

Year in Review

Welcome back to a new year! As we look back, 2019 turned out to be an eventful year.

To start of the year, the NDP government under Rachel Notley passed legislation to make our pension plan truly independent. With a redeveloped structure, the new LAPP Board was authorized to make meaningful decisions on our pension plan, particularly around the critical area of investments. For the first time, the Board was authorized to select their own investment manager --- a move designed to keep AimCo working for us, rather than for the provincial government's own political agenda.

We concluded a lengthy round of bargaining in March that saw a 1.5% increase over a three year period. While this was a nominal increase, in hindsight it appears to be a better deal than the provincial unions have been able to achieve. Within days of this, Council then announced their intention to use taxpayers money to fund a sports arena.

In April 2019, Albertans elected a new provincial government, headed by Jason Kenney and the United Conservative Party. Running on the platform of creating jobs and securing a pipeline, by January 2020, the UCP has only succeeded in shedding jobs and we are no closer to a pipeline than two years ago. The UCP has also announced deep cuts in provincial services, health care and education.

The UCP government then went further and reversed the previous NDP government's move on the independence of our pension plan by legislating away the ability of the LAPP Board to move away from AimCo. They also forced the Teacher's Pension Plan into AimCo, and announced that they wanted to use our retirement money to prop up the Alberta Energy sector.

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Retirement Allowance

At the December 2019 Council meeting, a majority of Councilor's voted to end the decades-long policy of offering employees a retirement allowance. This policy has been in place since the 1960s and is well-known among staff.

The rules are simple: in order to qualify for the allowance, an employee must sever their employment with the City and immediately move onto pension. The earliest an employee can move onto LAPP is age 55. So this means that any retirement allowance is restricted to those employees at least 55 years or older.

In practical terms, not many employees have access to the allowance. Early retirement --- moving onto pension prior to 65 years old --- results in penalties applied the pension. On average, it amounts to a 3% reduction per year of early retirement. This causes most people to refrain from early retirement. However, if the employee's age added to their years of services equals 85 or greater, then they are able to retire prior to 65 years without the penalty being applied. This is commonly referred to as the "85 Factor".

So, to qualify for the retirement allowance in practical terms, an employee must be at least 55 years old and typically reach their 85 factor. For a 55-year-old employee, this means they must have worked for the City 30 years.

There is very little that public employees enjoy compared to their private-sector counterparts. Funding is far more restricted in the public sector, events are limited (such as Christmas parties, etc.), and we are even prevented from enjoying Stampede events that are hosted by others. One of the very few benefits of working a full career at the City was a small token of appreciation after a life's work. Now, Council would try to take that away as well.

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Black History Month

February 1 to February 29

February is a month to celebrate, share and promote the history, cultural heritage and contributions of the entire African Diaspora.

In December 1995, the House of Commons officially recognized February as Black History Month in Canada following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine. The motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons.

Besides all the history of Blacks in Canada since 1603, the labour movement has been guided by the gains brought on by the African Canadians fight to be equal. Not only did black labour activists like Philip Randolph, Bromley Armstrong, and many others fight for improved working conditions and equal rights for African-Canadians and Americans and change the way we do things at work, they also paved the way on the broader issue of equality for all. In February we celebrate Black History Month. We should also pay homage to all ethnicities and minority groups that have benefitted by the work done by our ancestral friends to promote equality.

CUPE has a proud and successful track record of using collective agreements to promote human rights in the workplace before they were achieved through legislation.

For more information on Black History Month <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/black-history-month.html>

Upcoming Dates to Remember

March 8th, International Women's day—is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of women and renew our efforts in achieving gender equality. 2020's theme is #EachforEqual ... "An equal world is an enabled world."

March 21st is also another very important day where we honour the fight for equality by observing The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Retirement Allowance

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The motion passed by Council stipulates that the allowance will end in December 2021. This is set to avoid the inevitable litigation that the City would have faced from the unions and individual employees. This will provide us the time to attempt to negotiate this allowance into each collective agreement.

Unfortunately, we have heard from the membership very clearly that many individuals intend to move up their retirement date. The frustration with the continued attacks by Council on staff is culminating in what is likely to be a retirement wave in early to mid-2021. Perhaps this is what Council wanted all along.

Local 38, along with all of the other Civic Unions, will be seeking your strong support in the upcoming round of bargaining. Clearly, much depends on it.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



“Your value does not decrease based on someone’s inability to see your worth.”

~ Author Unknown

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Crossing the Line

In the lead up to Christmas, comments were made by Councilor Farkas that resulted in an explosion of calls to Local 38's office. On December 19th, just days away from the Christmas season of peace and goodwill, and while many Calgarians are looking forward to spending time with family and friends, Councilor Farkas was in the media calling City Staff "vampires".

In the December 19th edition of the Calgary Sun, Rick Bell quotes Mr. Farkas as saying "when you drive a stake in the blood-sucking vampire, I want to make sure it's dead." Mr. Farkas was referring to the recent decision by Council to end the retirement allowance for those staff who devoted their careers to building a better city.

Normally, leaders in an organization spend their time offering staff some type of congratulations for the work over the past year, and offering best wishes for the new year. Here at the City, the highest levels of leadership equate staff to Hollywood monsters.

Local 38 has repeatedly raised the issue of Councilors verbally attacking staff, only to have it fall on deaf ears. Certain Council members constantly rush to the media to attack public servants, whose only crime is that they come to work every day to provide much needed services to Calgarians. Clean drinking water, top-rated parks and pathways, safe roads, safe and affordable public transit, recreation programs for children --- the list goes on. In many ways, it is because of the work of City staff that Calgary ranks as one of the most livable city's in the world.

Staff deserved to be congratulated, not insulted.

It is time for this behavior to stop.

Year in Review

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By July 2019, City Council finally came to the realization that their avoidance of dealing with the tax shift problem in Calgary was unsustainable. However, rather than address that key problem, they made a mid-year cut of \$60 million to the operating budget. This resulted in lay-offs across the organization, at the same time they continued to increase work within the organization. The cuts resulted in lay-offs and redeployments among many business units.

In November, Council began a budget debate. It took until late November 2019 for this Council to finally make moves to address the deep structural tax problem that has been dubbed the "tax shift". Unfortunately, while they began to address the tax shift, Council also used one-time funding to off-set the budget for both 2020 and 2021. This will effectively leave a significant shortfall in 2022 --- Council simply kicked the problem down the road.

During this debate, Council instructed senior administration to ask for staff to voluntarily give up the 1.5% so that they could continue to fund their pet projects. They even requested Exempt staff to take a 5% roll-back after years of wage freezes. All the Unions, as well as Exempt staff, refused to take any roll-backs.

As stated at the beginning, this was an eventful year. There is every indication that another eventful year is ahead of us. We will begin bargaining a new contract in the fall of 2020. When this begins, we will be seeking your support. We will need a united membership to ensure that we get a fair and reasonable collective agreement. Together we can be successful!

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend



**When: Tuesday, January 28, 2020
at 7:00 p.m.**

**Where: CUPE 38 Office
1439-9 Avenue SE**

Business: Regular & Elections

Elections:

- 1. Eighteen (18) Eligible Delegates to CUPE Alberta Division Convention, March 17-20, 2020 in Fort McMurray, Alberta.**