



# BC FERRY & MARINE WORKERS' UNION

## Message from the Union Hall

January 11, 2023

### 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

#### Union Hall

The year began with an internal review of Union Hall records management, looking to store Union records more efficiently and appropriately. This was the conclusion of an affiliate providing an expert on a special project related to records management, archiving, hierarchy of data and file preparation for a pending database. The records management will assist as the Union Hall transitions to the 21<sup>st</sup> century for digital records and potentially a new platform to communicate through.



#### Labour Relations Officers

In January the BCFMWU began an extensive LRO search to ensure that Local and Component Presidents, as well as the members of the Union, have access to support for grievances and other BCFS-BCFMWU labour related matters. After multiple months and an impressive list of applicants the BCFMWU hired Jenn Seper who had previously worked for the BCGEU in a similar role. With the addition of a 4<sup>th</sup> LRO there was a reorganisation of work responsibilities to provide the BCFMWU Director of Labour Relations additional time to supervise the Servicing Unit in their roles.

#### SailSafe

In the beginning of 2022, the Union and Company finalised the facilitator for the July SailSafe Vision 2.0 Conference. The conference was led by Charles Holmes with more than 30 Union and management participants at the end of July. This was a positive event with both sides speaking frankly about trust and foundational issues with the SailSafe partnership. At the end of the event both sides committed to reinvigorating SailSafe by having town halls scheduled and to do information gathering session(s) prior to town halls.

#### Senior Union Management Meetings

Beginning in January 2022 the Union and Company held the first regularly scheduled in-person Sr UMC meeting in years and agreed to multiple forward-looking dates to address the back log of issues. We have also added to the ever-increasing number of issues as we saw staff numbers for both Union and non-Union workers drop at BC Ferries while sailing reliability hit its own recession of sorts.

#### External Supports

The Union and Employer began looking at the 'Be More Than a Bystander' program as a way to improve the culture at BCFS. Ultimately, the Union applied for a grant from the Federal government for funding to provide the 'Be More Than a Bystander' training to all BCFMWU members and BCFS employees. In October we were notified we did not receive the funding for the 2022 year but may in the future.

The Union highlighted a serious and systemic lack of internal development within BC Ferries to the BC Government, the Services Board, and Authority Board. While the Union had raised concerns about internal development funding and supports for decades, as 2022 progressed the proverbial chickens came home to roost and hundreds of sailings were disrupted and refits delayed due to a lack of Unionised staff at BC Ferries.

Multiple times over the past year the Union has met with Federal and Provincial ministers, MLA's, MPP's, leaders of political parties and others in government. We have also met with the chair of every Ferry Advisory Committee across the Province and continue to engage with the BC Ferries Commissioner, Services and Authority Board when the opportunity arises. Our connections through various Labour Councils have been very helpful and we encourage Locals to consider filling their currently unfilled Local Labour Council seats in 2023.

### **World Events**

Ongoing COVID-19 waves, vaccine and mask mandates and monkey pox were concerns for the first half of the year.

On February 24, 2022 Russia, in unprovoked act of aggression, attacked the independent country of Ukraine, the war continues to this day. The Union Hall continues to fly the Ukrainian flag in support of millions of people negatively impacted and tens of thousands killed.

Around the world and here at home, inflation is rising at rates many workers have not witnessed in their lifetime. At the same time unemployment rates, particularly in BC, plummeted making it difficult to attract and retain talented employees for employers who offered less competitive compensation and quality of life employment packages such as BCFS.

### **BC Ferry Authority Board**

We continue our relationship with our nominee Andy Ross on the Authority Board for BC Ferries. Andy is a long-time activist in the labour movement and has been effective at advancing the perspective of Ferry Workers on the Board and elsewhere. In mid 2022 the Authority Board provided input on the BC Ferries Services Board which ultimately lead to new directors and a new chair in long time BC resident Joy MacPhail.

### **Conventions and Conferences**

Winter school in early 2022 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resurgence with the Delta variant. This was around the same time waves 2 and 3 of the vaccine mandate at BC Ferries took place.

Some online conventions were participated in. However, by June in-person events were starting to occur and the BCFMWU was represented in-person. Our Union continues to build bridges with like minded allies in the labour movement, primarily within Canada but also internationally as we look toward wage reopeners in 2023 and 2025.

At the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) convention the BCFMWU submitted resolutions to form a nation level committee to address minimum safe manning levels and labour's ability to provide input on employer applications as well as addressing regulatory changes and look at strengthening Canadian cabotage, which is the right to operate transport services within a particular territory (i.e. domestic travel in Canada is to be provided by a Canadian Operator with Canadian crew). The resolutions were later combined, and a single committee approved with all Provinces in Canada expressing interest as there are vessels and ferries in every single province and most territories with shared interests.

We also participated in the BC Federation of Labour's Convention as affiliates through the BCGEU for the first in-person Convention in years. BCFMWU members participated in the Young Workers, Indigenous, Executive Council and 2SLGBTQIA+ caucuses.

The BCFMWU continues to represent our marine specific view at the Canadian Labour Congress's transportation group, the Pacific Coast Maritime Council, and now has the co-chair position on the Canadian National Seafarers' welfare board.

## Recommendations

To begin the 2021 year the Union presented multiple potential resolves to the growing wage gap for members of the Union compared to others in comparable or adjacent industries in BC to the Company.

Issues raised included but were not limited to certificate acknowledgement for ships officers, remote living allowances, housing scarcity, general wages, staff levels, regular staff levels, CSD compensation, and trades across the ferry system.

Also highlighted was the difference in compensation between Union and non-Union employees of BC Ferries such as mileage rates and housing options, which resulted in increased mileage for Union members.

Almost a year later and we have seen progress in career advancement (currently 10 Ships' Officers in an apprenticeship style career advancement and 4 trades apprenticeship positions at Deas), there is a new certificate allowance interpretation, an increased 3<sup>rd</sup> shift differential, as well as wage reopener for April 2024 now beginning in August 2023.

## Industry Events

The BCFMWU was represented at the Canadian Ferry Associations' fall national gathering which paired well with a Union led NUPGE board meeting, a CLC transportation group meeting, and an opportunity to meet with MP's and Transport Canada representatives.



In early October Interferry held an international event in Seattle, which provided our Union a cost-effective opportunity for representation at an international ferry event. The preparation for Interferry with the International Transportation Federation Seafarers Ferries working group, resulted in Peter Hebblethwaite, the CEO of P&O Ferries which fired domestic workers and hired "agency" workers, no longer being a speaker and ultimately was declared the World's Worst Boss. Which is saying something since he still has a job and Mark Collins and Mike Van Es no longer work at BC Ferries.

## LNG Arbitration

The LNG job dispute arbitration continued through 2022 with SOC President Kimmerly spending almost a month in cross examination and the addition of a number of Union members prepared to provide firsthand testimony. Thank you to the SOC engineering members who have been at the forefront of this dispute for years.

Recruitment center of excellence at BCFS gets...rolling.

## Workers Compensation Appeal Tribunal

The rescue boat WorkSafeBC monetary penalty appeal by BC Ferries continues to this day, with our Union participating on behalf of members affected by the Spirit of Vancouver Island and the Queen of Cumberland rescue boat incidents which have changed the lives of members and affected the way rescue boat drills have been done since 2018.

## Member Engagement

In 2022 the Union conducted two basic and two advanced shop steward courses. Meaning nearly 50 additional members received in house led training by the Unions Labour Relations Officers. This group adds to the growing number of Union reps who can identify breaches of the Collective Agreement and file a grievance after an initial discussion to correct said violations.

In June our Union participated in the BC Lions Canadian Football League season opener and we were able to provide 200 tickets to Union members to attend along with other Union members from other labour organisations.

We will be running more “First 15” trainer sessions in 2023 for Union members who welcome new employees and Union members during their introduction to BC Ferries. We will also be trialing the “Step Up” Union introduction training session for new casual Union members.

We will be hosting a Shop Steward Conference in the first quarter of 2023.

The BCFMWU Solidarity float got back into action this winter for the Ladysmith Light Up and Sidney Sparkles parades. A measured start post pandemic but good to see the public support at events.

Members of the Provincial Executive Officers travelled to every Local and Component geographic location this past year with the exception of the Northern Routes (you’re up soon). Thousands of kilometres, and numerous ferry crossings have been part of the direct engagement, with more coming so the leadership of the Union can hear from members directly. We have also supported other Unions on their picket lines. BCGEU, CUPE, ILWU, CMSG, and Unite Here to name a few so we can build solidarity and increase wages which we can measure our future gains against.

Multiple Locals and Components held summer and winter events to bring Union members together and celebrate the hard work done before and after the summer and winter sailing increases.

### **Grievances**

Internally the Union Hall has been looking at the grievance process and how it can better serve the members in a timely manner.

In 2022 we began a thorough review of backlogged files which were initiated during or prior to the COVID-19 pandemic coming to BC in 2020. This review is being combined with the records management process being implemented for Union held records.

### **Committees**

Early 2022 the Union struck a number of working groups and committees to address a host of issues at BC Ferries. After months of waiting on management representatives the Committees were collapsed and the Joint Committee on increasing productivity, reducing costs, increasing revenue and gainsharing was formed. After coming to a mediated settlement, the Joint Operational Safety Committee began meeting with initial agenda items related to safe conduct of emergency procedures aboard Island Class vessel Aurora after an external audit.

The BCFMWU has initiated an internal strategic planning session to map out the next five years and will continue to canvas Union members for input.



### **Looking Ahead**

With more than 4000 members moving into 2023 there is light ahead, the primary Employer, BC Ferries, is espousing an employee centric position and has new and clear direction from their boards. We have more labour relations staff after filling a multi year vacancy. All the staffing changes internally will put the Union in a better position to advocate for members rights and the wage reopener in the summer. The Union continues to advocate for clarity when the Employer appears to have missed the mark, be it the clean-shaven policy, block scheduling, SEA training, Hours of Work, fatigue, or any other of the myriad of member identified issues we can support each other through.

In Solidarity,



Eric McNeely  
Provincial President



Dan Kimmerly  
Ships' Officers' Component President

**“Shop Stewards: Please Post on Bulletin Boards”**

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