



PRESIDENT'S 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW



Brothers, Sisters, Friends;

This year has been wild. Our Union staff have done yeoman's work to keep our business going, and they deserve endless thanks. Below is a brief summary of some of that work above and beyond our normal day-to-day:

- COVID-19 Pandemic – from advising on safety reporting and unsafe work refusals to representing issues of worker safety with WorkSafe, Transport Canada, and the Provincial government, the pandemic has created a novel and sometimes chaotic everyday experience. To date, we understand there has not been no reported worksite COVID-19 transmissions from the public to a Ferry Worker, however there have been several community spreading events at several worksites. These worksite events have been a challenge for our Union and the Company, as we try to balance competing rights of employee safety and privacy, and continue to improve our processes. With a vaccine on the horizon, our Union and affiliates have been busy reaching out to the Provincial and Federal governments to ensure essential Ferry Workers have early access to the vaccine. Many thanks to Carl Campbell and all our safety reps for their work on these issues.
- Illegal Layoffs – for the first time in the history of BC Ferries and our Union, the parties were unable to reach an agreement in the face of layoffs. In this case, it was because BC Ferries chose a different path, laying off over 1,000 Ferry Workers without notice and outside order of seniority. Through actions taken at the Labour Relations Board, our Union was able secure a short cut to a full arbitration with our first choice for arbitrator. The hearing was in August, and provided a decision in September that proved our position relative to the Collective Agreement. While many of the substantive issues of what's owed have been settled, there remain other significant issues to resolve, like casual layoff/severance. We will continue to work with BC Ferries to have outstanding matters sorted by agreement or by third party, if required. Thank you to our Local Presidents and Shop Stewards for leaning into these issues.
- Regulatory Challenges – the introduction of the Island Class ferries with a crew of five has brought to bear many of our fears about the new processes for determination of Minimum Safe Manning ("MSM"). The new MSM process discards drills and allows for more flexibility for ship owners who use Safety Management Systems ("SMS"), and our current experience demonstrate MSM determinations that appear ill considered. To this end, our Union is suing Transport Canada over its determination for the Island Class Ferries, and are filing lengthy submissions on creation new SMS regulations. We expect court dates on our Island Class law suit in mid-February. Meantime, we are lobbying government to make a change in the MSM process.

- Collective Agreement – from the Bargaining Conference in March through to ratification in mid-December, our Union’s Bargaining Committee experienced training, preparing, negotiating, and ratifying all while under a pandemic, which is in itself an exceptional feat. In view of the incredible turmoil facing the world, our membership voted for certainty and stability, with hope for increases come wage reopeners and a brighter healthier world. Thanks to our Bargaining Committee for their hard work getting this done.
- More Sailings More Service Campaign – in the late summer our Union ran a campaign focused on BC Ferries providing more service. This well received campaign ended with the BC Government’s Contribution Agreement with BC Ferries, with maintenance of core service plus additional sailings as a term of that agreement. We believe this agreement will provide comfort and stability where layoffs may otherwise be at risk. Thanks to Kevin Lee for running point on this project.
- Executive Director – at the beginning of 2020, our Provincial Executive set out to hire an Executive Director for our Union in the role of Executive Director. This position is meant to provide professional management at the direction of our Union, and without competing loyalties between our Union and another union. This project, like many other things, was derailed by the pandemic. On resumption of our search this fall, we landed on hiring Jack Bruckman into the role. We look forward to welcoming them in the New Year.
- ... and so much more.

Thanks for reading, and I hope to see you in the New Year!

In Solidarity,

BC FERRY & MARINE WORKERS’ UNION



Brother Graeme Johnston
Provincial President