

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETS BY ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

Members of the Executive Board met for a 2-day meeting on July 14–15, 2020, by Zoom videoconference.

During the Executive Board meeting, Brother Richard Blais was appointed Regional Executive Officer Alberta, a position previously held by David Skrober (see the box on the right). Brother Blais, a Service Technician from Unit 214, has been a Shop Steward since 2013, Unit Secretary, and a Political Action Committee member since 2015. He's also a USW Development Scholarship Program graduate. Members of the Executive Board are honoured to welcome Brother Blais to the Board!



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

THANK YOU TO DEPARTING REGIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER ALBERTA DAVID SKROBER

Brother David Skrober started his work in Loyalty and Retention at Telus in 2008. He has been involved with the Local Union since 2011, when he became Shop Steward for Unit 213 in Calgary. He was Vice-Chair and then Chair of his Unit from 2015 to 2018, Unit Counsellor, and was elected Regional Executive Officer Alberta in December 2018.

"It's been my pleasure and joy, over the last decade, to work for my friends and co-workers, protecting their jobs, dignity at work, and making sure management treats them fairly, in my capacity as a shop steward, a Unit Chair, and on the Executive Board. The Local Union will always be my extended family."

"Thank you to everyone who's helped me along the way. I want to give a special thanks to Bonnie Devine, who first mentored me and showed me what it is to be a great shop steward. Nathan Beausoleil for his dedication to the craft and mechanics of being a great activist, and for being a pretty rad dude. Robert Briza for helping me with my atrocious communication skills, and being a tireless advocate for our members. Last, but not least, Michael Phillips who is a truly brilliant man that we are very lucky to have working for us. Michael is anchored deeply in principle, and sound logic, and I am so grateful to have had the chance to work with him."

"I'm looking forward to spending more time with my wife Cheri, and children Isabelle and Benjamin."

The Local is grateful to have had the chance to benefit from the involvement and dedication of this long-time activist, and wishes Brother Skrober well-deserved family time.

\$2,000 DONATION TO USW WORKERS

For 286 days, members from USW Locals in Arizona and Texas have been out of work after they were forced on an unfair labour practice strike against their employer ASARCO. The workers are fighting to secure fair contracts that will protect the health and safety of workers and communities. They've been going without pay, healthcare and need your help.

"Our sisters and brothers have been out there all these months fighting for a fair contract because their employer, a multi-national company that generates indecent profits, does not want to give more than scraps to its workers, and especially not to its unionized workers," said Acting President Donna Hokiros. "We cannot let corporation greed crush workers, not in Canada, nor in the US, nor anywhere else in the world. Local 1944 made a \$2,000 donation because we need to help each other now more than ever. The stronger our Union is, the stronger each of us will be in our workplaces regardless of location, country or sector, be it public or private. With the Telus round of bargaining coming up in 2021, we will need allies to have our back. Helping each other out isn't a luxury, it's a necessity."



Watch the USW video

ARBITRATION AWARD

INTERVIEW WITH LOCAL UNION REPRESENTATIVE TAMARA MARSHALL: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO WIN AN ARBITRATION AWARD?

Local 1944's Local Union Representatives have been trained so that they can represent our members at arbitrations, replacing the previous practice of using lawyers to lead cases. The Local Union already reaped the rewards of this new practice, when it received a favourable **arbitration award** reinstating a terminated member, in a case led by one of our Local Union Representatives, Tamara Marshall.

Local 1944 grieved the termination of a member for chronic tardiness, taking the position that the member's tardiness was not culpable and that her termination was excessive discipline. The arbitrator accepted the Local Union's position that the penalty imposed on the grievor, who is a very senior employee with a good performance record, "may create severe economic hardship for her" in an unjust manner.

1944@Work: What training did you receive to represent the Union at arbitrations?

Tamara Marshall: I have been a Local Union Representative for 14 years and have been to many arbitrations, so some is learning from being involved and working with legal counsel. Actual training has been some classroom with USW legal staff over 7 days spread-out over the last few years.

1944@Work: What process did you follow to prepare this arbitration?

TM: There is a set framework on how arbitrations are to proceed under law. The Arbitration Act sets out procedures that you must follow which involves agreeing to the arbitrator, seeking and disclosing particulars, etc.

1944@Work: How many hours/days of work did you put into this arbitration?

TM: I lost count but with researching case law and preparing, it was probably 200+ hours then the actual hearing which was 6 days. I have a renewed respect for the level of work and research time needed. I met with the grievor many times and had numerous calls with the employers legal counsel. I also had a couple of prehearing conferences with counsel and the arbitrator.

1944@Work: Were you nervous doing your first arbitration?

TM: I was nervous, anxious and terrified. I lost a lot of sleep.

1944@Work: Who were the parties meeting during the arbitration?

TM: In every arbitration there are two sides; the employer and the Union both had representatives. The employer had

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their legal counsel and labour relations along with their witnesses who were managers of the grievor. The Union had myself, Acting President Donna Hokiro, Administrator Omero Landi, the grievor and Shop Steward Michelle Dey, who took notes during the whole case.

1944@Work: How was the atmosphere during the meeting?

TM: Arbitrations are very hard emotionally for the grievor as they need

to sit there and hear evidence on why the employer feels they had cause to terminate. I have never met a member who found it enjoyable. But overall, both sides treat each other respectfully and professionally.

1944@Work: How did the arbitration go?

TM: It had its moments; the Arbitrator was patient with me as it definitely had its teaching moments for me. Arbitrations for us up till now has had legal counsel on both sides so I was a layperson against a lawyer with all their resources.

1944@Work: Will you be following up with the grievor / the arbitrator / the company in the weeks or months to come?

TM: The grievor was my second phone call after receiving the award, I have spoken with the company about the grievor returning to work. The arbitrator is only involved after the fact if any situation arises if either side needs clarification on her ruling.

1944@Work: From the grievance to the award, how long did it take?

TM: The grievor was terminated in February 2019. The arbitration started in March 2020 and finished in June via Zoom. The award was given two weeks after the hearing ended. This was extremely fast, as it can take many months to get the ruling of the arbitrator. The grievor returned to work on July 6, so the whole process took 17 months in total.

1944@Work: What is the next arbitration you will be working on?

TM: My next arbitration is for a member that was denied a workplace accommodation.

1944@Work: Is it a part of your job that you feel is rewarding?

TM: Being able to help someone is the best part and most rewarding part of my job. This grievor was a 29-year employee, and to be able to help them have life return to normal and finish off their career is amazing.



HOW ARE THINGS GOING IN YOUR WORKPLACE?

Because a right denied to one is a right denied to all,
Local 1944 members need to hear from you!

Contact your Local Union Representative
Share your story by email at communications@usw1944.ca



BURNOUT

OUR WOMEN OF STEEL COMMITTEE RELEASES 4 PUBLICATIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS BURNOUT

Local 1944's Women of Steel (WOS) Committee is releasing four publications raising awareness around some common mental health issues, with a focus on burnout which could be affecting members.

"We are very proud of our project and trust it will benefit all members," said Denise Chisholm, Chair of the WOS committee. "Mental Health has no boundaries. The project's goals are to raise awareness on Burnout, provide information aimed at raising awareness for mental health, reduce stigmas, and enable easier access to all types of resources. The timing for releasing these publications, due to COVID-19 impacts on our members, could not be more needed at this time. There was a quote I learned in English Literature 12 which has stayed with me from the day I learned it: 'To know ourselves diseased, is half our cure' [Edward Young, 1683-1765]. In the spirit of that quote, I ask you to consider: If you are suffering, seek information, ask for help, get a diagnosis, and you'll be halfway there! Most importantly, please know you are not alone, there is help."

The four publications' topics are as follows:

Publication #1: **Burnout, Anxiety, Stress and Depression**

Publication #2: **Living with Burnout – Self-care**

Publication #3: **How burnout could affect you at work?**

Publication #4: **When self-care isn't working, what's the next step?**

ALL 4 BURNOUT PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE [ONLINE](#)

The Women of Steel Committee is here to help!
Get in touch by email at womenofsteel@usw1944.ca

TAKE OUR SURVEY!

Your feedback will allow the Union to evaluate if burnout is an issue or not for our membership.

[Complete the survey online](#)



OPEN LETTER TO THE ALBERTAN GOVERNMENT

"Dear Mr. Deol and Mr. Kenney,

Politics is about power and Mr. Kenney is trying to take away any power workers have left. While big corporations spend billions of dollars every year lobbying governments to get tax breaks for themselves, workers fight for fair wages, retirement security, and safe and healthy workplaces for all Albertans.

If workers lose their power to fight on the issues that matter to everyday Albertans, who will be left to speak on these issues?

I'm writing today because I refuse to let workers be stripped of their power. Your plan for American-style labour law will prevent workers from campaigning on issues that matter to us, like fair wages, paid sick leave, secure pensions, workplace safety, and more.

I am a hardworking Albertan with a family to support during an especially difficult time in this province. Mr. Deol and with you as my MLA, I expect you will strive to bring down this unacceptable and undemocratic attack on working people.

These are the issues being championed by nurses, firefighters, construction workers, paramedics, lab techs, grocery clerks, municipal workers, education workers and the many other people who make up Alberta's labour movement. People who have been described by so many as heroes during this COVID-19 pandemic.

How are you Mr. Kenney repaying these heroes? By attempting to silence us and shut down the issues we, as working Albertans, care about?

The balance of power in our society is already tipped dramatically in favour of corporations. If we restrict workers' rights to speak out, that power imbalance will grow.

These are the same kind of anti-worker strategies employed by conservative politicians in the U.S. They make it easier for employers to refuse fair wages and workplace safety. These rules silence workers and corrupt democracy by ceding policy to corporate influence.

I don't want Trump's pro-corporate, anti-worker policies imported to Alberta.

Defend worker rights and cease these attacks on workers' rights Mr. Kenney.

Mr. Deol, I have every expectation you will do the right thing.

Respectfully,

Joe Benn, Local Union Representative Alberta"

Do you care about fair wages, paid sick leave, pensions, workplace health and safety? With Bill 32, the UCP government is trying to take away workers' rights and power for the profit of corporations.

[CLICK HERE TO ADD YOUR VOICE & FIGHT AGAINST THE UCP'S ANTI-WORKER LEGISLATION](#)

WHEN IS SURPLUS IS NOT SURPLUS

Ross Brown, Trustee, tells the story of downsizing attempts that hit his department in Unit 31, in the Lower Mainland, BC.

"Surplus is not surplus when it's not written down. That's the lesson we learned in Inside Build in the past year. But like all stories, let's begin at the beginning. Inside Build as the name suggests, is the department that builds the network within Telus. When Telus needs to expand its data services, or upgrade an area to fibre optic, a lot of the work is done by IB. We install the servers, the routers, the fibre optic cable. Everything in the buildings is done by our crew.

"An issue permeated the conversation: head count"

At Telus, our management is constantly evolving. About a year ago, we received the news that our department was having a shakeup. We were no longer going to have a local VP or director, and we were merging with our Alberta brothers and sisters. We were also moving from CSD into Design and Engineering. It made sense: we build things that design and engineering send us. We settled in with a new director, new department and new executive leadership. If you have ever been through this yourself, you know there's a settling-in period where the new director has a conference call and everyone enthusiastically introduces themselves. There was an issue that permeated the conversation during this meeting: head count. Costs were mentioned, we were asked to write our time to 'Administration' rather than charge to the networks, and were assured that this was so we could accurately track our costs, and so we could better plan for the future in our department.

"We were in a 'Surplus' situation"

Sometime in Q1 of 2019 our director gave us the news that headcount was too high in our department.

Our work is based on Telus' budget for the year and traditionally this is done during Q1. There is a slowdown in work between December and January because of an extensive embargo on work during the busy sales period during Holiday season. By February, the budget for the year would be planned and the work would begin to flow steadily until November, when again we would slow down.

Well it turns out, our 'peaks and valleys' were unacceptable. This was logical; can't have technicians sitting around doing nothing. We suggested maybe budgeting in Q4 and so we could get to work in January. Alas, the solution was much simpler: "We will now staff to the lowest demand, during the embargo season." Thus, we had too many people in our department. We were in a "Surplus" situation.

The first step in reducing headcount was a voluntary severance package. A lot of older staff jumped at this, but many of us opted to stay. Headcount was down – though not as much as the company wanted.

"Mandatory Redeployment stage"

As the summer went on, we got some more bad news: we were still too heavy on head count, it was time for the Mandatory Redeployment stage. Our director consistently told us to jump ship: "Leave before we move you somewhere you don't want to be!" It was even suggested that we could be contractors: "If you leave, we could even help you setup your own company, so you can bid back on the work you do now!" It seemed that if necessary, he would have to send us to clerical roles, or push us

towards taking the package. Small threats flowed, insinuation, intimidation, hints about more ominous tidings to come. We left these conversations, drained, dejected and demoralized. There's nothing quite like the feeling of being told you are no longer wanted. Your effort is 'appreciated' but we want to get rid of you. Especially since remember the whole peaks and valleys? "We're gonna contract the peaks out."

"We suspected something didn't smell right with these mandatory moves"

Time passed and the numbers didn't move. Without any opportunities to move to, and a reluctance to leave a department you spent time and effort to get into, everything stayed the same. The whole move or quit scenario was out so surely, we were okay, right?

We suspected something didn't smell right with these mandatory moves: what was to stop management from picking a different spot next time? It seemed to us that Telus was trying to get their head count reduction by forcing people to quit their jobs rather than move to an undesirable location. Which is exactly what happened next. Edmonton and Grand Prairie suddenly had an opening and our junior staff were called again to get things in order to make the impossible choice of move or quit."

After a year of pressure and stress, our department had had enough. The calls, the constant stress, the monitoring. The uncertainty surrounding our department and our jobs. It was taking a toll.

"This issue of surplus began to look more and more manufactured"

We decided to take action. We began to piece together the inconsistencies in management's approach. A lot didn't make sense. We were told we had a surplus, yet some work was being contracted out. Jobs weren't being posted using the established procedure. There were certainly jobs in other departments that were local? Why couldn't we go there? There were retirees being hired as casuals? Why would Telus do that and force us out? This issue of surplus began to look more and more manufactured. It was then that our department began to do something we hadn't for a long time: **collective action**.

"When the rank-and-file starts to get involved, the needle begins to move"

It seems cliché in a Union story that we would say that collective action works but seeing this first hand, I was taken back by how quickly things changed. This was explained recently by a simple formula the company uses. If a Union activist starts making a fuss in the workplace, nothing much happens. Management doesn't pay them much mind as they are always in opposition. However, when the rank-and-file starts to get involved, the needle begins to move.

"First step, get things in writing"

First step, get things in writing. This by far had the biggest impact. As soon as we asked for an official memo stating we were surplus, the attitude changed dramatically. Repeated attempts to get what they were saying in writing resulted in us taking our own notes during calls. We needed to know exactly what was being said and more importantly we collected evidence for future grievances. In a conference call meeting, we all showed

WHEN IS SURPLUS IS NOT SURPLUS

up. We all came together in the meeting rooms and packed them out to show we were all interested in what management were doing. We came together to write an email stating all the facts over the last year and useful suggestions to mitigate or eliminate the need to move anyone. We sent this to our manager, director, VP, EVP LR and HR to ensure that everyone was in the loop and no excuses could be given that leadership were not aware of what was going on. It seemed like a long shot, but it worked.

“Stick together, and be seen to stick together”

A few days later, we were informed that Management had decided to put the whole moving to Edmonton thing on hold until

the New Year, where it would be reevaluated. We couldn't believe it! I can tell you that not a week after, the Inside Build team was moved into Mission Critical Environment, under a new director and VP. They won't tell us the reasons why the sudden change of heart, of course we got the emails and official line, but I believe that our departments firm commitment to each other is what moved the needle. Collective action works. Stick together, and be seen to stick together. This is our strongest weapon against unfair work practices.”

— Submitted by Ross Brown, Trustee

UPDATE

“New Director, new direction.”

Shortly after our move into MCE we had the same 'meet the director' conversation. Enthusiastic greetings, appreciation and welcome were on the agenda. A new director, new way of thinking, emphasis on quality and preventing outages. After the previous year of stress and uncertainty it was a relief to be told that currently there would be no movement on the “Surplus” issue. A short period of evaluation from the new director was needed. And so we carried on, business as usual. A little bit more secure but still uncertain in the current climate of cost cutting and contracting out. An all hands call in Q1 of 2020 changed all of that.

“Lots of Work.”

The call was greeted with some apprehension. After all we'd been here only the year previous.

Our pencils were at the ready to record what was said, we prepared for the worst. The new director however, had a new approach. He has looked forward at the projections and work forecasts. There was “Lots of work to do”, and in fact “We may well need to hire.” To say our jaws hit the floor was an understatement. We had suspected that the previous year was a manufactured situation but the swing from surplus to hiring was truly breathtaking. How could projections be so different year to year? How could a change in director create such a difference?

The truth is reducing workforce is par for the course at Telus. Over the past 10 years their workforce of USW Local 1944 members **from 14,198 in January 2009 to 8,195 in July 2020.**

To quote the latest contracting out letter; **“This decision represents part of our effort to improve operational efficiencies, and provide additional flexibility to help us better meet our customers' needs...”**

What does not get said is how it reduces active union membership. Reduces union income to fight and organize. Reduces contributions to our pension. There are hundreds of these letters and they are all on our website at <https://1944.fyi/col>.

Telus will always seek to streamline its operation. To skin each department down to the bare minimum in an effort to drive profit and dividends. No one is immune from downsizing. Just remember, when the company starts to make threats, ask for it in writing. In turn, write down what is said in meetings. Stick together. Do not let management create division in your work group. Collective action from all rank and file members does make a difference.

In Solidarity,
Ross Brown, Trustee

Members from Unit 31 met at the Local Union's headquarters in Burnaby, BC, on November 14th, 2019, for their Unit meeting.

From left to right: Stephen Chan, Yatendra Sen, Justin Richard, John Lawson, Trustee Ross Brown, Tom Cusick, Darren Macaulay, Local Union Representative BC Perry Pasqualetto. Acting President Donna Hokiro attended the meeting by Zoom videoconference.



IN YOUR PROVINCES

SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES

In Ontario: Members and children of members can apply to the [OFL/AIL Labour Post-Secondary Scholarships](#). The \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded in honour of distinguished trade union activists who have made a significant contribution to the life and growth of the labour movement in Ontario. The deadline for receipt of applications is August 24, 2020.

SHOW SOLIDARITY

In Alberta: Boilermakers Lodge 146 in Edmonton have been locked out by CESSCO Fabricators for 5 weeks. You can show your support by joining them on the [picket line](#), at any given day from 6:00 am to 5:30 pm, as they can use support any time! Wear your Local 1944 colours, a face mask, and join them on the line! The address is 7310-99 Street, in Edmonton.

TAKE ACTION

In Alberta: The Alberta Federation of Labour launched the [Defend Worker Rights campaign](#). Sign the petition and contact your MLA to fight anti-worker labour laws in Alberta.

In British Columbia: Working sick isn't working. [Sign the BC Federation of Labour's open letter](#) and let the BC and federal governments know that you support immediate action on paid sick leave for all workers.

In Ontario: [Call your MPP to oppose Bill 195](#). The bill, proposed by the Ontario Conservatives, would break collective bargaining agreement provisions like layoff and reassignment rights, suspend grievances, deny vacation rights, and allow for the contracting out of work. #OpposeBill195

In Quebec: [Sign the petition](#) to demand public and universal drug insurance! Some Quebecers still cannot afford the medication they need.

STEELWORKERS VOTE

STEELWORKERS TALK POLITICS WEB SERIES

Steelworkers are active in politics to have a positive impact on our workplaces, our communities and in our lives. Political action adds workers' voices to the issues that affect us.

This summer, the USW District 6 Political Action Committee is hosting five consecutive 1-hour Tuesday evening chats online about political issues. All Steelworkers are welcome.

This is a free web series:

- Tues., Aug. 4 – Taking on Anti-Black Racism
- Tues., Aug. 11 – A Chat & Discussion with Andrea Horwath
- Tues., Aug. 18 – Taking on Women's Inequality
- Tues., Aug. 25 – A Chat & Discussion with Jagmeet Singh
- Tues., Sept. 1 – Canadians Taking on Trump Politics

[Register here](#) for Steelworkers Talk Politics. Once you register you will receive a link for the event.

STEELWORKERS TALK POLITICS: SUMMER DISCUSSION SERIES

A USW ONLINE DISCUSSION SERIES FROM THE DISTRICT 6 POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE EVERY TUESDAY AT 7:00 PM EDT FROM AUGUST 4 TO SEPTEMBER 1

THIS IS A FREE WEB SERIES FOR STEELWORKERS TO:



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.