

Two wrongs don't make a right!

Last month the media made a lot of Councillor Sean Chu being held accountable for violating the City's respectful workplace policy. The media buzz stemmed from the Councillor referring to a report on the bicycle path as "garbage". The media spun the story to how City Administration was attempting to gag the Councillor, and claimed that Chu was just standing up for the taxpayer. A review of the facts doesn't support the media's version.

City Council is the Corporate Board of Directors for the City of Calgary, and as such, they are the governing body for The City. The Board, among other things, approves policy and sets the direction for Administration. It is inappropriate for a member of this same Board to take the position that they are above the rules they impose on the rest of us. If the respectful workplace policy no longer applies to Council, then why has it been used to justify removing members of the public from Committee and Council meetings?

Councillor Chu freely admits that he called the report garbage and indicates that in the future he will use the term rubbish or other such words that can be googled. Sadly, he is missing the point. If he wants to be effective in his role, and present himself as a leader at City Council meetings, he needs to make reasoned arguments and deal with the specific short comings of positions presented to him. Throwing out sweeping generalizations in a provocative and disrespectful manner doesn't contribute to the debate --- it shows frustration and a lack of understanding.

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Salaries on the rise

There has been much talk in Calgary, and across Alberta, about the impact of the slowing energy sector on jobs and salaries. Throughout 2015, many of the oil and gas companies engaged in layoffs to compensate for the decline in oil prices, which has inevitably led to concern around our own salaries. There have been some calls in the media that perhaps the public sector should bear some pain in sympathy of those workers laid off in the oil and gas sector. What has been completely ignored by the media and right wing special interest groups, however, is that the public sector has never enjoyed large compensation packages in the good economic times.

So what is the truth behind the noise? Are salaries decreasing in Alberta as oil prices stay low?

Compensation levels and salaries are tracked annually by a number of organizations, and this data is made available to employers. Groups such as Mercer and HayGroup track this information both nationally as well as segmented regionally.

For 2016, both organizations anticipate that salaries will increase in the range of 2.5% to 2.8%. According the groups, this is slower growth in salaries which they in turn link to the slower economy. As pointed out by HayGroup, Saskatchewan (2.7%) and Alberta (2.5%) still lead the country with projected overall base salary increases higher than the national average (2.4%). These are lower than in recent years, due mainly to the softening commodity prices.

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Advance Notice of CUPE Local 38 Elections

At the Regular General Meeting April 22nd the following positions will be open for a two (2) year term:

1. President (full time)
2. Treasurer
3. Chief Steward
4. Five (5) Executive Members-At-Large

To be eligible for nominations for any of the offices, members must have attended at least 50% of the Regular General Meetings in the twelve (12) months immediately prior to the election. The member must be present at the April meeting, or indicate in writing to the Recording Secretary a willingness to stand for nomination.

In accordance with the CUPE Local 38 bylaws, in order to be eligible for the office of President, Treasurer and Chief Steward, a member shall declare their intention to run at the March Regular Meeting. This declaration can be made verbally at the March meeting or by submitting a written declaration witnessed by another member which is to be read at the March meeting.



Stewards Wanted



The Union Steward is a key “link” in our union. As a steward, you make collective bargaining agreements meaningful by helping your co-workers implement their contract and defend their rights on a day-to-day basis. You are in the best position to understand your co-workers’ concerns and priorities, organize with them to take action, and communicate their priorities to other Union leaders. You are also the best person to educate co-workers about our Union’s goals.

Communication is a key attribute in an effective Steward. The most effective forms of communication are one-on-one workplace conversations. Flyers, newsletters, emails, and meetings are all important, but the best way to inform members, get feedback, and encourage participation is through personal contact.

There are some areas still in need of someone to come forward as a Steward. The most important aspect of being a Steward is that he/she is an employee’s link to the Union. A Steward is a friendly and trustworthy face in the area and someone co-workers can go to for information or help. Stewards advise employees on their rights in the workplace but their most important duty is to listen and respond conscientiously.

If you are interested in becoming a Steward, please contact the Union Office at (403) 233-2700 for more information.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



Life expectancy would grow by leaps and bounds if green vegetables smelled as good as bacon.

2016 Top Employer?

In the recent list from the Calgary Herald of Alberta's top employers, the City made the list with certain offerings to employees that make the City a great employer. Interestingly enough, at the City's "main office" (City Hall, we presume?), the City is promoting a "cafeteria that features subsidized meals of healthy and special diet menus..."

Clearly, the Calgary Herald, who publishes the list, has not been to City Hall in some years. Otherwise, they would have noticed that the City shut down the cafeteria, a decision that caused dismay with staff at City Hall. Similarly, the 6th floor cafeteria was also closed down. What is left is the Good Earth Coffee shop. One can hardly confuse the coffee shop with a cafeteria that provides healthy menus.

2016 Top Employers... so much for truth in advertising.

Connect with CUPE 38

Email: office@cupe38.org

Phone: 403-233-2700

In-person: 1439 - 9th AVE SE, Calgary, AB T2G 0T4

Salaries on the rise

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Meanwhile, the Mercer survey indicates that, although the Alberta projections are softer for 2016, the rate is in line with their projected national average of 2.8%. Calgary and Vancouver areas are projected to be at 2.8%.

While there are obvious differences in projections depending upon the data reviewed, what is becoming clear is that salaries are still on the rise, albeit at a slower rate of growth. The biggest difference is that the slowing energy sector has brought Alberta's increases more in line with the national average. It is important to note that our salaries over the life of this contract simply amounted to the average.

Let us not forget that the employer is the first to tell us in the good times that we are NOT the energy sector, so we cannot compare our compensation to them. Well, if that is true in the good times, then it must still be true in the slow times.

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At no time has anyone told the Councillor he cannot hold staff accountable; it is that he must do so in a reasoned and respectful manner. All City employees, regardless of their position, are required to be respectful when we carry out our responsibilities on behalf of The City, and often we do so under difficult circumstances. It isn't too much to expect an elected "leader" to do the same.

We didn't invent the saying, "Good generals eat with the troops."

Get involved!

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend



When: Tuesday, February 23, 2016
at 7:00 p.m.

Where: CUPE 38 Office,
1439-9 Avenue SE

Business: Regular