am overseeing the consultation process for the report to convention on the future of telework at CEIU, I will be conducting simultaneous interviews, meetings and consultations with our staff and staff union to ensure collaboration and transparency as we make recommendations for consideration to our delegates at convention. It is my hope that the recommendations that come as a result of these consultations will be help jointly, by both elected leadership, and our employees, allowing our members a 1.5 to two year timeline to make decisions about how we structure ourselves internally moving forward. To me, this will ensure a direct return to the power of large scale decision back to where it belongs – to the members of CEIU.

Until then, I will remind our NE, that our membership numbers have risen significantly since the start of our mandate, and we must revisit, and reconsider our staff compliment. I know you will have many questions and that we will have productive discussions. Discussions that must also look beyond staff numbers, and consider at the same time the way our locals are being supported in their development and activism to ensure that we are structured as a union ought to be – from the ground up.

In closing, I want to thank you. I have brought many ideas to this table over the past four years. And by and large you, as members of our NE have supported and embraced them. When I ran four years ago, I had a very clear vision of the type of union that I wanted CEIU to be. We're not quite there yet. But we are so much closer then where we were coming out of trusteeship. And that's in no small part, because of the solidarity around this table.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving next to you. I must thank my Executive Assistant, Gina. For holding it down for me. Our Engagement Officer, Ashley, for keeping up with me. And Guy, our DRLR, for guiding me.

To my National President. It has been quite a journey. We have had high's and we had low's. And it was you who recently pointed out to me, that even when we have disagreed on the process, we have almost always agreed on the desired outcome for our members. Thank you for helping bring it back.

And in closing, I will speak now directly to the members of CEIU, to tell them that everyday, this role has allowed me to wake up with a sense of purpose. I commit to keep striving to do better. And I will continue, for as long as you will allow me, to serve our union.

Respectfully submitted in solidarity,

Crystal Warner
National Executive Vice-President of CEIU