



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

USW Local 1944's Executive Board members met on April 14–15, 2020, by Zoom videoconference. The two-day meeting was an opportunity to hear reports from our Executive members and Committees, and take decisions on matters important to the Local Union. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, the Local Union staff and Executive continue to service members "as usual."

"We have locked down all of our buildings, so that our clerical staff are working in-office as little as possible," said Donna Hokiro, Acting President. "All facets of our operations continue to be conducted very effectively and efficiently at all times. Local Union Representatives are all working from home and member contact is being kept to speaking by telephone, or by Zoom for Unit meetings. We accomplish all of this while attending to the regular course of running our organization. We maintain a forward looking approach, all the while making plans on how to keep us all safe, physically and emotionally."

From left to right, top to bottom: REO BC Denise Chisholm, Acting Vice-President Pierre-Luc Dick, Acting President Donna Hokiro, Secretary-Treasurer Michael Phillips, Acting REO QC Robert J. Briza, Trustee Jenn Dunsmore-Turner, Trustee Michelle Ravary, USW Staff Rep Jayson Little, USW Staff Rep Randy Gatzka, REO BC Corey Mandryk, Administrator Omero Landi, REO AB Steve Durrell, REO AB David Skrober, and Trustee Ross Brown

GREEDY JOB CUTS AT SHAW IN TIMES OF CRISIS

While Canadians everywhere are trying to support one another through this COVID-19 crisis, Shaw considered this to be the opportune time to cut jobs.

Earlier in April, our Brothers and Sisters at Shaw Cablesystems were notified that the company intended to [downsize their workforce](#) in our Vancouver, Surrey and Abbotsford certifications. First, Shaw offered voluntary exit packages, but when they didn't get enough takers due to the meagreness of their offer, the company announced that they would proceed to permanent reductions. The company aims at reducing its workforce by about 70 workers, which is devastating to our members at Unit 60.

Canadians rely heavily on telecommunications, at this time more than ever. So why would Shaw want to lay off their employees during this time of crisis, when telecommunications have been recognized as an essential service by the Canadian federal government?

To make Shaw's moral hypocrisy more evident, the employer has claimed that COVID-19 accelerated its dramatic rush to cut jobs, and yet at the same time they are claiming that the layoffs are due to "technological change", which triggers a portion of the Collective Agreement that they hope will allow them to rid themselves of Union members without having to lay off contractors first.

Greed is at the heart of this initiative, and Shaw can't figure out which is the better excuse, the pandemic or a coincidentally timed "technological change".

"A telecommunications company like Shaw has customers needing more insofar as bandwidth not less," said Acting President Donna Hokiro. "With so many more remote workers due to social distancing, the public is clamouring for more accessibility, speed, and internet options, not fewer. Telecommunications is absolutely vital to people now more than ever, from having to do online learning and educating to conducting meetings using a wide variety of applications, to satisfying the need for home entertainment and so on.

Why would Shaw want to lay off their employees during this time of crisis, when telecommunications have been recognized as an essential service by the Canadian federal government?



What does it show, if not a desperate attempt by a greedy-for-profit company to get rid of unionized and sustainable jobs?"

Telus has not announced any layoffs over the past few weeks due to COVID-19 but instead they are hiring in many communities in both Alberta and British Columbia. So what gives, SHAW?

COMMITTEES

UPDATES FROM SOME OF LOCAL 1944'S COMMITTEES

Women of Steel Committee

"The Women of Steel Committee welcomed new members Sister Alina Gherghinoiu and Sister Genevieve 'Gigi' Wojdyga who replaced Sister Sandra Hewko and Sister Julie Charbonneau. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Sisters Hewko and Charbonneau for their participation and contribution to the committee. The Committee is currently working on a national education and member support project regarding burn out."
— Denise Chisholm, REO BC and Chair of the Committee

Political Action Committee

"COVID-19 dominates the political field across Canada. In Alberta, Jason Kenney's UCP are taking an extremely negative route during the crisis (see article page 3), dragging their feet in implementing protections the rest of the country had put in place, many of these gains for citizens have come thanks to a strong opposition in the NDP. The UCP have also continued their attacks on the public sector from using COVID-19 as cover for defunding education, to ministers threatening citizens, to actively attacking our healthcare system in the middle of a pandemic by cutting fees for doctors." — Steve Durrell, REO AB and Chair of the Committee

Grievance Committee

"The Grievance Committee has adopted a process that ensures that the Local Union Representatives in your respective regions follow up on cases set for arbitrations that are nearing hearing dates in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are in the process of addressing and coming up with reasonable solutions on a case-by-case basis. The Committee is tracking resolves to grievances and exactly what those resolves amount to. We want to see that our employers are being consistent amongst the provinces and amongst the Labour Relations people they employ." — Joe Benn, Local Union Representative AB and Chair of the Committee

NextGen Committee

"I am thankful to have a part in our Local, the USW, and our NextGen Committee. I am really happy with the ideas and brainstorming that we have been able to accomplish. I feel we will be able to hit the ground running. I want all members to know how well everyone on the Committee has worked together. We are making positive strides forward and I am excited to see what the future brings. The Committee would like to plan NextGen inspired community service days as part of future conventions and gatherings, like we were able to do at the first USW International NextGen Conference in Pittsburgh."
— Kyle Johnston, Unit 205

DISCOVER OUR COMMITTEES

Getting involved with your Local will help you to improve your skills, develop your network, and make an impact in your workplace and community.

Get involved!

Lobby for laws that have a positive impact on our workplaces and communities with the Political Action Committee.

Become an advocate for human rights in your community and Union with the Civil and Human Rights Committee.

Ensure that our workplaces are healthy and safe with the Worker's Compensation and Health and Safety Committee.

Seize opportunities for mentoring and leadership development through the Next Generation Committee.

Benefit from training and leadership development through the Women of Steel Committee.

Stay involved when you retire by joining the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees.

More information: <https://1944.fyi/committees>



STEELWORKERS VOTE

THE UCP GOVERNMENT IN ALBERTA USES THE COVID-19 CRISIS AS AN EXCUSE TO MAKE MORE CUTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

At the end of March, the UCP government fired 25,000 education employees, while students and families were still adjusting to online learning. This was done pursuant to the UCP's ideology to cut public services all the while cutting taxes for corporations. Now, the government plans on cutting doctors' pay during a world pandemic, and when this latter is over, they will eliminate 6,000 jobs for health-care workers.

"Our provincial government's determination to pursue austerity in the middle of an unprecedented recession will make a bad situation much worse," stated Gil McGowan President of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). "It'll just mean more unemployed Albertans, less consumer spending and fewer of the services and programs our province will need to get back on its feet. Albertans need to push back and let the government know that now is not the time for deep cuts."

Albertans didn't vote for their government to hurt them instead of helping them.

JOIN THE FIGHT!

Email your MLA: Tell the UCP: Stop firing workers

DISASTER CAPITALISM

What is Disaster Capitalism? *The practice (by a government, regime, etc) of taking advantage of a major disaster to adopt liberal economic policies that the population would be less likely to accept under normal circumstances.*

Naomi Klein, activist and author of *The Shock Doctrine*, popularized the concept of disaster capitalism. "In times of crisis, seemingly impossible ideas suddenly become possible," she said. "But whose ideas? Sensible, fair ones, designed to keep as many people as possible safe, secure and healthy? Or predatory ideas, designed to further enrich the already unimaginably wealthy, while leaving the most vulnerable further exposed? The future will be determined by whoever is willing to fight harder, for the ideas they have lying around."

In its [blog series](#), the Alberta Federation of Labour warned against the use of the crisis as a catalyst to promote privatization: "The shock doctrine [...] is done while citizens are distracted by economic [...] or physical disaster, and are unable to effectively engage or resist these destructive policies. Alberta is not immune to the forces and ideologies that exploit disaster capitalism, and our government is not ignorant to these strategies."

NEWS FROM OUR WORKPLACES

THE RAND CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

As mentioned in the [February issue](#) of the 1944@Work, the campaign to contact employees that hadn't yet become Union members (called "Rand members") and sign them up to become full-fledged members of the Union was to move to Unit 602 during the month of March. Well, it did! On March 2nd, a team of four activists was put in place and met at the Montreal office to increase our number of members in good standing. Over four days, by signing up new members through phone calls, emails and meeting face to face, we have been able to reduce the number of rand members in Unit 602 from 125 down to 55.

If you haven't signed your membership card and wish to do so, you can [download the membership application form by clicking here](#). Instructions on how to submit this form can be found at the bottom of the document.

What's next? Now with the pandemic, this campaign has been put on the back burner. We must make every effort to keep our members safe through social distancing, which is a challenge for a campaign like this one.

Once everything has returned to normal, or close to, and if you are interested in participating in a Rand Campaign in your area, please contact Acting Vice-President Pierre-Luc Dick at pierreluc.dick@usw1944.ca.

[Click here to sign up now!](#)

"I am grateful to have had such good teams to work with in Quebec! I look forward to bringing the success of this campaign to the other Canadian provinces." — *Pierre-Luc Dick, Acting Vice-President*

Rand Campaign Team for Unit 602:
Widmarc Innocent, Unit 602 Vice-Chair
Robert Messier, Unit 602 Counsellor
Pierre-Richard Joseph, Local Union Representative for Quebec
Pierre-Luc Dick, Acting Vice-President

"I loved working on the campaign because it gave me the opportunity to inform our members about the purpose of the Local Union." — *Robert Messier, Unit 602 Counsellor*

DID YOU KNOW?

Under Canadian labour law, employers are required to deduct dues for all employees covered under a collective agreement. This is known as the Rand Formula, which applies in both federal jurisdiction and provincial jurisdictions.

Members in good standing are members who signed their membership card. This grants them specific rights, including having voting rights during elections, and having their say in Union meetings and negotiations. Only signed members can vote to ratify a collective agreement. Local 1944 offers a retirement gift of up to \$1,000 to eligible members in good standing.

Rand members are members who don't sign their membership card. They benefit from the same protection and representation rights as other members, but they don't have the ability to vote on the Union's leadership nor on collective agreements.

Both members in good standing and rand members pay dues.

SOLIDARITY



GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY: DELIVER GROCERIES TO HELP OUT YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Many people in our neighbourhoods feel too vulnerable to do their essential outings, either because of their age or health condition. Please consider lending a helping hand by delivering groceries to those neighbours and friends who need it the most.

We have gathered information on some organizations who can help in connecting you with elderly people in need of free grocery delivery.

[Alberta](#) | [British Columbia](#) | [Ontario](#) | [Quebec](#)

SCHOLARSHIPS 2020

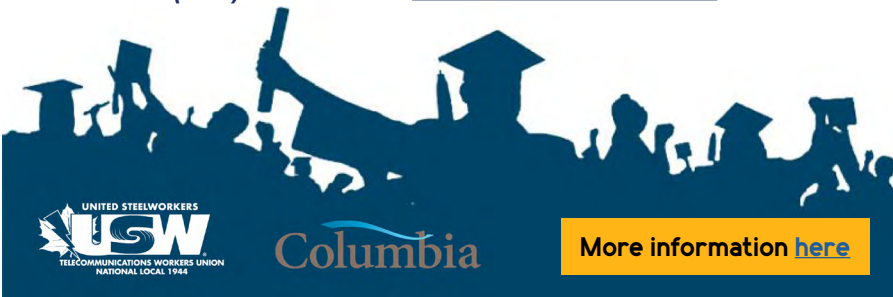
Seize the opportunity for financial aid for post-secondary education now! Every year, USW Local 1944 assists members with tuition relief through 7 scholarship opportunities: 3 educational scholarships of \$750, and 4 scholarships of \$1,000 for any post-secondary public institution.

Applicants must be children of active members of USW Local 1944, graduating from high school in 2020 and registering for courses at a public post-secondary institution.

Applicants must submit the completed [application form](#), their Grade 12 transcripts or a copy of their latest Grade 12 report card, and a letter of reference from a teacher or an employer, OR a letter written by someone who can attest to their character and work ethic.

The application deadline is **Saturday, August 1st, 2020.**

For inquiries, please contact the Columbia Institute at (604) 408-2500 or info@columbiainstitute.ca



ACTIVISM: LET'S VOTE WITH OUR WALLETS!

The current economic distress is a particularly appropriate time to notice companies' ethics (or lack of) towards their employees. Over and over, we have heard of how Amazon refuses paid-sick leave to its employees. Is it this type of working conditions that we want for ourselves?

We must ask ourselves: When this crisis is over, what world and what workplaces do we want? Do we want to patronize companies that take every opportunity to crush their employees' rights, or do we want to build sustainable communities by supporting responsible and ethical businesses?

Consumers – we, the people – have the power to decide what our future will hold. Every single one of our purchases is a vote for the world of tomorrow; we believe this vote should go towards workers' rights, fair contracts, and fair work practices.

For every purchase that we make, let's ask ourselves who and what we give our power to?

zoom



Join your unit Meetings from anywhere
using your laptop, desktop, phone or tablet!

ALL UNIT MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED BY
ZOOM WEBCONFERENCE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Access your Unit Meeting in one click!

Simply follow the link provided in your meeting notice, and enter your meeting ID. You can also call-in using the toll-free number.

Stay connected. Stay safe.