

Vancouver and District Area Council General Meeting – April 22, 2020

Via Teleconference due to Covid-19 pandemic

In Attendance:

Todd Smith (President, AGR 20044), Crystal Isaac (Vice President, UTE 20027), Jen Horsley (Secretary, UPCE 20095), Andre Bessette (UHEW 20729), Marion McLarty (UNE 20150), Warren Wolf (UCTE 20088), Anne-Marie Friesen (UHEW 20729), Aaron Chang (Treasurer, CEIU 20938), Jamey Mills (REVP), Monica Urrutia - Staff

Regrets:

Meeting started at 6:03 PM, Called to Order at 6:15 PM

Agenda:

1. Prior Minutes
 - a. 2020 AGM – review – cannot be passed until the next AGM
2. Business Arising from the Previous Minutes
 - a. Wet'suet'en Statement
3. Standing Updates
 - a. Financial Report
 - b. Metro Vancouver Alliance
 - c. Phoenix
4. Affiliate Reports
5. New Business
6. COVID-19
7. Round Table
8. Next Meetings

Welcome & Acknowledgement – Todd opened the meeting with the acknowledgement of the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh.

Before the meeting was called to order, the floor was given to Jamey to give the members an update on Covid-19 and the PSAC, bargaining, and Phoenix.

Covid-19: it is an unprecedented and difficult time and Jamey commended everyone for showing up for Canada, whether that is continuing to go to work or staying home. There have been a number of calls: Regional Council, NBOD, AEC, BCFed, National Officers and many councils and committees. One of the issues that has come up has been that federal government workers did not have access to their paystubs if they don't have access to the government VPN. There is a toll-free number on the website to access them. There has also been an agreement with the employer that Phoenix overpayments will not be collected at this time unless they were calculated before March. Jamey had the opportunity to speak to provincial political leaders about access to the critical workers childcare that has been offered. Some of our members would qualify under tier 2 of the program.

Bargaining: the members of Canada Post represented by UPCE (Union of Postal Communication Employees) have reached a tentative agreement and ratification will be taking place via electronic means which include a webinar to review the agreement with members. The Canadian Food Inspection

Agency PIC is expected to be taking place electronically. The Union of Taxation employees (CRA) strike vote is on hold due to the pandemic. Seeing that bargaining has continued and been successful in other places, including UPCE and the BC Teachers Federation, the PSAC is pushing the Treasury Board to come back to the table, our members deserve to be compensated for their continued hard work through these unprecedented times.

Phoenix: there is not much news here

Other Updates: The PSAC offices in BC and across the country have been closed with staff working remotely since March. The closure has been extended to June 30, 2020. There were 2 Health & Safety webinars held the previous week which were well attended and had good reviews. There will be more coming and as long as members have suggestions for topics will continue. Currently planning on Mental Health, Ergonomics at Home and Teleworking. The “Here for Canada” campaign has been revived and been renamed “Still Here for Canada”. Members are being encouraged to send photos and stories about what they are doing for Canada during this crisis. There has been good response.

Jamey asked if anyone had any questions for him, but there were none.

Meeting called to order at 6:15 PM.

Agenda M/S/C (Todd/Crystal)

Business Arising – Wet’suwet’en Statement

Floor was given to Andre. Andre explained that the statement has been updated to reflect the current situation and to reflect the suggestions made at the AGM. Andre read the statement.

Warren asked a question about the negotiation part of the statement and whether it should be removed or changed. Andre explained that culturally negotiations are done in person, but that he would find a way to incorporate this. Andre looked over the statement and made some changes and read it out again. See below for the finalized statement:

“Earlier this year, the PSAC Vancouver and District Area Council was disturbed to witness the strategic oversight of the RCMP that led to the breach of B.C.’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These rights were infringed upon by removing Wet’suwet’en peoples from their territory as well as blocking and removing journalists during the enforcement of the BC Supreme Court injunction at the Unist’ot’en Camp.

We watched as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Turtle Island, and around the world, supported the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs through innumerable actions, marches, and fundraisers. The Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs reaffirmed their position: There is no consent for a pipeline being built on their traditional unceded territories.

Now in March 2020, the world is faced with the COVID-19 global pandemic. Canada and British Columbia have implemented a lockdown on all non-essential services. Yet, the BC Government is allowing construction to continue on the Coastal GasLink Pipeline. As of April 2020, hundreds of workers are continuing work on the Northern project and their presence is threatening the Wet’suwet’en and other Northern communities.

There are hundreds of workers unnecessarily working on the CGL pipeline in remote Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. These communities have little to no access to the level of health care needed in the face of a COVID-19 outbreak. By allowing CGL to continue work, the BC Government is endangering the lives of workers as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the North.

The Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief's position is clear: They do not consent to a pipeline being built on their traditional unceded territories and they want work on the CGL pipeline to halt immediately for the safety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as well as the workers.

We are in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs' demand that Coastal GasLink Pipeline cease all work and remove themselves from Wet'suwet'en Territory.

The PSAC Vancouver and District Area Council calls on the BC Government to protect remote Northern communities in the face of a global pandemic and stop work on the CGL pipeline until a time which it is safe to continue negotiations with the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs."

M/S/C (Andre/Marion)

A discussion followed on how the statement would be distributed and publicly made. Andre had asked if we could fulfill the request of the Unist'ot'en and email it to them. Todd said that it would be published in the minutes and that it should be fine to share it as well. To get it out as soon as possible it would be published on the PSAC BC website.

Financial Report

Todd gave thanks to Aaron Chang for preparing the report. There was not much in the way of expenses since the AGM, only a cheque to Jen Horsley for reimbursement for the CLiFF night held in November and the previously motioned funds to Andre for his attendance at the CLC Winter School at Harrison. The area council has received its yearly disbursement from the REVPs office. Todd and Aaron are trying to come up with a solution to deposit the cheque due to the pandemic, will look into electronic banking with the credit union. We don't currently need much in the way of funds as most of our events have been canceled, but worried about having it stale date.

Metro Vancouver Alliance

Todd reported on a Zoom conference call he had attended. It had originally been intended to discuss Translink funding but became more about building relationships with municipal politicians and the importance of lobbying on the municipal level as well. Councilor Christine Boyle from the Vancouver City Council was on the call.

Jen didn't have much to report as she has not had much time to help out with MVA given her own work situation. The last meeting she had been able to attend was the debrief of the Sponsoring sessions held in February.

Phoenix

Todd restated what Jamey had said about the cancelation of recovery of overpayments and the toll-free number for access to paystubs. The floor was opened for members to talk about any current Phoenix issues they are aware of.

Warren mentioned that a retired member had contacted him. She had retired six months ago and had asked for her severance to be paid out as it had been held in trust. She was told by the pension centre that it was a phoenix issue and that she needed a form signed off by her manager. It would amount to about 30 weeks of pay due to her length of service. Warren was wondering if he should file a grievance, if it is possible to file a grievance for a retired member. Anne-Marie asked whether the member had retained information about her severance pay being held in trust and whether there was a pay liaison for his department that could be contacted. She felt that because it a phoenix issue a grievance is warranted. Jamey said that if it isn't resolved soon that it should be escalated through Barry Tchir to the UCTE Component office in Ottawa. Anne-Marie noted that her component prefers the grievance path.

Monica talked about the tone changing around bargaining, especially with the speed with which the CERB has been processed by our members. She said that if members see anything about the speed of CERB that they shouldn't hesitate to comment on the continuing Phoenix issues in response to these articles or posts.

Affiliate Reports

No written reports were received.

COVID-19

Todd thanked Monica for her Wednesday Actions emails. Todd asked if anyone had any items to add, for example campaigns, webinars, ideas?

Marion said she wasn't aware of anything specific, but that she was concerned with the cuts to Translink.

Andre talked about how it might be a touchy subject, a lot of union members are still employed while many non-unionized people are not. He'd like to see a mention about spending money in local businesses, avoiding amazon and the giant corporations. He has noticed websites on facebook and reposted them himself, seen some through Heritage Vancouver. He finds that these are very Vancouver-centric and would like to be able to find /see more for other communities. Jamey responded that he has noticed that some of the MLA and MP FB pages have created databases of local businesses that are still open, might be a place to look. Jamey said that the Regional Office wouldn't take it on as a project, but if the Area Council wanted to there would be no objections with having it sent out.

(someone) mentioned that there are several good webinars out there, that they had seen "Disaster Capitalism" by Naomi Klein recently.

Monica noted that the Day of Mourning was going online this year, would be sponsored by the VDLC and the BCFed. Taking place at 10:30 am on dayofmourning.ca

Also, May Day Collective would be holding an online event called "May Day in 2020"

Any ideas for the Wednesday Action emails or things we can get involved in should be sent to Todd or other executive member so we can continue our work as an Area Council.

Round Table

There was not much added. Jen mentioned that the Teamsters Business Rep had been at the Purolator facility in Richmond handing out masks to their members. Monica said that they were working on

Webinars as all in-person education had been cancelled or postponed. Members should contact their regional rep if there are any specific topics they would like to see covered via webinar. Also, PSAC is continuing its internal organizing campaign by trying to get updated contact information for members, especially as things are likely to be digital for quite a while.

Todd said that he still wanted to do a presentation on his Social Justice in Action trip to Guatemala and that he was working with Patrick on a Skype format with a Q&A session.

Next meeting will be June 3, 2020 via conference call.

Adjourned 7:20 PM