

Law Society Chapter

Staff Report

Frank Greenlay, Labour Relations Officer

Earlier this year I was assigned to provide service to the Law Society Chapter of the Professional Employees Association. This assignment is the third Chapter in my portfolio and was assigned before bargaining for your first agreement was concluded. I have been ably aided in assuming this file by my colleague Ernie Gorrie and your chapter Executive.

Collective Agreement

As you undoubtedly know, Ernie led your bargaining team in negotiations for your first collective agreement and has continued in his staff role as the first agreement reaches conclusion. Your current executive has taken on the duty of closing the first round of bargaining.

Concluding your first agreement has been challenging but as you know from the report from Executive member David Newell, we are near to signing off the final resolve on the salary structure following the direction of the mediator. I expect that we will finalize the salary grids very soon and, in the normal course of events, begin to prepare for negotiations for the second collective agreement.

While this process has taken longer than expected, first agreements are the toughest to conclude. The next round of bargaining will undoubtedly be shorter, both because the bulk of the framework is in place and because the parties have developed and are continuing to develop a good working relationship.

Joint Committee

One important part of any collective agreement is the establishment of a Joint Committee to provide a forum for the Chapter and the Law Society to discuss issues of mutual concern. A Joint Committee is a common part of a collective agreement, and is something mandated by the B.C. Labour Relations Code. I am frustrated that we have not yet managed to meet to discuss and agree on functional protocol. I do understand that the Law Society human resources staff are new to a formal labour relations role, and accept that some delay on this matter has resulted from being tasked on the employer side of the first collective agreement negotiations. In spite of this delay, I expect that we will have our first meeting before the new year.

General Servicing

Communication with the Chapter membership is an issue of concern. The employer's email system is fine for general notices and information to and from the PEA, but we are not authorized to use the system for Labour relations purposes. Nor can we presume that the system will allow confidential communications. I expect that a fuller use of the system will be agreed through discussion and or negotiation, but at this time we are building a list of private email addresses to provide a link between the Association and your Executive, and the Chapter membership. The use of private email addresses allows for greater confidentiality.

As found in all Chapters, issues raised with the Association staff often begin with appropriate salaries and benefit questions, to questions peculiar to one's individual circumstances relating to leaves of absence and workload, to workplace relationships. All issues sent to my attention will be reviewed and receive a response.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Greenlay

Speaking Notes

Assignment

Earlier this year I was assigned to provide service to the Law Society Chapter

So you know, I provide service to two other Chapters in my portfolio

Taking on the Law Society Chapter makes sense as my colleague Ernie Gorrie works out of the Victoria office while I am located in the Lower Mainland.

Ernie and your chapter Executive have assisted my integration into this servicing assignment.

And, the assistance of the Chapter executive is invaluable as picking up the particular workplace culture is critical

Collective Agreement

As you undoubtedly know, Ernie led your bargaining team in negotiations for your first collective agreement

We are technically speaking, still involved in bargaining and Ernie remains involved in this activity to the conclusion - Concluding your first agreement has been challenging

Your current executive has taken on the duty of closing the first round of bargaining

David has provided a report on where we are with the final salary issues

We are near to signing off the final resolve on the salary structure

As long as we can agree on how we can remain consistent with direction of the mediator,

I expect that we will finalize the salary grids very soon and,

And, as is the normal course of events,

We will begin to prepare for negotiations for the second collective agreement.

The cliché in labour relations is that you begin for the next round of bargaining as soon as you finish the current round.

This round has taken quite a while

This is not unexpected,
first agreements are the toughest to conclude.

The next round of bargaining will undoubtedly be shorter,

This is because the bulk of the framework is in place and because the parties have developed and are continuing to develop a good working relationship.

My experience is that the working relationship with the Law Society is good, so I do expect that round two will not take this long.

Joint Committee

One important part of any collective agreement is the establishment of a Joint Committee to provide a forum for the Chapter and the Law Society to discuss issues of mutual concern.

The joint committee is mandated by the BC Labour Relations Code Division 2 – Section 53 bclrb

If not in the CA, then language is deemed to be a part of the agreement

While I am somewhat frustrated that we have not yet managed to meet to discuss and agree on functional protocol, I do understand that the Law Society human resources staff are new to a formal labour relations role,

Some delay is a result of the Law Society HR folks taking on new labour relations roles and also being busy with the conclusion of bargaining.

I do expect that we will have our first meeting before the new year.

When we do get into a regular meeting pattern, a prominent part of the joint committee agenda will be issues not resolved in the first round of bargaining.

It the intention that we deal with a many of these unresolved items be dealt with in this forum before the next round of bargaining. If we are able to remove some issues prior to bargaining, it will assist in making the next round quicker.

General Servicing

Communication with the Chapter membership is an issue of concern.

The employer's email system is fine for general notices and information to and from the PEA, but we are not authorized to use the system for Labour relations purposes.

And, it is important to note that the employer's email system is not secure.

It is not confidential

I expect that a fuller use of the system will be agreed through discussion and or negotiation, but we will always need to communicate with the membership confidentially.

We are building an email group list so that we can use private email addresses to provide a link between the Association and your Executive, and the Chapter membership.

Please send your email to me, or to any of your executive, we will build the list.

You can contact any of your Chapter executive members to raise concerns or issues. I am in regular contact with the executive and they pass on issues to me where they see a need for staff involvement.

Otherwise, if you have any questions, please give me a call. I will do my best to assist.

I am sure that we have some time for questions.