



**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2020**

1. LOCATION: ZOOM Video Conference – 7:00PM

The VDLC acknowledges that this meeting is being held on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and other First Nations people.

2. CHAIRPERSON: 2nd Vice President Bal Shandhu

3. NOTICE OF VDLC POLICY ON HARASSMENT: Circulated prior to meeting

4. ADOPTION OF MEETING AGENDA

M/S/C that the agenda of the January 19, 2020 Regular meeting be adopted.

5. ADOPTION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:

M/S/C that the minutes of the December 8, 2020 Regular meeting be adopted.

6. CREDENTIALS: Nil

7. OBLIGATION OF NEW DELEGATES: Pledge of New Delegates

8. GUEST SPEAKERS:

Ben Ger of the Rent Strike Bargain Campaign, Lillian Deeb, Bryan Jacobs and Steph Langford.

We'll start off by framing the discussion between the Tenant-Landlord relationship and the Worker-Boss relationship. It is our belief that the solution for renters can be found in collective bargaining rights. Some of our milestones; August 2020 we received endorsement from the VTU. October 2020 we hosted the only housing debate of the provincial election. January 2021 we have presented to the VDLC, PSAC and hopefully the BCGEU. Outreach has been made to TSSU and other labour unions. February 2021 we will launch our campaign website and run an event on labour-tenant solidarity for union members and renters. May 2021 we will target specific riding to test our organizing theory of change.

There are many problems with being a renter in Vancouver. The RTA individualizes the relationship between landlords and tenants. We do not enter into a contract with landlords as equals. The cost of rent is increasing much more than the rate of wage increases. People are slowly losing the ability to pay rent. Tenants lack the same incentives to organize that workers do. No formal structure, protections, or extra tools (class action lawsuits, the right to strike, etc.) exist.

Tenants need to learn from our friends in the labour movement. It's time we take on Whole Worker Organizing. We need to activate our members' identities as BOTH renters and

workers. Collective bargaining can help tenants make gains at the negotiating table, and build institutional power for bigger housing and labour wins especially now during a time of financial instability.

In growing tenant power we are going to try to identify workers who rent and build renting-class consciousness. We would then organize tenants and workers in mutual fights across the province. Seed new tenant unions and tenant caucuses in labour unions across BC. We would then utilize tenant and labour power to push elected officials to support collective bargaining rights for renters. We already have a research group working on this. Current tenancy law in BC only allows tenancy agreements between individual tenants and their landlord. We need to amend the RTA to allow for collectivized tenancy agreements and the RTB would need to be reformed to recognize those changes and enforce them once they are negotiated.

Why Now? More British Columbians are renters than at any other point in history and this trend is going to keep rising. Renters are bearing the brunt of this pandemic, with cost being downloaded by landlords to their tenants. A crisis is also an opportunity to fight for big structural change. Unions in the UK and US have taken on an approach of “Bargaining for the Common Good”. It recognizes that workers are tenants too, and it’s time we link our fights together. We need help from the Labour Movement. Join us and support our campaign. Those among you who are renters can help us fight. Solidarity is our path forward.

9. EDUCATIONAL: Nil

10. PRESIDENT’S REPORT:

President Stephen von Sychowski reported on activities since the December 2020 meeting.

Political Action

The Political Action Committee continues to meet to discuss plans for the 2022 municipal election. In general terms the plan that is coming together is to once again run an independent labour campaign to support endorsed candidates. This would include paid election organizers, mobilizing the volunteer base, internal and external campaigning, canvassing, mail drops, social media, and a get out the vote strategy. It would be a similar approach to last election, however this time we have the benefit of experience and a better understanding of the rules, which were unclear even to Elections BC last time.

In terms of endorsements, we will begin earlier and prioritize renewing endorsements of incumbents who are re-offering and who we can continue to support. We will then proceed to fill the remaining endorsement vacancies, up to the number of spots to be elected, with non-incumbent candidates from the progressive parties. We will determine will endorse by considering the values, political program, commitments, and track record of a given candidate as well as their electability. We will also work to ensure diversity and gender balance.

Per usual, the Political Action Committee will carry out the vetting process and will make a recommendation to the Executive Board, and we will in turn bring our recommendation to a regular meeting wherein the endorsements will ultimately be approved.

In the immediate future, the Political Action Committee will be beginning quarterly meetings with parties and Team Kennedy. An initial round of meetings took place last Fall. We will

also be drafting a campaign budget, approaching additional unions for participation, and working on early pre-election messaging focused on opposing the NPA.

I want to highlight that this election is not going to be an easy feat. The primary goal in Vancouver is to maintain a progressive majority. In other words, to ensure the defeat of the NPA or any new right-wing entity. The secondary goal is to move the political direction of that progressive majority to the left, or to a bolder progressive approach. This requires a bloc cohesive enough to maintain a consistent and reliable pro-worker political direction. In Vancouver's fractured, sectarian political landscape that will prove a major challenge.

The other primary goal in this election needs to be looking beyond Vancouver. In the last election we endorsed only a handful of candidates in the City of North Vancouver, and no others elsewhere in our District. This time we need to work to ensure a strong slate of endorsed candidates in both the City and District of North Vancouver, as well as in Richmond and, if the opportunity exists, elsewhere within our District.

In addition to this, there will be a by-election this year in Richmond, to replace Kelley Greene who was elected as an MLA last Fall. We will seek to endorse a progressive candidate in that by-election and support their election however we can.

There could also be a by-election in Vancouver, potentially, due to the court case regarding allegations of conflict of interest against Councilor Michael Wiebe. However, it is unclear at present what the outcome of this will be, or when it will occur.

Labour Education

Our Labour Education Program for the first half of 2021 was released just before holidays and is open for registrations. We have a robust list of offerings coming up over the next few months, however we are starting out slow to allow time for registrations and to avoid conflict with the CLC Winter School. Between now and our next meeting we will host two courses – Steward Level 1 and Level 2.

Registrations for the courses is going very well, but anything delegates can do to help spread the word is greatly appreciated.

T-Shirts

The pre-order materials for our next round of t-shirts has been sent out via email and on social media. Be sure to get your orders in by the end of the month!

WELLS

The Worker Education and Labour Learning Society, a new labour education organization focused on online learning which Janet Patterson, Joey Hartman, and I, started last year is coming along well. We officially founded the Society last Fall, with many experienced labour educators as founding members. We have two working groups currently looking at areas we might do work on. Zoom training sessions are taking place for all members on January 20 and 26. The work of the Society will be complimentary to our own efforts, not in competition or conflict. This is a way of marshalling funds and expertise to broaden access to, and availability of, labour education.

Events Attended / Dates of Note

December 9 – United Way Labour Workplan Review
December 10 – Meeting re: Feminist Campaign School
December 14 – Mayor Kennedy Stewart’s Holiday Social
December 14-18 – Vacation
December 21-25 – Office Closure
December 21-25 – Vacation
January 4 – Vacation
January 6 – Worker Education and Labour Learning Directors Meeting
January 7 – United Way Campaign Cabinet Labour Committee Planning Session
January 7 – Bentall Memorial Ceremony
January 7 – YVR Joint Union Committee
January 11 – Political Action Committee
January 11 – Meeting with Unite Here Local 40
January 12 – Living Wage Municipal Campaign
January 12 – United Way Joint Board Integration Committee
January 12 – BC Employment Standards Coalition
January 12 – CLC Labour Council Check-In
January 12 – Worker Education and Labour Learning Society Directors Meeting
January 12 – Housing Action Team
January 13 – DTES Joint Union Committee
January 14 – VDLC Executive Board
January 15 – Steward Level 1 (facilitating)
January 18 – Meeting re: civil society
January 19 – Climate Action Roundtable planning meeting
January 19 – VDLC Regular meeting

M/S/C to adopt President’s report.

19. ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS: NIL

11. TREASURER’S REPORT:

Treasurer Stefan Nielsen reported on financials since the December 2020 meeting.

M/S/C to adopt the Treasurer’s Report.

12. CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS REPORT:

Ron Stipp reported on the Canadian Labour Congress since the December 2020 meeting.

On a sad note; One of our long time CLC reps, Gord Larkin passed away from COVID. We though he was rallying but then took a bad turn and passed. Gord was a good friend of mine, a great friend to the labour movement, a great organizer, one of the coordinators of the Harrison Winter School. I just wanted to start with this as a great number of you knew him and worked with him.

We are in week 2 of the virtual Harrison Winter School. It’s only 4 courses a week but we filled up every one of them. It’s been going very well. We’ve been doing evening sessions which have been very well attended over the web. We have both Monday and Wednesday evening sessions.

The next thing is the Federal Election. We did think we were going to have a Federal Election in a few weeks from now. Now, there is news that it might happen this Spring. Depending on when the budget is announced, it could happen as early as February. Or, slightly latter. There won't be any vaccine arriving from Pfizer. This may affect the scheduling of the election.

The CLC Convention has now been set for June 16 – 18. It will be virtual. The call will be going out fairly shortly. We expect upwards of 10,000 delegates.

The important thing is we are going to focus on the election in the coming weeks. It's looking more and more like a distinct possibility unless something else happens with the COVID vaccine.

Moment of Silence for Gordon Larkin

M/S/C to adopt the Canadian Labour Congress Report.

13. CORRESPONDENCE: Circulated prior to the meeting.

M/S/C that the correspondence be received and filed for the information of the delegates.

14. EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:

a) *M/S/C that the following recommendation be adopted:*

Subject: Disability Assistance Rates

BECAUSE in April 2020, the Government of British Columbia introduced a \$300 supplement to disability assistance rates in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was broadly welcomed by advocates; and

BECAUSE this increase raised the base amount of disability assistance to \$1,483.42 a month, or \$17,801.04 annually, and the base amount of income assistance to \$1060.00 a month, or \$12,720 annually; and

BECAUSE the poverty line, as defined by the Government of British Columbia, is \$20,000 per year for individuals; and

BECAUSE on December 8, 2020, Minister of Finance Selina Robinson announced that starting on December 18 families and individuals could apply for the BC COVID Recovery Benefit, a one-time payment of up to \$1,000 per family or \$500 per individual based on income; and

BECAUSE the government further announced that they would not claw back the BC Recovery Benefit from people receiving income or disability assistance, but they would reduce the \$300 monthly supplement to \$150, and discontinue it in March of 2021; and

BECAUSE this decision will increase income to some recipients by \$50 by the end of March, but some recipients will not qualify and will immediately lose \$150 a month in income, and all recipients will experience a sharp reduction in income in April 2021; and

BECAUSE in all cases this removes a crucial lifeline that people relied on during the

ongoing pandemic, causes significant additional uncertainty and fear, and ultimately leaves them below the poverty line; and

BECAUSE pandemic-related increased expenses disproportionately affect disabled people; and

BECAUSE the BC Recovery Benefit will therefore provide the least assistance to low-income disabled British Columbians who need it most;

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL endorse the petition “Increase B.C. Income and Disability Assistance Rates: We Need The #300ToLive!” which calls for the Government of British Columbia to maintain the \$300/month increase to income and disability assistance rates; permanently raise income assistance rates to at least the poverty line, indexed to inflation; and ensure that increases to income assistance and disability assistance include a clear, earmarked increase to the shelter portion; and

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL FURTHER write to Premier John Horgan, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Nicholas Simons, and Minister of Finance Selina Robinson calling for the same and asking that they also ensure that there are no claw backs in relation to the BC COVID Recovery Benefit.

b) *M/S/C that the following recommendation be adopted:*

Subject: Vancity Board of Directors Elections

BECAUSE Vancity Credit Union is holding elections for its Board of Directors this coming April; and

BECAUSE it is important to ensure progressive, worker-friendly members on Boards of Directors of member-run co-ops,

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL endorse Adrienne Smith for the Vancity Board of Directors and will communicate this endorsement to our delegates, affiliates, and contacts.

c) *M/S/C that the following recommendation be adopted:*

Subject: In Solidarity with Farmers in India

BECAUSE in September, the right-wing government of Narendra Modi deregulated agricultural markets, opening them up to takeover by multinational corporations; and

BECAUSE farmers immediately took to the streets in protests of this threat to their livelihoods, and were met with brutal police repression; and

BECAUSE despite the violence perpetrated against farmers and their allies, the protests have continued to grow, with millions demonstrating across India; and

BECAUSE the VDLC Executive Board, acting on urgent requests from members of the community, issued a statement in solidarity with the farmers in mid-December, which read as follows:

The Vancouver and District Labour Council Executive Board stands in solidarity with the millions of farmers and allies who are protesting in New Delhi and across India. The demonstrations, which represent one of the largest mobilizations in history, are in response to legislation recently passed by the right-wing government of Narendra Modi. The legislation deregulates agriculture, opening it up to takeover by multinational corporations. Farmers have been peacefully demonstrating in defence of their land and their livelihoods but have been met with brutal police repression, including roadblocks, violence, and arrests. Despite the violence perpetrated against farmers and their allies, the protests have continued to grow.

We express our solidarity with farmers, labour activists, and other workers in India who are protesting this draconian legislation and standing up for the livelihoods of millions of families. We further call on the government of India to cease the use of violence against protestors, and release all political prisoners arrested for protesting these laws.,

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL endorse the statement of the VDLC Executive Board expressing solidarity with farmers, labour activists, and other workers in India who are protesting draconian legislation which would threaten the livelihoods of millions of families, and calling for the release of all political prisoners imprisoned for protesting these laws.

d) *M/S/C that the following recommendation be adopted:*

Subject: Rent Strike Bargain Campaign

BECAUSE the Rent Strike Bargain campaign seeks to build solidarity between labour and tenant movements to win collective bargaining rights for renters in British Columbia; and

BECAUSE the campaign has created a survey which seeks to gather information on the housing issues faced by renters,

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL endorse the Rent Strike Bargain campaign's goal of obtaining collective bargaining rights for tenants in British Columbia; and

THE VANCOUVER AND DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL WILL FURTHER encourage its affiliates to endorse the campaign, to circulate its survey, and to encourage their members to complete it.

M/S/C - Motion to let Ben Ger speak to this motion.

Motion to table this recommendation to the next regular meeting brought forward by Stefan Nielsen. Motion to table was defeated: 58% No. 40 Voted out of 62 in the room.

Motion to adopt recommendation d. Motion passed.

Vote to adopt recommendation d. 32 voted Yes. Recommendation adopted.

15. REPORT OF UNIONS: Submitted in writing in order to be included on meeting minutes.

No written reports submitted

M/S/C to adopt the report of unions.

16. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES: Nil

OTHER REPORTS: Nil

M/S/C to adopt reports of committees

17. REPORTS OF LABOUR COUNCIL APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES: Nil

18. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Nil

19. ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS:

One vacancy exists for a Trustee - Call for nominations

Nominations closed.

20. NEW BUSINESS: Nil

21. NOTICE OF MOTION: Nil

22. GOOD AND WELFARE:

Motion brought forward by guests: Nadia Santoro and David Ng.
Motion adopted.

David Ng – IATSE Local B-778. We are trying to put together a worker’s action centre. We are hosting a watch party and virtual panel on frontline workers solidarity. We will be watching “The New Corporation – The Unfortunately Necessary Sequel”.

Event link: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/136339014663>

23. MEETING ADJOURNED: *M/S/C to adjourn at 9:02pm.*

24. NEXT MEETING: **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021** at 7:00 pm
Zoom Video Conference.



Please visit website for event listings and more – www.vdlc.ca