

Department Reports

Operations (Ops)

It almost goes without saying that in the time that has passed between Convention 2019 and this year's Convention the world itself has changed in ways we could never have imagined or anticipated.

Looking closer to home, the impact of a worldwide pandemic on the SEIU-West's membership, Top Officers, staff, and all those connected to us was, without a doubt, deeply felt province-wide in our communities, workplaces, and living spaces. While it seems that we are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccination process well underway, we still need to remain vigilant about practicing healthy hand hygiene, physical distancing, and the limiting of our potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus and its variants.

In the Operations Department, limiting our exposure to the virus was the driving force behind the changes that to our work processes, office spaces and locations where the work itself was being performed. It seemed like in the blink of an eye we were coming into work on a daily basis to making significant alterations to our day to day working processes in a lockdown situation.

In spite of the rapid changes that were imposed on society in general, we knew as an organization and as a department that we had to provide continued support to all SEIU-West members who had no choice but to work on the front lines. We recognized that many of you were deemed essential workers and we had to do everything in our power to remain not only functional, but accessible as well.

I'm proud to say that when push came to shove, the Operations staff stepped up and faced this dire situation head on. Options were considered and changes were quickly implemented to accommodate the majority of Operations' work being performed remotely. This included, but was not limited to, several processes shifting from an in-person, hard copy-based model to an electronically-based model.

Fast forward to today, I can say that the many changes we have incorporated throughout this past year have become our "new normal" and the growth we have experienced as a result, I'm confident will see us through not only this pandemic, but will far exceed our expectations into the future for Operations' work processes. The positive effects of the many process changes has been, and will continue to be, felt throughout the entire Operations Department, if not the entire organization. I think one must agree that in this particular instance, the saying "necessity is the mother of invention" has never rang more true.

Pandemic effects aside, I can say, without a doubt, the Operations Department itself is a vibrant, exciting, multi-tasking/multi-servicing department where the sum of its parts (Front Line Services, Financial Services, Membership Dues, Information Technology, and



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Property Management) do in fact make up the whole. In terms of gaining a deeper appreciation for the role of the SEIU-West Operations Department, one must picture a big wheel slowly turning with a central hub connected to the outer rim by a series of spokes. The Operations Department is the organizational epicenter of the SEIU-West's "working wheel", providing a vital link to all the other departments (CB&E, PA&E, and Organizing), the membership, Executive Board, committees, and all other groups who intersect with us on a daily basis.

Even though this past year was spent driving change, it has always been with the goal to be continually seeking out efficiencies throughout the organization which serve to significantly enhance our footprint within the broader labour movement. By doing so, we keep the "working wheel" we call SEIU-West turning in the right direction!

To showcase the wonderful individuals who make up the Operations Department, below is a list of our team;

Office Administrative Assistant:

Alicia Zerr, Saskatoon
Cara Ross, Moose Jaw
Cindy Buchinski, Saskatoon (LOA)
Darlene Shawchuck, Saskatoon
Jessica Lablanc, Moose Jaw (LOA)
Joanne Buan, Saskatoon
Judy Polsfut, Swift Current
Karen Larson, Saskatoon
Leanne Johnson, Saskatoon
Lisa Pittman, Moose Jaw
Lorene Entz, Swift Current

Administrative Finance Coordinator:

Danielle Banadyga, Member Services, Swift Current
Joylene Mora, Staff and Operations, Saskatoon

Membership Dues Coordinator:

Dana Sture, Moose Jaw

Information Technology Support Technician:

Jeffrey Hendriks, Saskatoon (Jeff also makes site visits to the Moose Jaw & Swift Current offices)

I can say with much certainty that this skilled group of professionals is constantly working to generate a dynamic within SEIU-West that provides, accurate, efficient, confident service



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and support. The recipients of their services include but are not limited to, the SEIU-West staff, Top Officers, Trustees, Executive Board, Directors, standing committees, ad hoc working groups, and various bargaining committees across all sectors. In addition, they also manage the educational/training course logistics, conference and convention planning, merchandise sales, distribution of information/materials throughout the province, payroll support, member expenses, and dues processing. Some might say, it is a one stop shop for all things operations related.

Now that you have the background on who's who and what they do, allow me to offer an overview of our department's activities, as well as some highlights of our accomplishments.

The Operations Staff is a high-functioning team of individuals working on behalf of the SEIU-West membership in the three Saskatchewan offices (Moose Jaw, Swift Current, and Saskatoon). By virtue of this fact, it can be said that we are exceedingly busy and our work is incredibly diverse.

Here is a snapshot of a typical day in our department:

- We collect, process, and administer the membership's dues, as well as maintain and update the records for over 13,000 members.
- We process Member Expense Vouchers (MEVs). The MEV is a form members complete and is used to track and repay approved expenses incurred by the members attending educationals, conferences, and conventions, or are otherwise performing the work of the Union.
- We process and pay all other expenses/invoices for SEIU-West, from utility bills to hotel accommodations and meeting spaces, vendor services to admin supplies and office equipment.
- We are responsible for many of the human resource processes and systems, including the accurate and timely delivery of payroll services, compliance with regulatory bodies like the Canada Revenue Agency, relative to employee tax withholdings, remittances, employer reporting obligations, the administration of pension and benefit plans, the Employee Family Assistance Program, and many other processes and systems.
- We maintain stewardship of the organization's resources through a sound internal control structure and by ensuring that financial statements are prepared in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and the policies of SEIU-West.
- We provide critical support to the SEIU-West Treasurer and Trustees in terms of managing the financial operations for SEIU-West. This support is specific to all financial reporting, the maintenance of all bank accounts, expense budgeting, audit preparation/oversight, and other general financial processes.
- We provide administrative support for all SEIU-West training and education programs. This involves extending invitations, registering participants, booking venues and hotel accommodations, catering arrangements, and the preparation and



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distribution of all training manuals and supplies.

- We help to prepare and coordinate communications to our Unit Chairs and the broader membership. This includes the regular quarterly mail-out as well as ad hoc communication releases throughout the year.
- We provide clerical and administrative support and services. We type, format, file, train, organize, and help to coordinate events (like this convention), meetings, training sessions, and travel and accommodation arrangements.
- We provide Information Technology (IT) support for all departments, Top Officers, Executive Board, committees, members, guests, and visitors.
- We update our membership database regularly which, in turn, provides accurate and up-to-date information to all departments.
- Our administration staff coordinates with countless outside organizations from property management groups to the numerous vendors and subcontractors, employers and many government agencies. There are well over 100 outside interests that we manage within the operations of the Union.
- We manage the operations of our three properties in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Swift Current. This includes managing leases, taxes, insurance, maintenance, parking, and security. We have the assistance of a property management company for maintaining our building and grounds in Saskatoon.

Turning now to some of our accomplishments, we would like to share with you the following highlights.

External Audits. Our 2020 External Audit (at the time of writing this report) is in the initial stages of review. The extensive preparatory work by the Finance team (Finance Coordinators, Membership Dues Coordinator, and SEIU-West Treasurer) ensures that our records are kept up-to-date and that all relevant documentation is in place. This means taking stock of inventory and compiling all the information requested by the Auditors in the course of their work. Under the *Saskatchewan Employment Act*, the timeline for trade unions to complete their external audits has been significantly reduced. Under the new legislation, we are required to have the financial statements approved and available to our membership by June 30 of the current fiscal year. This means that the audit process must follow a very tight timeline and takes a high priority at the start of every new-year.

Expansion of our electronic document and record management methods. The application of the Document Locator (DL) system has been ongoing for a few years and we, as an organization, have been diligent in making it a staple in our workplace. We currently have two 'Super Users' who are able to perform all of our formatting and training needs. By expanding our everyday usage of the DL system, it has provided our organization with better oversight of and access to almost 100% of our documentation – both paper and electronic. Other benefits include the ability to conduct advanced searches, better control of the distribution system as well as enhanced security and recovery protection.



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Server, Internet, and Telecommunication Systems. We are continually monitoring and implementing all required upgrades to server (the central brain for SEIU-West's IT), as well as upgrades to the Internet and to our digital phone system in all three offices. The upgrades are essential to improving the user's capabilities across the board. This in turn allows us to provide excellent Wi-Fi coverage, enable critical information sharing, and conduct other important communications with staff and members between the three offices. Having the ability to connect in a reliable manner reduces the need to travel as much between the offices, saves time and streamlines costs. We also continually monitor and strategically make improvements to our Server and at the same time install the required upgrades to the system's back-ups. By undergoing this extensive IT review and upgrade process, it has continually provided an elevated level of confidence in our ability to troubleshoot the various day-to-day issues that present themselves. In addition, it will also provide a large measure of reassurance in the form of a triple layer of security against data loss due to the attempts of hackers trying to get into our system. These various backups are performed on a daily basis.

Video Conferencing. Our Video Conferencing system (Virtual Meeting Rooms/VMR) has been a huge success and with the onset of the pandemic, the timing of the implementation back in 2018/19 couldn't have been better. The VMR system has allowed us to hold face-to-face discussions, share critical information, and conduct various other meetings with members and staff alike between the three offices. We have also been able to successfully conduct crucial bargaining work between the Union and the many Employers, up to and including the signing of several Collective Bargaining Agreements. With the pandemic creating travel restrictions, having the ability to meet in this format has significantly reduced the requirement for any unnecessary travel or face-to-face meetings between the various bargaining committee representatives for both the Union and the Employers. In addition to limiting the exposure to the virus/variants, the VMR system has greatly saved our members and staff the precious commodity of time. Time spent traveling to and from offices and facilities across the province is reduced to almost zero, which also delivers on the expectation of improving cost effectiveness.

UnionWare. We continue to update our member and dues data collection program called UnionWare. We have added new processes which allow for better tracking of dues collected, MRC calls/responses and member education as well as detailed unit executive/shop steward information. Our IT staff person is mostly responsible for helping to fix glitches in the programming as well as keeping all staff, Officers, and Directors trained and up-to-date. We continue to import data from dozens of sources and we are committed to improving the process around how the data is received from the Employer. We are currently undertaking a very important project that will address any inadequacies we are experiencing with the importing of Member's data that we currently receive from the Employer.



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I would be amiss if I didn't acknowledge that the lion's share of the credit for the level of success we as a department are enjoying within the larger Organization of SEIU-West goes directly to the Operations staff. For it is through their hard work and dedication, that we are able to continually demonstrate our commitment to making a difference in the lives of their co-workers and the members of SEIU-West.

SEU Properties

SEU Properties is a duly formed corporation that has oversight at each of the SEIU-West buildings. Mainly it is responsible for the infrastructure and general building/property operations and is a separate entity from SEIU-West the Union. We have two buildings that are owned by SEU Properties (Saskatoon and Moose Jaw) and one building that we lease (Swift Current). SEU Properties also manages tenant and sub-tenant relations in Saskatoon and Swift Current respectively. The Directors of SEU Properties are continually assessing the needs for each of the three buildings and meet on a regular basis to discuss potential improvement projects for each property.

Renovations and Repairs. Due to fairly extensive renovations in all the offices in 2017-18, 2019 did not have any significant capital projects scheduled and with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020, any renovations that were scheduled had to be postponed. However all offices did receive COVID19 safety protocol installations. Any repairs/enhancements were kept to essential projects only.

Saskatoon

COVID19 physical distancing barriers, signage and sanitization kiosks were installed. In addition, there were some elevator upgrades (electrical), plumbing, heating and cooling enhancements as well as a few parking/grounds improvements.

Moose Jaw

COVID19 physical distancing barriers, signage and sanitization kiosks were installed. In addition, there were a few plumbing and heating enhancements.

Swift Current

COVID19 physical distancing barriers, signage and sanitization kiosks were installed. In addition, there were few plumbing, heating and electrical enhancements as well as a concerted effort to improve upon the air quality in the office through enhanced cleaning of ducting system.

In closing, I would at this time wish to acknowledge all the Convention delegates. I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your willingness to greatly increase your level of dedication (in the face of this global pandemic) to all those individuals that you provide care, assistance and services to. I would also like to say a big thank you to the SEIU-



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West Membership as a whole for their continued support and commitment to this great Union we call SEIU-West.

“Purple truly does Work!”

In solidarity,
Terry Zahorski, Director of Operations

