

Gaining Ground

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BRIAN COCHRANE REPORTS

Site C Fight continues and Kinder Morgan starts....

As we closed out 2016, our 85th year as a local, and entered into 2017, the pressure and pace has not wavered as your Local continues the fight to ensure BC workers and the BC Building Trades build large infrastructure projects throughout the province.

This report highlights the General Membership Meeting (GMM) held on March 18, 2017, where we had 149 members and 14 guests in attendance.

John Horgan, leader of the BCNDP attended as a special guest speaker where he delivered his message on the importance of having a provincial government that supported both workers and unions. John also took some questions from our members from the floor, which was appreciated and well received.

A key portion of my report was regarding the time, money and energy that has been spent in trying to work with the current government on the \$9 billion Site C dam project. We started this Site C campaign back in 2014 when we brought Brother Jack Whitaker and other long-time BC Hydro dam builders from the Building Trades to Victoria to hear our collective voices of experience. We wanted to try and ensure that this project be like all other dams built in BC's history – under a Project Labour Agreement with the Allied Hydro Council in place.

BC Hydro and Christy Clark decided to change that model to be “CLAC” friendly and proclaim that this project would be an open managed site



“The officers of your Local have been very active meeting with every level of government to make sure that the voice of Operating Engineers is heard.”

IUOE Local 115
Business Manager
Brian Cochrane

with no guarantees for British Columbian workers or apprenticeships for the next generation of skilled trades. It's ironic that the government talks about their investment in apprenticeships and training, but when the largest investment British Columbians have ever made into a public project is made and they have full control on maximizing these commitments—the words are seemingly just “fake news”.

The officers of your Local have been very active meeting with every level of government to make sure that the voice of Operating Engineers is heard. We have been educating them on the value of what well-trained and highly skilled tradespeople bring under a collective agreement.

This campaign for IUOE 115 has become certainly one of the largest in our Local's history and it is being coordinated by our Vice President, Brother Herb Conat. We have a team of dedicated staff working steady on this campaign and have had them on the ground in Fort St. John since January. We've won a decision at the Labour Relations Board to gain access to BC Hydro's camp three days each week during the CLAC raid window, where Brother Brett Chapman is representing us to speak with workers.

Local 115 has been coordinating our efforts along with the Teamsters and Labourers for this campaign and have brought back into play the TEL Group (Teamsters—Engineers—Labourers). It is time to up our game in this campaign, as we have a lot of work still ahead of us to get proper representation for the workers on Site C. The Local will continue to lobby for greater Building Trades engagement for this project and continue to ensure that the best safety, security and working conditions go to our membership.

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I would like to thank the staff and members both here and in Fort St. John for all their continued hard work, as they try to turn this project around while facing continued challenges.

Pipeline construction is another highly controversial topic that was discussed at the GMM. There are challenges from multiple directions, as the Liberals are supporting Kinder Morgan's low bid non-union procurement model. We have recently had several meetings with senior executives of Kinder Morgan and have been working with our contractors to try to maximize opportunities for work.

Local 115 has received great support from IUOE General President James T. Callahan on all of these issues. The combined efforts of our International staff and Local Union Officers has created the potential to have better engagement of Operating Engineers on this job. We hope to find out in the very near future if we were able to change their mind on procurement.

The Officers and Executive Board of IUOE Local 115 are committed to advocate to all levels of government and to companies, the importance these major infrastructure jobs have and that they are most successful when being done by Operating Engineers.

Change in MSP premiums announced

In February 2017, Christy Clark and the BC Liberals announced a reduction in the Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums by fifty percent, effective January 2018, for an annual family net income of up to \$120,000.

Overall, this will be good news for the sustainability of our Benefits Plan providing meaningful benefits at a reasonable cost to our membership, both during their working careers and into retirement.

It is important to recognize this move was purely political and that BC is the last province in Canada that has an MSP premium. And further, Christy Clark and the BC Liberals were the ones who have more than doubled these MSP premiums over the last 16 years. The Liberals had to make this reduction, as the NDP has had the elimination of MSP as a part of their platform forever (Amazing what can happen in the lead up to a Provincial Election!).

As we move through the balance of the year, we may have some administration issues to deal with to ensure that all of our members who qualify for this premium reduction get access to it through our Plans.

MAY 9, 2017 Provincial election—Get out and vote

I finished my GMM report by stressing the importance of getting out and voting in the upcoming BC provincial election, which is to be held on May 9, 2017.

The BC Liberals reign has spanned 16 years and has made major changes to our Labour Code and Labour Relations Board, which has been detrimental to unions, more importantly BC workers, and their rights. Although the current government is building major infrastructure projects, they are not ensuring that they are being undertaken with PLAs put in place. They do not see construction craft unions as a partner in the development of the province. That combined with the poor Labour Code demonstrates that the current government is trying to put unionized construction workers out of business.

The NDP have not backed a few of the major infrastructure projects which we support as Operating Engineers. We have certainly been in conflict with them on some of those issues. However, we do know that the NDP has better support for union jobs, as well as union density and issues that are important to average blue-collar workers in BC.

Your Executive Board is not backing any one particular party in this provincial election. We are working with all potential MLA's who support issues that support Operating Engineers. We are asking our members to vote for the MLA in their area that best represent their interests and the interests of all organized BC workers across the province.

To close, it was a very proud day for our Local at our GMM where Brother Mervyn MacDonald was presented with his 70-year membership service award from Brother Wayne Mills and myself. It speaks volumes to the loyalty and pride within our Local to maintain membership in good standing for seven decades. This is truly a great reminder of a legacy created by our forefathers and the great leadership of generations of IUOE 115 members that came before us. 🍁

IUOE Local 115 GMM: BC NDP Leader speaks to membership

The GMM also included a special guest: BC New Democratic Party (NDP) leader, John Horgan. Horgan spoke to IUOE 115 members and guests about bringing balance back to the Labour Code, investing in training the next generation of workers and building a new infrastructure for our province. Good jobs, affordable lifestyles and improved services are the key messages that the BC NDP are promising to deliver to British Columbians. Horgan also took some questions from IUOE Local 115 members from the floor which were appreciated and well received. 🍁



John Horgan, leader of the BC NDP speaks at the General Membership Meeting.

Mervyn MacDonald's story

Setting you straight, like only a Crane Op can

By Marco Procaccini

Whenever you're handed the corporate line that unions don't benefit all types of workers, just talk to veteran union member Mervyn MacDonald. He'll set you straight.

The 91-year-old construction pioneer and operator of a diverse variety of cranes is a 70-year member of the Operating Engineers Local 115. He's weathered many changes in the industry and economy right up until his retirement in 1992.

"I started operating cranes in the shipyards in the '40s during World War II", he says. "I was active in the shipbuilders' union. After the war, I joined Local 115 in 1946 and went into construction. Back then, there was no (training) school. You learned to run equipment and cranes on the job. Everything you learned to do, you learned from other guys on the job. I had to learn to monkey-wrench too: in logging, mining, and beachcombing."

He says despite being entirely self-taught, he is glad the Local Union now has a training school and apprenticeship programs. "It's way better now," he said. "When I was first in and you learned on your own, you had to figure it out all by yourself. Other guys would show you, but they wouldn't always be there if you ran into something or had a question. Now with the school you get everything up front. You know a lot more what to expect when you get on a job site."

He says his entire life—buying a house, raising a family, educating children—has been due to his earning capacity as a union member. "My first big job was building the Waneta Dam near Trail in the 1950s. I spent three years there, got married, bought a house, and had three kids."

After the completion of the dam, MacDonald and his family moved to Coquitlam, where they spent the next 57 years.

"Everybody should keep this in mind," MacDonald said. "Without the union out there, there's no way we could get the rates we can now. No way we could survive."

That's why the stalwart crane operator, who for the last three years has called Maple Ridge his home (since the passing of



Three generations of IUOE Local 115 membership. President Brother Wayne Mills and Business Manager Brother Brian Cochran congratulate 70-year member Brother Mervyn MacDonald, his son Robert MacDonald and grandson David MacDonald.

his wife), also has a message for all tradespeople and workers across the entire building and construction sector: Get organized! It's long overdue, he says.

"If you belong to a union, you've at least got a chance," he said, referring to the decline of unionization in many parts of the construction sector. "If we had everybody out there in the unions, we wouldn't have all these guys working out there for eight and ten dollars an hour! And we wouldn't have the guys they are working for getting super-rich. Pretty soon it will be one guy owning everything."

His sentiments have become generational practice. His son (a truck driver) and grandson (a mechanic) are Local 115 members. His daughter is a public school teacher and member of the BC Teachers' Federation.

Meanwhile, MacDonald doesn't let these challenges get him down. Even today, he hunts, fishes, and travels regularly.

"I've been doing this stuff for 30 years," he said. "I don't wanna stop." He also wants to keep up his union friendships. "Look me up and come and see me," he says. If you're a Local 115 member who needs a pick-me-up take him up on his offer. He'll set you straight. 🍁

We Need Your Help – Tell Kinder Morgan: Keep Your Promise to BC!

B.C. Coalition for Safety Before Profits and its members have launched an online campaign to tell Kinder Morgan to keep their promise to British Columbians—and that is a promise to put Safety Before Profits.

Founding coalition members include IUOE, LiUNA, UA Canada and Teamsters Canada.

Please visit the website at:
www.safetybeforeprofits.ca

TELL KINDER MORGAN: KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO BC!

Kinder Morgan refuses to partner with the most experienced and skilled workers to build the Trans Mountain pipeline. They are putting profits before safety! This puts British Columbians at risk.

Pipelines built with experienced Canadian union workers will be safer than those built by other sources of labour. Besides, these jobs were promised to the people of BC, and that should mean something. British Columbians demand they put safety before profits!



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A few scenes from our GMM



Above: Members receive their long term service awards at the General Membership Meeting (GMM) held on March 18, 2017