

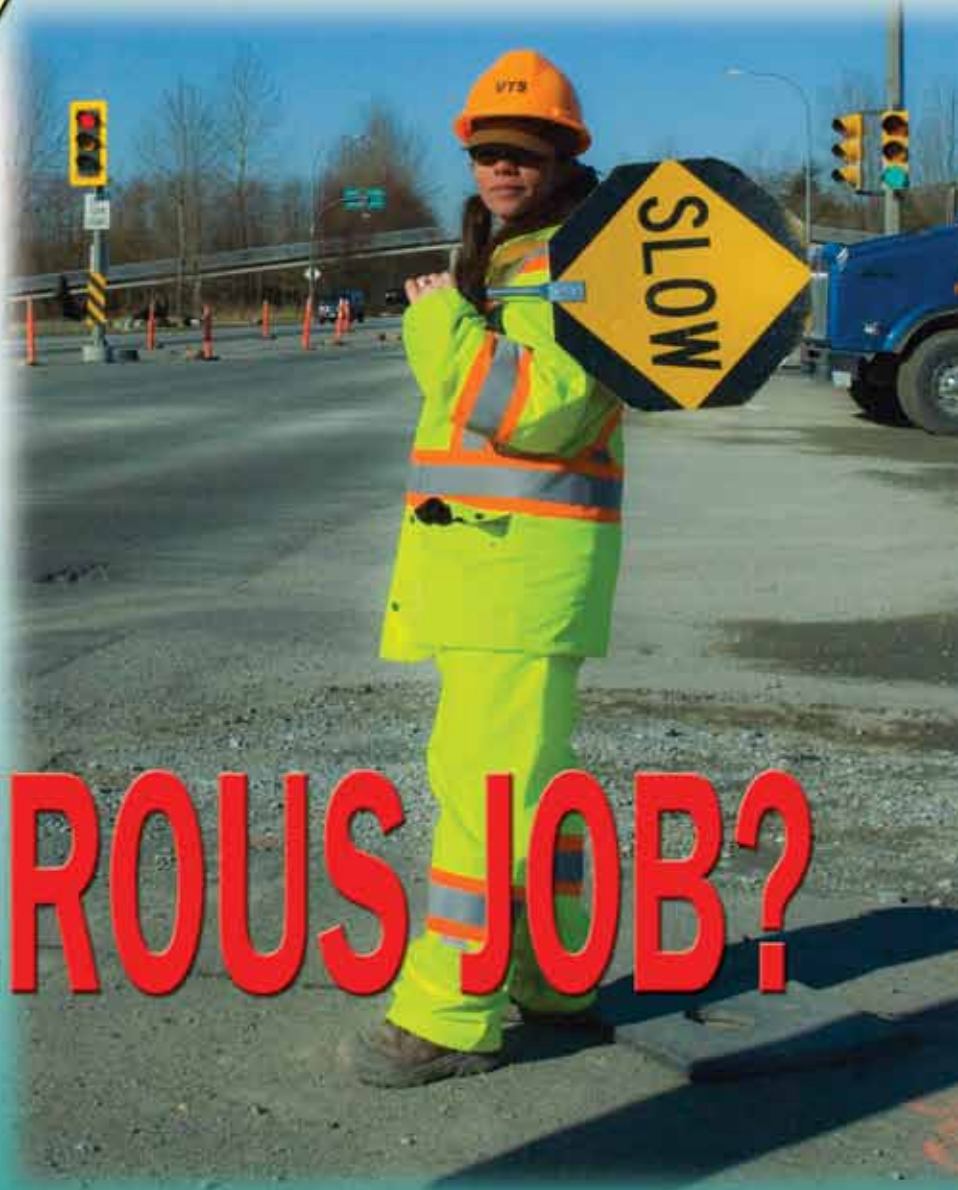


HOTLINE

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
PUBLICATION OF
LOCAL 258 IBEW
SPRING, 2009

LOCAL 258, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Are
angry drivers
making
traffic control
an even more



DANGEROUS JOB?

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ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER ELECTION



EITI MAKES AN IMPACT ACROSS CONTINENTS



LINE CONTRACTORS AGREEMENT RATIFIED



PROTECTING PUBLIC POWER ACROSS BC



HOTLINE Spring 2009

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THE UNION OF HEARTS AND MINDS

HOTLINE is the official newsletter magazine published for the members of Local 258, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in British Columbia, Canada.

Address all correspondence to:
IBEW Local 258
7535 Sixth Street
Burnaby, BC V3N 3M2

Phone: 604-520-3305 Fax: 604-522-3371
Toll Free: 1-877-520-3305
Dispatch Office: 604-524-3547

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Visit IBEW Local 258's website at www.ibew258.bc.ca or contact us via e-mail at info@ibew258.bc.ca.

Editor, Layout & Design: Michelle Boudreau, Leopard Print Communications Inc.



Local 258 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers is affiliated to the British Columbia Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Local 258, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers:

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Local 258 IBEW Legal Counsel: Rebecca Murdock

FRONT COVER PHOTO: Candy Wutke, IBEW Local 258 member who works for Valley Traffic in the lower mainland, on the job maintaining safety around worksites on our roadways. INSET PHOTO: EITI Instructor Bill Wheeler with Electrical Crew in Yemen.

VIEWPOINT from your Business Manager Doug McKay

Another year, another election

On May 12th, we will be heading to the polls to elect those in our community who seek to listen to our voices and speak and take action on our behalf in the legislature in Victoria. This is a benefit of the democratic society we live in, and if recent elections show us anything, they have revealed that fewer and fewer of us are exercising our responsibility to ourselves, our families and our communities in going to the polls to choose who among us will fill these important and powerful roles.

In these difficult and harrowing times, just making a living, raising our families and finding time to enjoy life seems to consume more than the 24 hours we have in a day. I know we are all very busy and often politics has a tendency to frustrate and anger many of us – we only seem to hear the bad news and it doesn't feel very encouraging.

But politics plays a huge part in our everyday lives. When you go to work everyday, you are protected by your union contract. But your union, and your employer, has to work under the rules and laws created by the government. If the government decides that your employer has the legal right to let you work a 2-hour shift, well, then the union is subject to the employer's whim if they choose to exercise their legal right to schedule 2-hour shifts. If the government decides that its OK for 12 year olds to go to work, well, get ready to have yours or somebody's kid join you on the job. If the government decides you will be getting a wage cut or freeze, or your hours are limited, or your job disappears, get ready to deal with that change in your life.

These are just a few examples of what the Campbell Liberal government has brought and is planning to bring to British Columbian's working lives since they were elected in 2001. They have not consulted with our elected labour leaders during their entire term of office. For 8 years they have disregarded us, but their doors have been open to the business community – exclusively. The Campbell government has silenced the voice of working people when we try to communicate our concerns on issues like minimum wage, health and safety, training and apprenticeships.

By their actions, the Campbell government has shown us they are arrogant and out of touch with our concerns. While they deny a minimum wage increase to BC's lowest paid workers, they give themselves and their hand picked assistants massive wage increases that everyday people know is just not right.


But we have the power to change what we see as unfair. And we know who has traditionally listened to and acted on our concerns. I encourage you to let this years' candidates know what you want for your family, your community and your job. Choose to participate – and most importantly, get out and vote on May 12th.



From left, Senior ABM Jim Greenwell, Brother Rick Gerard, IBEW Business Manager Doug McKay and International Rep Laird Cronk at the Western Utility Conference in Victoria.

On other matters, I would like to remind our members who are retiring that if they wish to be considered for dispatch to other jobs they must pay unemployed dues. On the other hand, BA members may request an honorary withdrawal card if they do not intend to continue working. This removes you from active membership - so no paying dues and no elections (either running or voting). If, in the future, you wish to return to active membership, you can deposit your withdrawal card at any time, resume paying dues, and resume entitlement to dispatch and elections. For our members who are off work on Long Term Disability, you are responsible for ensuring that your unemployed dues continue to be paid, as your employer will not be sending dues in for you. Of course, if you are experiencing financial hardship, you also have the opportunity in this circumstance to request an honorary withdrawal card.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with visiting with many of our members who work in the traffic control industry and listening to their concerns about safety on the job. As many of you know, these members play out a vital role contributing to the safety of their union brothers and sisters as they maintain safety around worksites on roadways. A number of recent challenges in dealing with what seems to be an ever increasing number of angry drivers is threatening their safety on the job and the union continues to act on our members' serious concerns. See the story on page 9 of the work that Assistant Business Manager Susan Longva has been doing in this area.

In closing, congratulations to our members working under the Master Line Contractor Agreement who recently ratified their new contract. The hard work of the bargaining committee led by Assistant Business Manager Dan Giesbrecht and Senior ABM Jim Greenwell resulted in a new agreement that features wage and benefit increases as well as, for the first time, paid sick days. Thanks to Brothers Walt Hockey and Doug Laity for stepping forward in these negotiations. 



We've Got Mail!

Dear Doug McKay,
Thank you and your Local Union for the support provided during the past fund raising campaigns. We are looking forward to your continued support for the Multiple Sclerosis Society in 2009. Wishing you all the best for the New Year.
Fraternally yours,
Wayne Brazeau
(retired International Rep)

Dear Doug McKay;
After some thirty-five years with the IBEW Local 258, I am requesting an honorary withdrawal from the Local.

As a Vegetation Coordinator I see more opportunity to bid other jobs within BC Hydro through the COPE union. It was a tough decision but nonetheless I made the move.

I appreciate all the hard work negotiating past agreements with BC Hydro to mine and my colleagues benefit. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Wayne Clarke

Dear Local 258,
Many thanks for the visits. Pass my thanks also to the IBEW members for the plaque. It's a great trade to be in.
Thanks again,
Bob Orrey

Dear President, Executive and Members of IBEW Local 258,
Re: Ladysmith Festival of Lights 2008

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ladysmith Festival of Lights Society, we wish to extend a sincere thank you to your Nanaimo members: Brian Benjamin, Ryan Hawryluk, Blair Murphy and Terry Price, who so generously gave their

time to assist us on our November 9th work party day.

It is only with continuing support that we are able to bring warm memories of the magic of the holiday season to our lovely hillside community. We commend you and your crew for your efforts in helping to make this year's festival a memorable and spectacular success.

Sincerely,
Bill McLaren
President, Ladysmith Festival of Lights
www.ladysmithfol.com



To the members of the Executive, Managers and Union Representatives of Local 258;
Thank you for your support and sending your regards with the gift basket while I was starting my recovery at GF Strong.

I am at home now and continuing my physiotherapy and have been doing so since before Christmas. My mobility is improving steadily and I anticipate that, in time, I will make a full recovery.

I hope you all had a Merry Christmas and a great start to '09.
Sincerely,
Kevin Dagg

Dear Michelle Laurie,
The 2009 CLC Winter School has passed in what seems to me like no time at all and I am very pleased that you were able to instruct at what has been my last Winter School.
It has been a real honour and source of pride to have been the Chancellor of the Winter School for twenty-four years, and to have been able to watch the transformation of activists that occurs every year at the school. It wouldn't happen without your contribution and I want to thank you for your participation and hard work. Thank you for donating your time and your skills to labour education. I know you put a lot of work into your course to ensure that the Winter School quality was kept at a high level and you should be proud of what has been achieved.
In solidarity,
David Rice
Regional Director, CLC Pacific Region

Dear Sisters & Brothers;

We are writing to express our sincere appreciation for your contribution of \$200 to the 2008 Labour Community Christmas Dinner. This 13th annual event was another outstanding success, with more than 3,000 dinners served to low-income families in Vancouver and Surrey. We were able to provide more than 800 food hampers and hand out hundreds of toys and supply clothing to our guests. The total cost on the dinners this year was \$32,565.55 – which was completely covered by donations – with some funds left for start-up this year.

This Christmas event would not be possible without the contribution of many unions, their members, their employers, friends of the labour movement and several hundred volunteers. We know that without your continued support this effort would not be possible.

On behalf of the Labour Community Christmas Dinner Committee, we thank you.

In solidarity,

Jim Sinclair
President

Angela Schira
Secretary-Treasurer



Dear Local 258,

Thank you again for your support of our annual fund-raising banquet held on November 15, 2008. Your contribution plays a significant role in enabling us to continue our many initiatives promoting protection and enhancement of fish stocks and protection of angler opportunity.

Our initiatives include “Pathway to Fishing”, “Rivers Day” celebrations and “Family Fishing” weekend. Many of our projects relate to developing our youth as the future stewards of the resource.

We sincerely hope we can count on your support again in the future to enable us to continue in our role as the “voice” of river anglers.

Rod Clapton,
President, BC Federation of Drift Fishers

To IBEW Local 258;

I would like to thank Unit 3 of IBEW Local 258 with sincere appreciation.

Ed Kensen & family

Dear IBEW Local 258;

Thanks to the IBEW for the lovely plants and kind words. They are so appreciated.

In Solidarity,
Chuck Puchmayr

MLA New Westminster

Editor's Note: Chuck Puchmayr recently underwent a successful liver transplant after battling cancer for the past year. He has indicated he will retire as NDP MLA for New Westminster and Official Opposition Critic for Labour for the past four years.

Thank you!

To IBEW Local 258: I wish to sincerely thank the brothers and sisters of the IBEW for their genuine compassion and continuing support in the tragic loss of our daughter. I also thank Local 258 Unit 3 Social Fund for the generous donation to Caitlynd Piderman memorial Scholarship Fund.

Fraternally,
Jack Piderman

Hello IBEW;

Sorry for the tardy response but I just wanted to thank you for the zippered hoodies. They were a big hit. Your continued support makes this event possible and enjoyable for everyone.

Thanks again,
Jan Laursen
BC Hydro Vernon Bonsel Committee Chairman

Dear IBEW Local 258;

We thank you very much for your generous donation towards our 2008 fireworks display.

Yours truly,
Hudson's Hope Fire Department

HAVE YOU MOVED?

If you have recently moved, make sure your local union office has your new mailing address.

Contact Local 258 IBEW and let us know your new address so we can make sure you continue to receive news alerts, The Hotline newsletter and be notified of current events.

Your employer is not responsible for forwarding your new mailing address in a timely fashion, so please let your union know where you are.

Call the office at

604-520-3305, fax us

at 604-522-3371, or

e-mail us at

info@ibew258.bc.ca



BARGAINING REPORTS

Members ratify new agreement with Line Contractors

On February 19, 2009, the vote by mail ballot sent in by Local 258 members working for Line Contractors throughout the province was counted at the union office in Burnaby. The new two-year agreement was ratified by a margin of 78%, reports Local 258 ABM Dan Giesbrecht.

“Together with the Bargaining Committee (Walt Hockey, Doug Laity, Jim Greenwell) we were successful in achieving significant gains for our members, including for the first time, 3 paid sick days. Meaningful wage, health benefit and pension increases were won and the new contract is retroactive to January 31 when the previous contract expired,” said Giesbrecht.

Almost 500 Local 258 IBEW members work for the Line Contractors who bargain under this Master Agreement.

Following is a list of private power line contractor companies where Local 258 members work:

A. POWERLINE CONTRACTING LTD., LANGLEY

ADVANCED POWERLINES LTD., KELOWNA

AERIAL CONTRACTORS LTD., SALMON ARM

ALLTECK CONTRACTORS LTD., LANGLEY

ARCTIC POWER SYSTEMS, ABBOTSFORD

ARROW INSTALLATIONS, CRANBROOK

B & T LINE EQUIP TESTERS LTD., NANAIMO

B & G POWER SYSTEMS LTD., COQUITLAM

BC HIGH VOLTAGE INDUSTRIAL LTD., ALDERGROVE

B T ALL POWERLINE CONSTRUCTION LTD., NANAIMO

BRIDGE CREEK POWER LTD., 100 MILE HOUSE

COAST POWERLINE (1993) LTD., VICTORIA

CENTRAL ISLAND POWERLINE LTD., COBBLE HILL

EAFAB ELECTRIC, LANGLEY

EDWARDS POWERLINE LTD., WILLIAMS LAKE

EHV POWER CORP., BURNABY

ESC ELECTRICAL SERVICES & CONTRACTING, PRINCE GEORGE

FRASERVIEW ELECTRIC LTD., ALDERGROVE

GALBRAITH POWERLINE CONTRACTING LTD., ABBOTSFORD

GARTH'S ELECTRIC CO. LTD., 100 MILE HOUSE

GLENN POWER CONTRACTORS LTD., SALMON ARM

HIGHLAND POWERLINES LTD., KAMLOOPS

HIGH VOLTAGE SERVICES, ABBOTSFORD

HORIZON DEVELOPMENTS LTD., SAANICHTON

JACO ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS INC., SURREY

JACO POWERLINES LTD., COBBLE HILL

J.M.N. CONTRACTING LTD., QUALICUM BEACH

KODIAK POWERLINE CONTRACTORS LTD., KAMLOOPS

MARTECH ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS, CASTLEGAR

MIDLIGHT CONTRACTORS, FORT McMURRAY, AB

MIDWAY POWER LINE SERVICES LTD., SECHELT

PACIFIC ELECTRIC INSTALLATION LTD., MATSQUI

PLOWE POWER SYSTEMS LTD., KAMLOOPS

R R INTERIOR POWER & ELECTRIC LTD., WILLIAMS LAKE

R S LINE CONSTRUCTION, LANGLEY

REIMAIR CONSULTING LTD., VICTORIA

ROCKY MOUNTAIN POWERLINE, PRINCE GEORGE

ROCHE POWER, WILLIAMS LAKE

RUSH ELECTRIC LTD., QUESNEL

SKEENA POWER SYSTEMS, PRINCE GEORGE

SKYLINE POWER LTD., SMITHERS

STAN-MAC LINE CONSTRUCTION LTD., DAWSON CREEK

SUNSET POWERLINES LTD., SURREY

TRANS POWER CONSTRUCTION, NEW WESTMINSTER

TWIN RIVER POWER LTD., TERRACE

VALLEY POWER LINE CONTRACTING LTD., ABBOTSFORD

VANCOUVER ISLAND POWERLINE LTD., VICTORIA

WESTERN PACIFIC ENTERPRISES GROUP, COQUITLAM

**Attention all
Local 258 IBEW
A members**

This is a reminder to all *A* members to update your beneficiary information for your International Pension when there is a change in your personal status. Please contact Janice or Eileen at the Union office in Burnaby for further information or if you have any questions. Phone: 604-520-3305 Toll Free: 1-877-520-3305

*Day of Mourning
for Workers Killed
or Injured on the Job*

April 28, 2009

Check your union's website for events in your area.
www.ibew258.bc.ca



Call for submissions

Local 258 IBEW Tom Forkin Student Scholarship

In a letter sent to IBEW Local 258 members, the union's Executive Board has advised the membership of changes to the application process for students interested in the Tom Forkin Scholarship. This Scholarship was created in 1991, in memory of our first Local President - Brother Tom Forkin - and is open to members, or dependants of members, of Local 258.

Previously, successful applicants were determined through an essay competition. As there have been applicants at various levels in their post-secondary education competing against high school graduates, it was felt there may be some inequities in the competition process.

As a result, the union's Executive Board underwent a comprehensive review of the intent of the scholarship, which is to further the goals of unionism and education amongst our youth, and agreed to change the format of the competition this year.


This year's applicants are being asked to explain their goals and define their community service and relationship with the union. Applicants must complete the application form, available for download on the union's website at www.ibew258.bc.ca/forkin09.html, and submit it either by mail, or if possible, via e-mail to info@ibew258.bc.ca. If you are submitting via e-mail, you must include "Tom Forkin Scholarship" in the subject bar.

To be eligible, applicants must be registered, or plan to register in a full-time post-secondary program at a BC educational institution. Special consideration may be given to applicants who are attending or planning to attend a post-secondary institution outside of BC, if the program they will be attending is not available in BC. Applicants must have a letter-grade standing of C or better, and copies of the letter-grade standing must be included with the application letter. Mature students may have this requirement waived if approved by the Executive Board.

Applications can be mailed to:

Tom Forkin Scholarship
Local 258, IBEW
7535 - 6th Street
Burnaby, BC V3N 3M2



All submissions must be received by 4:00 p.m. on April 17, 2009. The Executive Board shall assess all submissions, and will make a final and unalterable decision by May 15, 2009. Successful applicants will be notified immediately, but the scholarship funds will not be released until proof of enrollment is provided. 

Protecting Public Power Across BC

IBEW Local 258 can be proud of its leadership role in the fight to protect public power across British Columbia. Last year, our membership voted in favour of making a significant contribution to support the work of provincial grassroots advocacy group BC Citizens for Public Power (BCCPP).

Through mobilization, education and advocacy, BCCPP works to ensure that BC's electricity system is publicly owned, regulated and operated to provide British Columbians affordable, clean, reliable and renewable energy. Since 2002, their activities have included launching a class action lawsuit in response to the first phase of privatizing BC Hydro, commissioning research, producing and distributing educational materials, as well as coordinating and participating in hundreds of public forums, social action events, media interviews and more. Last year, BCCPP organized and hosted the tremendously successful MORE POWER TO YOU conference. This event was the impetus behind the launch of their recent provincial awareness and action campaign—BC Guardians.



Time for Action

The public vs. private power debate promises to be a critical issue in the upcoming provincial election on May 12th. Collectively, our efforts can help stop the privatization of BC's electricity sector. Here are **five actions we can take**:

city sector. Here are **five actions we can take**:

State your case! Display a free BCCPP lawn sign on your property or in the window of your home or vehicle. Signs read: *BC Hydro: The Power is Ours. KEEP IT PUBLIC. Vote May 12th.*

Question the candidates! Attend All Candidates' meetings during the campaign period and raise questions about the social, environmental, and economic impacts of BC's energy policy (see sample questions below).

Go on record! Write the Ministers of Energy, Environment, the Premier and your MLA. Tell them you oppose the government's energy policy and the privatization of BC's electricity sector. Let provincial politicians know that public power is a key election issue for you.

Consider a personal donation to BCCPP! Single or monthly contributions help BCCPP expand their outreach so they can increase their distribution of educational materials.

Vote! Find out where your local candidates stand on this issue, then cast your **vote to protect public power on May 12th.**

Question the Candidates!

Here are a few suggested questions that you can ask at All Candidates meetings. Phone your local candidate's offices for a schedule of meeting dates/times/locations in your area.

The government has repeatedly stated that BC has been a net importer of electricity for most years over the past decade. In fact, data from BC Stats reveals that we have been a net *exporter* of energy for 7 of the last 11 years. Is your government prepared to reevaluate forecasted domestic energy requirements and the *BC Energy Plan's* "self-sufficiency" targets?

Do you favour repealing Bill 30 and restoring zoning authority rights to municipalities, regional districts and citizens with respect to private power developments slated for their jurisdictions?

Would you support a moratorium on issuing any additional private power project licenses or applications in British Columbia? If so, for how long, and to what ends?

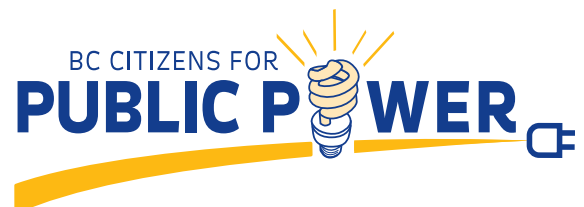
In 2003, BC Hydro outsourced one-third of its operation—administrative and customer services—to Accenture, claiming costs savings of \$250 million over the 10 year contract. With growing evidence of duplication of services and inefficiencies, will your government support an Auditor General's review to investigate BC Hydro's true costs and savings from its outsourcing agreement with Accenture?

The BC Energy Plan presently restricts BC Hydro with respect to developing any new sources of energy for the province; new energy development is relegated to the private sector. Do you support lifting the existing restrictions that prevent BC Hydro from developing new generation projects?

Would you support an Auditor General's review of Energy Purchase Agreements between BC Hydro and private power companies to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding contract terms and conditions and assess the benefits to the province?

To request signs, educational materials, or to make a donation to BC Citizens for Public Power or the BC Guardians campaign, contact:

m: 604 – 207 West Hastings St. Vancouver, BC V6B 1H7
t: 604.681.5939
e: info@citizensforpublicpower.ca or coordinator@bcguardians.ca
www: citizensforpublicpower.ca or bcguardians.ca




More than 350 members of Local 258 IBEW get up in the morning and fight the traffic to get to work every day. But the fight doesn't seem to end when they get there. In fact, for many of our members who work on the roads in traffic control, keeping the public and their union brothers and sisters safe and out of harm's way, the fight is about to begin.

Traffic control has always been a dangerous job, and the statistics prove it. According to information from the Workers' Compensation Board, from 2005 to 2008 in BC, 15 traffic control persons (TCPs) were struck by motor vehicles that did not slow down in traffic control zones. Most of these incidents resulted in significant but not life threatening injuries – however – in two of these incidents, the TCPs died (Brother Terry Mitchell passed away in February of last year as a result of being hit by a car while working as a TCP in Fort Langley).

Assistant Business Manager Susan Longva tells The Hotline that many TCPs are reporting an increase in the number of incidents being described as “angry drivers out of control” who add to the daily hazards of this dangerous job. “Many of our members, especially those working in the lower mainland and Fraser Valley, are reporting an increasing number of drivers who ignore the traffic lights, barricades, signs, flashing arrows and most importantly, the directions of the traffic control person,” she says. “From verbal insults to throwing things at the TCPs to physical assaults, we've heard it all.”

Longva described that recently a member working as a TCP was faced with a situation that has left her with lingering fears and questions about her safety on the job. She was called to work with a repair crew who was tending to a power outage in an apartment complex. They had to set up at one of the parking entrances to the building and when one of the tenants approached in his car to turn into the parking area, saw the obstruction caused by the repair crew, and proceeded to begin a verbal assault on the TCP. The situation quickly escalated as he got out of his car and approached the TCP, yelling and screaming. She feared he was going to hit her and had to put her arms up to protect herself. The local police were called and the situation was rectified, but during the course of the conversation with police, the member was informed that if she had been the first to have physical contact with the angry driver in the course of trying to protect herself, she could find herself facing assault charges.

From this and other incidents described by many TCPs, Local 258 is holding a series of meetings for TCPs in the lower mainland and in communities where members have reported increasing incidents of driver anger. The first meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 4, and members will be notified through their workplaces of times and locations. The purpose of the meetings are to find out the details and scope of incidents that may be taking place where members working as TCPs fear for their safety from angry members of the public. Also, the meetings will have a focus on what can be done to develop a plan of action with stakeholders in the community to ensure the safety of TCPs.

More than 12,000 TCPs have been trained in BC since 2003 by instructors trained by the Construction Safety Network. Graduates of the two-day course that provides theory and practical experience receive a certificate valid for three years. TCPs are employed by municipalities, traffic control companies and road construction or maintenance companies. Local 258 members working in traffic control work alongside our BC Hydro crews, our private sector crews and our utility arborist crews. 



**Are angry
drivers
making
traffic
control
an even
more
DANGEROUS JOB?**

The Right to Refuse Unsafe Work



A true story: Working in BC's oil fields pays well, but the price of working unsafely is even higher. That's what two young workers learned the morning of October 27, 2007, when they tried to unload 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs.) concrete barriers from a truck on a job site 200 km north of Fort St. John. To do the job safely, they needed a picker unit, tag lines, and a third person to act as spotter. They had none of these things. They tried unloading with a backhoe. A 2.4 m (8 ft.) concrete barrier shifted and struck one of the workers, amputating his leg below the knee. This terrible accident could have been avoided.



It's up to you to refuse unsafe work

Every time you knowingly choose unsafe work, you risk tragic consequences, says David Vince, a WorkSafeBC regional prevention manager based in Fort St. John. "Combine young workers lacking the confidence to say No with a 'get 'er done' culture and accidents happen. But they don't have to. Every worker can and should respectfully decline unsafe work."

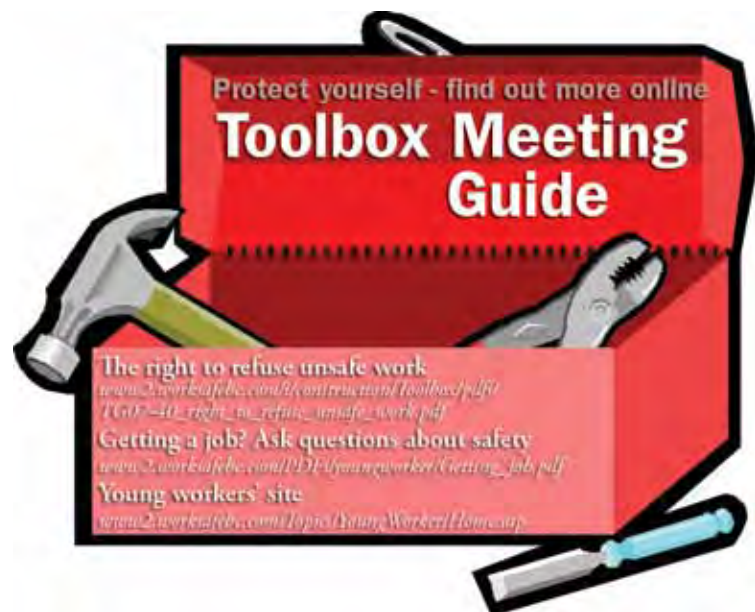
Just as you have the legal responsibility to follow safe work procedures, you have the legal responsibility to refuse work that doesn't comply with these procedures and endangers you or others. Worried you'll be fired? Don't be. It's against the law for employers to fire, demote, intimidate, or in any way punish workers for refusing or reporting unsafe work.

The decision to refuse unsafe work has to start somewhere and that "somewhere" might as well be you. Your safety – your very life – just might depend on it one day.

Young workers face particular challenges

Young workers, anyone 15 to 24 years old, are at particular risk in the workplace. They lack work and life experience and so may be unaware of safety hazards or their right to avoid them. Even when these workers are well trained and supervised, things can go terribly wrong on the job.

Young workers are vulnerable because they're eager to impress. They're reluctant to ask questions for fear of sounding incompetent or, worse yet, looking foolish or cowardly. This fear extends to speaking up and refusing unsafe work. Let's face it; it's tough to be seen as shirking your duties at any age. But it's a necessary step when you or a co-workers health and safety are at stake.



When you should refuse

You have the right to refuse work when the conditions of the job put you or another worker at imminent risk of serious injury or death. This means, for example, that complaints about indoor air quality are not considered legitimate reasons for refusing “unsafe work”. However, you can and should refuse unsafe work where you would be working:

- in a hazardous locale (unsecured scaffold)
- with faulty or inappropriate personal protective equipment (wrong respirator for the condition)
- with damaged equipment (table saw with missing or broken guards)
- beyond your skill level (early falling of a particularly hazardous tree)
- under pressures that make it difficult to perform tasks safely (using shortcuts to satisfy an unreasonable deadline)

Steps for refusing unsafe work

The best ways to avoid unsafe work are to, one, know your stuff and, two, know yourself. Ensure you’ve had the training you need and that you’re familiar with safe working procedures. If that’s not the problem, ask your supervisor for some help or a demonstration. If something still isn’t right and you have reason to believe that the work presents an imminent danger, refuse to perform it.

Step 1: Tell your supervisor

Tell your supervisor or employer immediately and explain why you refuse to perform the tasks at hand. Be specific about the unsafe conditions, whether they concern the work environment, equipment, or even your skill level.

Step 2: Wait for your supervisor to investigate

It’s now your supervisor’s responsibility to investigate and find a solution that eliminates or reasonably minimizes hazards without delay. If your supervisor does not agree with you and believes the task is safe, he or she must tell you that. Assuming you still consider the work unsafe, your supervisor must continue the investigation and conduct it in the presence of two people – you and one of the following:

- A worker representative of your joint health-and-safety committee
- Another worker selected by your trade union
- Any other reasonably available worker you’ve selected

Step 3: Involve WorkSafeBC

Most problems are solved before this step, but if the matter remains unresolved, both you and your supervisor should notify WorkSafeBC. An officer will come to your worksite, investigate, and take whatever action is necessary.

Everyone shares responsibility for a safe workplace, but when it comes to refusing unsafe work, the responsibility starts with you.

Speak up!

WCB launches Teleclaim service for injured workers

Injured workers can now file their time-loss claims more quickly and easily with a new service through WorkSafeBC (the Workers Compensation Board of BC) known as Teleclaim.

1•888•WORKERS

(1•888•967•5377 or #5377 on your Telus, Rogers or Bell cell phone)

Workers who are injured at work and miss time as a result can now report their injuries to WorkSafe BC by calling the Teleclaim Centre. By doing so, you will be connected with a WCB representative who completes an injury report on your behalf.

The Teleclaim representative will help explain the claims process in an average 30 minute discussion, and can help obtain services to assist with recovery and return to work.

Teleclaim is available to workplaces throughout BC, Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 4 pm.

EITI MAKES AN IMPACT ACROSS

by Phil Davis, EITI

EITI is picking up an increasing amount of very interesting international work. These training projects involve flying instructors around the globe for extended periods of time. In every case, they have done a fabulous job of showcasing the huge amount of trades' talent that exists in British Columbia. They have brought a lot to the job, but have also learned a lot with each experience. Upon their return, they have recounted a number of stories about the culture and the people that they have encountered.

Last fall, from November and into December, two of EITI's trainers, John Zucco and Bill McCaveney, conducted training in Malaysia for the national utility Tenaga Nasional Berhad. For the first time, the utility used aerial man lifts to perform live line work on 275 KV Mono Pole Structures. Zucco and McCaveney spent long hours working with local line workers instructing them on the intricacies of various live line work methods, first in a de-energized, and then, an energized field environment. The training was


made necessary due to the construction of a new toll highway that caused a re-routing of transmission lines, as well as maintenance procedures that had to be performed from the platform of the new highway.

The instructors overcame language, cultural and culinary challenges in a construction environment that was often muddy and somewhat chaotic. They established good friendships and picked up new skills in using cell phone minutes purchased in "ring-gits" to keep in contact with people back home in Canada.

In February of 2009, Bill Wheeler travelled to Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula where he spent about two weeks performing substation training and worker assessments at three separate locations. The review that came back from the customer stated, in part:

The courses that Bill Wheeler presented to the two classes at the Terminal were extremely good. The Power Point presentation was very interesting and full of relevant details and information. Most importantly,

the course focused on all aspects of the isolation, testing, grounding, de-isolation and re-energization of high voltage metal clad switch gear. By so doing, the electrical foremen and all the technicians who attended the courses could directly relate all of the course information to the metal clad switch gear here at the Terminal. Bill Wheeler was very proactive in his approach and succeeded with involving all the various foremen and technicians on the two courses to interact with him during the presentations.

Delivering training half way around the world presents a number of challenges. As a result, the staff at EITI has learned a lot more about customs, immigration, funding transfers and currency exchange. We have also gained a whole new appreciation for the immense skill demonstrated by our dedicated instructors. As we continue to seek international opportunities to provide training services, we look forward to continue to learn new lessons, and improve the product that we offer to the international electrical utility industry. 

CONTINENTS



Photos, from top: EITI Instructor Bill Wheeler with Electrical Crew in Yemen. Middle: EITI Instructor Bill McCaveney with local tradesperson preparing for lift. Bottom: EITI Instructor John Zucco with Malaysian client "Chua", relaxing after a very busy week. Background photo: All substation work focuses around the movement of oil.

The Electrical Industry Training Institute is owned by Local 258 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

EITI creates and delivers training that develops safe, skilled and competent workers in the electrical industry with a vision to enhance the industry's workforce by leading the way with innovative, responsive training solutions.

EITI's mission is to be recognized as the leading provider of quality customized training that develops safe, skilled and highly respected workers for our industry with a competitive advantage of quality customized training from our industry for our industry.



Random drug & alcohol testing:

Local 258 establishes an important precedent

by **Rebecca Murdock,**
Local 258 Legal Counsel

In BC there is no general right of employers to randomly screen for illicit drugs or alcohol. However an important exception to this rule exists for the employee who has an acknowledged problem with substance dependence or abuse. Where such an employee is returning to work after a period of treatment or absenteeism associated with drugs or alcohol an employer can reasonably request a period of random screening to establish fitness for work. A further exception arises in safety sensitive environments where employers may require a single random test following a major accident. The Exxon Valdez disaster in the late 1980's prompted this policy change in the oil and gas sector.

Random testing is an incursion into an employee's privacy and dignity, but arbitrators have found such concerns are overridden by the employee's obligation to participate in accommodating his/her own disability in a return to work situation. All parties: the employer, Union and employee must cooperate in optimizing con-

ditions of employment for an employee suffering from disabling drugs or alcohol.


Recently IBEW Local 258 arbitrated the case of a private sector employee with recently diagnosed bi-polar mood disorder (BMD) for which he took prescribed medication. The medical evidence established that the Grievor occasionally used pot and drank beer, both of which were not recommended by medical experts. In 2004 the Grievor (i.e. an employee who files a grievance) sought to return to work after a period of absence and the Employer objected on several grounds saying the Grievor needed to abstain completely from illicit drugs and alcohol which were negatively affecting his mental health.

That case was litigated in 2005 and the Grievor was returned to work with certain conditions. In 2009 the Employer threatened to fire the Grievor who had terminated the random tests upon his doctor's recommendation. At the hearing before Arbitrator Burke, the Employer argued the testing should continue for the duration of the employment relationship and that everyone knew the Grievor continued to

use alcohol on a recreational basis.

Arbitrator Burke disagreed, accepting the expert medical testimony of Dr. Hedges (New Westminster). Dr. Hedges testified that a 2-year period of testing was standard in most industries, and there was no medical basis on which to recommend continued testing for the Grievor who had tested negative on every single test since his return to work in 2005.

The decision is precedent setting because it is the first of its kind to establish the 2-year benchmark for random testing (during which there were no relapses).

It is also precedent setting because Arbitrator Burke rejected the Employer's application to retain Dr. Hedges' medical reports for its own purposes including possible future litigation. The Union successfully argued that the Grievor's right to privacy should be restored at the conclusion of the hearing, and the Employer had no ongoing entitlement to the Grievor's medical records. Accordingly Arbitrator Burke ruled that the medical reports in the Employer's possession be destroyed or returned to the Union at the conclusion of hearing. 

Gag Law now in effect as BC election on the horizon

by **Jim Greenwell,**
Senior ABM, Local 258, IBEW

On Feb. 13, 2009, Gordon Campbell violated free speech to silence his critics. On that day, the Campbell government's Bill 42 took effect and will remain in place for three full months until the provincial election is held on May 12, 2009.

Disguised as a law that would limit the influence of money in the democratic process, Bill 42 is really an attempt to silence groups that might criticize the record or policies of the provincial government.

Bill 42 imposes severe spending restrictions on groups, large and small, that prevents them from communicating with the public. Bill 42 however does not limit the amount of dollars that can be donated by business and

corporations that will help to bankroll the Liberal party in the upcoming election.


"Gordon Campbell is afraid of legitimate criticism and dialogue on important public issues and he doesn't mind violating constitutionally protected free speech rights to silence his critics," says BC Federation of Labour President, Jim Sinclair.

Michelle Laurie, Local 258 IBEW President and Board Chair of Citizens for Public Power, says, "This draconian law will limit our ability to get out the message that we need public ownership of or energy resources and we pledge to protest this gagging of our membership".

The Campbell government's Gag Law goes far beyond any other election spending restrictions in Canada. When it was intro-

duced last year, it was roundly criticized and ridiculed by groups from across the political spectrum as well as editorial writers, political pundits and opposition politicians.

Sinclair goes on to say, "When Gordon Campbell was in opposition, he loudly and vehemently opposed much more reasonable spending limits that were put into law at that time. Now that he has been in power for 8 years, he has introduced this anti-democratic law so he can hang on to power".

Four BC unions have launched a court challenge against Bill 42. The BC Federation of Labour is calling on the Attorney General, Wally Oppal, to suspend the law pending a ruling by BC Supreme Court Justice F.W. Cole. 

Local 258 members get educated!

The Canadian Labour Congress' annual union training and education classes for activists took place again this year in January and February at Harrison Hot Springs and IBEW Local 258 members were there!

Holding the title of Canada's largest union training school, the Harrison Winter School provides labour education for union activists, stewards and leaders and affords participants an unmatched opportunity to immerse themselves in topical issues, develop education skills and hone leadership abilities. Local 258 is proud to send a number of our members every year to take part in this important labour education experience.

Ten Local 258 members attended the week long classes this year. Covering a broad range of topics, these classes focus on providing information and education to ensure union members who attend stay on top of the issues they face in the workplace and in the community. Taught by local union leaders, including Sister Michelle Laurie, Local 258 president, participants learn not only from the courses offered but also from each other.

This year saw the retirement of long time Winter School Chancellor David Rice. IBEW Local 258 would like to thank brother Rice for his years of leadership, organization and hard work in making the CLC Winter School the highlight of labour education in Canada.

Congratulations to the Local 258 students who took part in this year's labour education and we thank you for your participation:

- Carolyn Lawrence - Shop Steward Training
- Lisa Cardarelli - Union Counselling
- Jan Kehl - Union Counselling
- Doug Hill - Provincial Labour Law
- Karen Porter - Labour Councils
- Zane Gauthier - Shop Steward Training
- Baptist Crompvoets - Shop Steward Training
- Fred Ruttan - Union Counselling
- Cathy Tagseth - Union Counselling
- Dan Klassen - Unions in the Community



Dear Michelle and all of IBEW 258;
Just wanted to extend my sincere thanks for allowing me to participate in the CLC Winter School.
Thanks again,
Lisa Cardarelli

To IBEW 258 Brothers & Sisters;
I just wanted to write a note and thank you for the opportunity to attend the CLC Winter School this year. The experience was incredible and the knowledge that I gained will definitely allow me to serve my peers more effectively.
I especially appreciated being able to interact with my brothers and sisters in unions from all over the province and the Yukon. This experience has broadened my horizons in a way that I didn't quite expect and I found myself having a "most excellent" time learning.
The education didn't end when the class did.
In closing, thank you again. It was a wondrous time and I would eagerly welcome a chance to attend the CLC Winter School again.
Sincerely,
Carolyn Lawrence
IBEW Local 258, Unit 2

Dear Local 258;
Thanks to you and the Executive Board for approving my attendance at the CLC Winter School. The course on Provincial Labour Law was good. I learned a lot.
It was a great opportunity to network with fellow trade unionists and exchange ideas about common issues. There was also a lot of discussion about the upcoming provincial election and how crucial it is that everyone get the vote out and work to defeat the current government.
Thanks again.
Doug Hill


Your website: www.ibew258.bc.ca



Local 258 IBEW's website, located at www.ibew258.bc.ca on the internet, continues to attract lots of traffic.

Your union website features information about the Local and also includes a number of links for important union information, including downloadable pdf files of your member magazine, The Hotline.

You will also find a number of resources for members such as a Membership Application Form, Unit Meeting Schedules and Applications for Training Assistance.

We hope you enjoy the website and look forward to receiving any suggestions on how we can improve your website, including information that you would like to see on the site. Contact the union's president, Michelle Laurie, at mlaurie@ibew258.bc.ca with your suggestions. 

Do you have photos, original artwork, cartoons, poems for The Hotline?

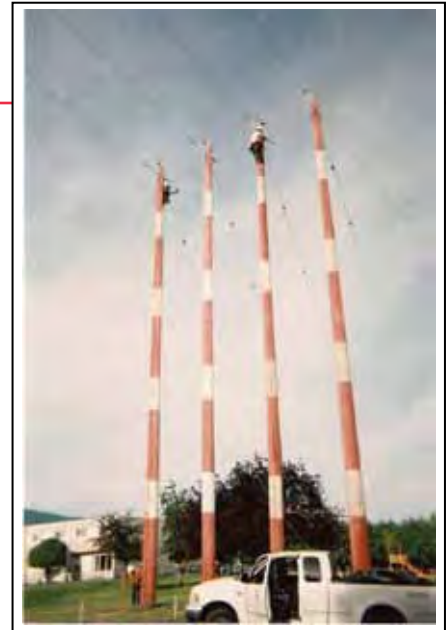
The Hotline knows many of you have an interest in photography and sometimes take photos at your workplaces. We also know there are some of you who are very creative. We would like you to share your photos and creative works — and your stories too — with your union's member magazine, The Hotline!

You are welcome to send in photos from your workplace, and if you have a bit of writing ability, we are also interested in any stories, poems or articles you have written about a work-related issue. Cartoons and drawings are also welcome.

If you'd like to send photos to be published in The Hotline, there are a few requirements:

- If you are sending digital photos - and that's a lot easier to do these days with almost everybody having a digital camera - it's best if the photos are from a minimum 4.0 megapixel camera, set at the highest quality setting ("Fine/Superfine" or "Large").
- If you don't have a digital camera, traditional glossy colour prints developed at the local camera shop or drug store work well too.
- Please **don't** send ink jet, colour copier or colour laser prints - they just don't work well for publishing purposes.
- Include your name and where you work, along with a description of who is in the photo including the occasion and date.
- You can also burn the photos onto a CD and mail them to the Local 258 IBEW office, Attention: The Hotline.

** Remember to turn off the automatic date when taking pictures on your camera. Please do not send original photographs - copies will be best as we cannot confirm return of originals. By sending photos you consent to having your photos published in The Hotline. Please be aware the union's member magazine is downloadable on the union's website, www.ibew258.bc.ca.*



The above photo was taken in 2000 by Harold Wootton, a 35 year IBEW member who works for Allteck Line Contracting. It shows Brother Dwight Barker and Brother Dennis Devoe on 100 ft. poles stringing express lines over the river in Kamloops. Thanks to Sylvie Wootton, Harold's wife, for sending this photo to The Hotline.

Send your photos via e-mail to:
hotline@shaw.ca

Send your photos via mail to:
Local 258 IBEW
Attention, The Hotline
7535 Sixth Street
Burnaby, BC V3N 3M2

RUMINATIONS OF A RETIREE

by Ken McEwen, retired IBEW Local 258 member

Well, okay. I've been told that another column for the Hotline is due. In that I have been conditioned to always do what I am told I will attempt to get something together in time for publication. Right now I am sitting with a completely empty mind in front of the keyboard in sunny southern California. Catherine Dear has, at times, alluded that my mind is empty on a fairly regular basis. This season, ruminating has taken kind of a back seat to a plethora of chores and projects that have been deemed necessary by Management.

One such project centred on the 10 foot by 10 foot shed on our lot. The shed, as it existed, was made of metal (I called it a tin shed but in actual fact it was aluminum) and was, like me, approaching what could be termed somewhat elderly and weather-beaten. Well, what happened was that last spring, after we had left sunny southern California, some of that weather in the form of great gusts of wind peeled back a corner of the tin (aluminum) roof. A kind neighbour hammered the roof back down and gave it a bit of a patch job. When we arrived on site in October and experienced the first rainfall it was noted that a lot of water entered the shed in proximity to the patch job. To forestall similar occurrences during any future rain events I was dispatched with a bucket of goop to make the shed roof water repellent. That operation was successful and during the next rain event the shed remained dry. I should note here that prior to the application of goop there was only water in the shed when it rained and that we live in a desert where rain doesn't happen frequently. Notwithstanding the dryness of the shed, ensuing negotiations determined that a new roof was required. Given my conditioning (see first paragraph) material was purchased and a new asphalt shingle roof was applied to the tin (aluminum) shed. There I was, content to rest on my laurels, with a project completed and a newly roofed dry shed.

After a few days of resting on the aforementioned laurels (I wonder where that term originated) I heard the three most dreaded words in the English language, "... I've been thinking". The subject matter of the thinking concerned the outside walls of the same 10 foot by 10 foot shed that apparently now looked shabby because of the new roof. At the request of Management, negotiations were re-opened, resulting in the purchase of siding, paint and ancillary hardware. I must say at this point that Management rolled up its sleeves and applied the paint to the newly installed siding. The result is that we no longer have a tin (aluminum) shed but have instead a painted wooden asphalt roofed shed that doesn't allow the ingress of water during rain events, should they occur. Management is happy, the neighbours are happy and I am back

to laurel resting, at least until those three words are heard again.

The whole process described above is somewhat reminiscent of the time we put new flooring in our Park Model trailer. The new flooring apparently caused the refrigerator to look shabby. The old microwave oven didn't match the new refrigerator and then the cupboards looked dingy against the new microwave oven and new refrigerator. Rumination has revealed to me that starting any project is sort of like chucking a rock into a large pond of water. The ensuing ripples expand outward and one can only hope that the edge of the pond is reached with a minimum of consequences.

A good thing is happening this weekend. Daylight Savings Time is starting. I like Daylight Savings Time. It has always seemed to me that daylight in the very early morning is a terrible waste. I much prefer to have daylight later in the day when I am, to some extent, alert and awake. Time reserved for sleeping should remain dark. An exception to that, of course, is that it needn't be dark for afternoon naps. Mind you, I don't really nap in the afternoon. I just kind of sit in my chair and rest my eyes for an hour or two. Catherine Dear reports that I sleep, with attendant snoring noises, but I'm pretty sure that I just rest my eyes briefly. I am also pretty sure that Sesame (the dog) prefers Daylight Savings Time for her evening strolls. If George Bush did nothing else during his presidency of the United States of America he gave USAmericans, and consequently Canadians, a longer period of darker mornings and lighter evenings.

On another issue, I'm not sure whether I discussed women and mumbling with you before. If I have, you need not read any further. I have found that women tend to mumble more and more as I advance in years. Especially Catherine Dear, who's mumbling seems to get worse with the passage of time. I have done some in depth research into this phenomenon with other retirees. Members of my peer group all report an increase in mumbling among their women acquaintances, particularly spouses. Prior to this exhaustive research I attended, at Catherine Dear's urging, an ear doctor guy who concluded after some tests that Catherine Dear did not mumble but instead my ears were faulty. I am pleased to relate that, based on my poll of other retirees and despite the ear doctor guy's opinion, it is confirmed that women mumble. In retrospect, and in fairness, I am constrained to report that some men, including TV announcers, mumble as well. Further research will be conducted.

Well, that's all for this time as I have once again overused the allotted space. Please continue to work and play safely because whether daylight comes early or late, retirement is great. 📧

In Memoriam

In memory of brothers and sisters of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 258, who passed away in 2008. Please accept our apologies if we have missed anyone.

Norm Morton – Jan 4	Lorne Kidd – August 24
Ed Gallant – Jan 16	Douglas Martin – Sept (?)
Richard Marsh – Jan 29	Michael Farrell – Sept 8
Terry Mitchell – Feb 26	Oliver O'Rourke – Sept 9
Robert Shirley – Mar 3	Beverly Gurney – Sept 25
Terry Willis – Mar 20	John Cliffe – Sept 26
Charles Forrest - Mar 20	Angela Franco - Oct 1
Robert Hunt – Mar 26	David Hunt – Oct 9
William Peters – Mar 29	Thomas Whitelaw – Oct 14
Gordon Arndt – Apr 11	Lawrence Baldwin – Oct 18
Lawrence "Tubby" Folden – Apr 16	John Fitzpatrick – Oct 24
Richard Woodward – May 10	Kenneth McPhail – Oct 24
Dirk Rozenboom – May 13	Kenneth Calwell – Nov 4
Robert Lehman – May 13	William Utterback – Nov 24
Heather Esplen – May 29	John Shortreed – Nov 13
Victor Scott – June 6	Kenneth Messenger- Nov 28
Wilbert Gattinger – June 12	Maxwell Westley – Nov 28
Debbie Morhart – June 15	Mattheus Frank Sarton – Dec 4
Arthur Rioux – June 22	William Edgar – Dec 14
Clarence Tande – July 1	Theodore Wear – Dec 28
Arno Calluna <i>(reported in July, date of passing unknown)</i>	Morris Roland – Dec 30
Richard Thompson – Aug 4	John Hewison – Dec 31



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PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

LOCAL 258

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS - INTERNATIONAL UNION OF RADIO & TELEVISION ENGINEERS & COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.



The January meeting of Unit 5 in Burnaby welcomed new members Brook Low, Andy Papaspyros and Al Villaneuva, initiated into Local 258 by Sister Cathy Tagseth, Unit Chair.



Brother Dan Bell was initiated into IBEW Local 258 at the Unit 5, Sechelt meeting, Feb. 18/09. He is shown above with Unit 5 Chair Cathy Tagseth.



Sister Cathy Heidemann, left, was initiated into Local 258 by Sister Cathy Tagseth at the Unit Meeting that took place in Sechelt in December.



Jim Betteridge of Unit 5 receiving his retirement plaque and jacket from Dan Giesbrecht at his retirement luncheon in Powell River.



Don Urquhart, right, presenting Kit Munro, Trouble Technician, with a \$50 dollar gift certificate for tailboard of the month of December.



Brother Brian Thompson, left, presenting Brother Bob Mills with his Electrician Certificates in Prince George.



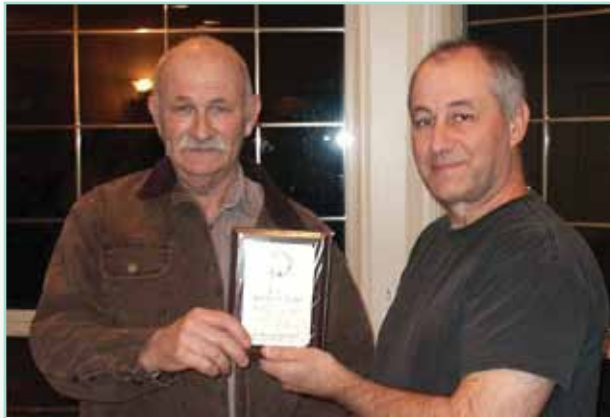
Unit 5 Chair Cathy Tagseth, right, congratulates Brother Al Bruder at the Unit 5 meeting in November on his recent retirement after 35 years of membership.



New members initiated into Local 258 at the July Unit 6 meeting in Surrey are Craig Schmidt, Andrew Grohme, Tim Pennell and Kevin Dagg.



Sister Cathy Tagseth welcomed Brother Don Hurd into Local 258 as he was initiated at the Unit 5 meeting in December.



Congratulations to Bridge River GT Brother Ken Spiedel on his retirement as he was presented a plaque by Brother Barry Bell.



Brother Eric Hsieh, left, and Brother Chris Conn with Sister Cathy Tagseth at the December Unit 5 meeting.



Photos from Victoria! From L to R are Don Urquhart, Field Operations Manager, Gary Woodbury, Trouble Technician, Past Safety Chair and Ray Deput, Trouble Technician, Current Safety Chair. Gary is holding a Silver Award from the BC Safety Council awarded for 109,288 hrs man-hours worked without a lost time accident.



Welcome to Brother Clayton Perro and Brother Dean Blakburn, at the Unit 5 meeting in November, 2008.



Congratulations to Brother Bill 'Mousy' Moyseyuk on receipt of his 60 Year service to the union membership award!



Congratulations to Brother T. Ivan Smith of Sechelt as he is awarded a certificate for 65 years of membership with IBEW.



Dave Mengerling (ATTC sub-committee for mechanics IBEW representative, on left) presents Mike Angrignon (recent graduate of mechanical trade in BC Hydro, on right) his graduation papers from the Union and BC Hydro. His graduation date was July 26, 2008. The presentation was made at Mica Creek where Mike currently works as a Mechanic.



Congratulations to Brother Bryan Washburn on your retirement after 35 years of service! Sister Cathy Tagseth presented Bryan with his union retirement goodies: jacket, pins and plaque at the November 2008 Unit 5 meeting.



From left are Chris Dahl, ATTC sub committee management representative; Brother Steven Jewell, graduating mechanic at GMS, and Brother Dave Mengerling, ATTC sub committee union representative, presenting a graduation certificate from the Mechanical apprenticeship program. Congratulations Steve!



Congratulations to Brother Dallas Walkey on receiving his Journeyman Lineman certificate.

Unit 3 Chair Leon Arishenkoff presents a 35 year service pin award to Brother Bill Gunn, center, as his son Morrey receives his Lineman Certificate



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We're committed to community involvement and proudly support the Columbia Institute, a BC based charitable organization providing scholarships for the re-training and life-long learning of British Columbians. We also support The Tyee, a leading edge on-line news provider.

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Earlier in this issue of The Hotline, you received some sample questions to ask your provincial candidates in the upcoming election regarding their position on public power issues. Recently, I attended a Power Summit conference here in BC, an event designed for all participants in the electric utility sector. Of course, there were various private generation proponents talking about the critical importance of green, renewable energy sources, and there were utility experts talking about the crucial savings that can be realized through demand side management – DSM – or, in plain language, conservation. These are issues that we all care about, and it infuriates me that the underlying message always seems to be that green and renewable and conservation issues can only be managed if we privatize electricity. In fact, I believe the opposite is true, because as long as someone needs to make a profit, someone (the ratepayer) has to pay a little over and above the cost of service to ensure that profit exists.

From your overwhelming vote to support this crucial fight against the privatization of our electricity, I know that the issue is important to you, and want you to know that we in the labour movement are not alone in this particular battle. The largest customer group in the BC Hydro system, the large industrial users (mines, mills, industrial plants) presented a paper to the conference outlining their opposition to the amount of private power BC Hydro is seeking to purchase. Their concern is that the extremely high price of the current power being called for (average of \$110 to \$120 per MWh) drives the cost up unnecessarily, as we do not require as much power as is being sought. Much of this power must be bought because the BC Energy Plan and Special Direction No. 10 (yes, more wonderful edicts from your current provincial government) mandates that by 2026, BC Hydro must purchase an additional 3000 GWh per year of supply in addition to its known energy requirements as “insurance”.

As with any insurance, this means we probably won't need it, and if we don't need it, we will have to sell it on the spot market – where the current prices are \$60 per MWh. Now, some of my co-workers may tell you that math isn't my strong suit, but buying at \$120 and selling for \$60 just doesn't seem to be much of a deal to me. When it comes to DSM, BC Hydro can cut the demand by investing about \$41 per MWh, so, again, you have to ask yourself, why are we so willing to spend so much on energy sources that we won't own, that generally aren't reliable (wind, run of river) and mean multiple transmission lines to multiple small sites all over the province?

Let me switch hats for a moment, and talk a bit about Workers' Compensation here in BC. We have been involved in a multi-year lobby to put the benefits to injured workers back to the level they were at before this government gutted them in 2002. Today, if you are injured at work and have to miss time because of it, you will automatically lose at least 10% of your take home income, and that is being extremely conservative. If you are permanently disabled in any way, any pension you receive will end when you

From the Back Corner

Report from
Michelle Laurie,
President, Local 258 IBEW




turn 65, and will not likely reflect any loss of earnings. This is fundamentally wrong – if you are injured at work, you should not lose income because of that injury. You, as a worker, gave up the right to sue your employer in exchange for that kind of insurance, and since you still can't sue the employer for workplace injury, you should still be entitled to full compensation.

On the regulation side of Workers' Compensation, did you know that if you are on a joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee in your workplace, you are entitled to at least eight hours of training every year? The Workers' Compensation Act states:

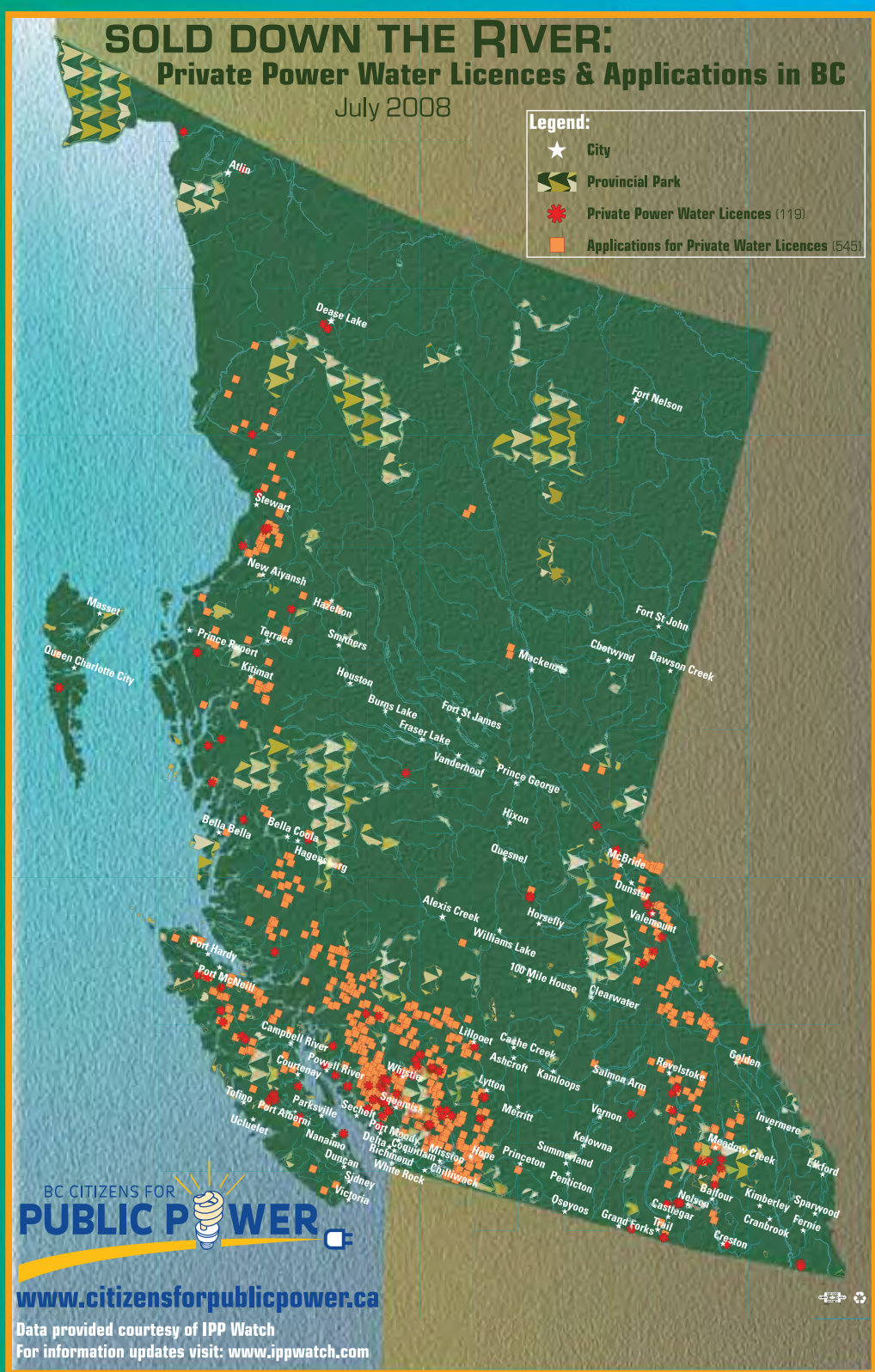
- 135 (1) Each member of a joint committee is entitled to annual education leave totaling eight (8) hours, or a longer period if prescribed by regulation, for the purposes of attending occupational health and safety training courses conducted by or with the approval of the Board.*
- (2) A member of the joint committee may designate another member as being entitled to take all or part of the member's educational leave.*
- (3) The employer must provide the educational leave under this section without loss of pay or other benefits and must pay for, or reimburse the worker for, the costs of the training course and the reasonable costs of attending the course.*

From time to time, at Union meetings, you will have seen the notices about Health and Safety Courses offered (around the province) through the BC Federation of Labour Health and Safety Centre. These courses are subsidized, and approved by the Workers' Compensation Board. You can find out more about the courses by visiting our website, www.ibew258.bc.ca, or the BC Federation of Labour at www.bcfed.org and follow the links.


We've addressed some workers' issues for you to consider when you vote in May. I expect you may also have other issues that are also critical to you or your community; please be sure to press your candidates to answer your concerns, so that you can make an informed and solid choice at the ballot box on May 12th. 

Find out more about how the BC Liberal government is selling our energy future to private interests — and how you can join with other British Columbians to stop them.

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