

April 2020

PRESIDENT'S REPORT to Delegates

President Stephen von Sychowski reported on activities since the March 2020 meeting.

COVID-19

Our office remains closed to visitors and meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We released a statement on this “VDLC Office Closure” and also a “COVID-19 Resources” page.

I am generally working from home and our Executive Assistant is working in office or from home. We are not working in-office at the same time and are taking cleaning precautions. The building is also closed, which adds additional protection.

Our May meeting will take place, likely via Zoom. More information on this coming soon.

Political Action

Our Political Action Committee, Municipal Engagement Committee, and Housing Action Team all have not met since the last meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, they are now able to meet via the VDLC’s new Zoom account and therefore may do so, if needed.

Our political action work has been focused on the COVID-19 pandemic including the following:

- An adhoc joint union committee of unions representing workers in Community Health and Community Social Services in the Downtown East Side has been formed and has met several times by conference call including a meeting with Mayor Kennedy Stewart. The committee is advancing a number of issues being faced by workers and residents in the DTES, most of all the need for worker representation in the coordination of the response to COVID-19 and the need for PPE. This committee has also written to Premier Horgan, Minister Bains, Mayor Stewart, and Minister Simpson regarding these issues.
- We cheered the announcement that Safe Supply has been approved for the City of Vancouver and helped to coordinate the involvement of an affiliate representing workers in this area in the roll-out.
- I have been in regular contact with the Vancouver Mayor’s Office around a variety of matters related to the pandemic.
- We issued statements and letters including “Emergency Action Needed for Working People and Families”, “Protect DTES Workers and Residents”, “New Tenant Protections Welcome, But More Action Still Needed”, and “Protect Frontline Workers”.
- We launched a petition “Support Frontline Workers” on our website. This is the first time we have done this on our website. It is doing well, adding backing to our demands.
- We were contacted by two affiliates about mobilizing laid-off workers to provide food services in the DTES and we plugged them into the appropriate city and United Way channels.
- We have circulated a number of appeals for assistance and opportunities to be involved around helping others during the pandemic. We also put up a page for affiliate and ally campaigns on our website.

- I am continuing to work with others on a future campaign around public housing, we will gradually begin to reach out to affiliate leaders over the coming weeks and months.
- Our Housing Action Team survey will go out to delegates via Survey Monkey shortly.
- The Executive Board is continuing to monitor the situation around COVID-19 and where we might intervene.

Day of Mourning

Since the usual public gathering is not possible, a video in the style of a live event is being released virtual event is being hosted on April 28 to mark the Day of Mourning. It will feature the usual organizational speakers including myself for VDLC and Laird Cronk for BCFED, as well as impact speakers who have been the victims of workplace injury or lost loved ones. The CLC is also producing shareable content for social media.

May Day

Since we cannot hold our usual May Day march and rally this year the May Day Planning Committee is looking at social media shareables. A statement will also be released from the Executive Board.

Labour Disputes

IBEW Local 213 is still on strike against Ledcor LTS.

Labour Education

We are postponing the May 11-14 Human Rights Boot Camp until September, in consultation with the facilitator. We are monitoring the potential need to postpone the other upcoming courses in May and June. We have many registrations for the courses but will hope to carry those over to a new date if needed.

YVR Joint Union Committee

The YVR Joint Union Committee met on April 2nd via Zoom. We have sent a letter to the YVR Board and published it online, calling for immediate action to protect workers. We are also talking about work on pressing for economic protection for workers facing layoff or reduced hours. A letter was also sent to Richmond Mayor and Council sharing our concerns.

Queen Alexandra Elementary

I had a conversation with John McCormick, Principal of Queen Alexandra Elementary on April 6. He says that a number of families stocked up from the Wishing Tree before the school closed. He is looking into the possibility of sending electronic gifts cards from the Wishing Tree to families in need during the pandemic. He says there are still funds in the account for now, so we can wait till post-pandemic for a fundraiser given the difficulties presently. He will let me know if there are any urgent things that arise.

T-Shirts

Stay tuned for information in the near future about an opportunity to pre-order VDLC t-shirts, union-made by One Movement Threads.

CLC Convention

The CLC Convention has been postponed to an undetermined date.

United Way

The United Way of the Lower Mainland is fundraising to help those in need during the pandemic, and has established a fund with Vancity and the Vancouver Foundation. It is also promoting its “Hi Neighbour” campaign as a way to maintain neighbourhood togetherness and support one another despite physical distancing and attempting to provide support to agencies and charities that are struggling during this time.

Metro Vancouver Alliance

MVA held a conference call of member organization leaders on April 2nd and again on the 9th to check in on how leaders and organizations are doing during the pandemic and start a discussion about what MVA could do under the circumstances.

Strategic Planning

Surveys to delegates and affiliate leaders will be sent out soon in order to collect data for use by the Executive Board in an upcoming Strategic Planning process.

Events Attended

March 16 – Meeting with Clarizza Singson of Karapatan, human rights organization in Negros, Philippines

March 16 – Meeting with Nicolas Raimbault re: research project on working class culture and community power in residential industrial neighbourhoods

March 16 – Meeting with Park Board Commissioners Irwin and Giesbrecht re: contracting out

March 17 – Conference call with Mayor Kennedy Stewart

March 18 – BC Federation of Labour Provincial Election Working Group

March 19 – DTES union Conference Call

March 23 – Conference call re: public housing

March 24 – CLC Labour Council conference call

March 25 – DTES union conference call

March 27 – Interview with Kayla Hilstob re: research project on automation

March 27 – CRLLI virtual gathering

March 30 – DTES unions conference call with Mayor Stewart

March 31 – BCFED Executive Council

April 2 – Day of Mourning meeting

April 2 – MVA leaders meeting

April 6 – Phone call with Principal John McCormack

April 7- DTES union Conference Call

April 7 – CLC Labour Council conference call

April 8 – United Way Labour Committee of the Board

April 8 – Docker Podcast Interview

April 9 – United Way Campaign Cabinet Labour Committee

April 9 – BCFED Sexual and Domestic Violence During COVID-19 Community Conversation

April 9 – MVA leaders meeting

April 9 – YVR Joint Union Committee

April 15 – United Way Campaign Cabinet

April 15 – United Way Labour Cabinet of the Board

April 15 – COVID-19 Working Group

April 16 – VDLC Executive Board

April 16 – Save Public Transit event