

**REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
April 2021
Benoît Thibault**

This report covers the period from November 2020 to April 2021.

Sisters and Brothers, I submit to you my report as National Vice-President of the Union of Health and Environment Workers (UHEW).

Since last October, I have continued to work from Rimouski. We went through wave #2 of the COVID19 pandemic and are now in wave #3. Shimen Fayad, our National President, and myself, have kept the same approach:

- We speak on a daily basis to keep ourselves up-to-date with all our current and ongoing files
- I also replace Shimen when she is unable to attend different meetings, such as the PSAC NBOD

The National Office operations and management of staff are still handled remotely and virtually, as the office remains closed due to the pandemic.

These are the mains files / cases I have been working on:

- 1. UHEW NATIONAL OFFICE**
- 2. UHEW FINANCE COMMITTEE**
- 3. UHE AUGUST CONVENTION**
- 4. COVID-19 TECHNICAL BRIEFING WITH BA**
- 5. NJOHSPC MEETINGS**
- 6. NATIONAL UMCCs**
- 7. C-65 TRAINING**
- 8. SURGITE (DFO) – FISHERY OFFICERS (FO) RECLASSIFICATION FILE**
- 9. ECCC WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (WED) OFFICERS REFUSAL TO WORK**
- 10. EXCLUSION REQUEST FROM DEPARTMENTS**
- 11. RECLASSIFICATION FILES WITH SMALL CRAFT HARBOUR (SCH) AND REGULATORY OPERATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT BRANCH (ROEB)**
- 12. REVIEW OF UHEW BARGAINING DEMANDS**
- 13. DISCUSSION WITH ECCC MANAGEMENT (LR) ON OUTSTANDING GRIEVANCES**
- 14. OTHER FILES / ACTIVITIES**

1- UHEW NATIONAL OFFICE

- Our National Office has now been closed for more than a year, so all employees are working from home. They are still going to the office for short periods only:
 - Retrieve / print documents
 - Mail out to members (like masks and hand sanitizer)
 - Pick up mail
- We are not aiming anymore for any specific date for a partial opening. But hopefully, there won't be a fourth wave. In any case, we will be following the recommendations of Ontario Public Health
- Employees are still using the Excel spreadsheet to indicate their presence at the office and ensure a minimum of attendance
- Safety measures are still in place, like a provision of hand sanitizer, masks and gloves to employees
- We will still be looking for teleworking scenarios on a full-time basis or a combination of telework and office work whenever it will be safe to reopen the office
- Our Videoconference calls have been more sporadic since last fall, but I'm in regular contact with the staff
- Labour Relations Officers:
 - Gabrielle has completed with success her first year probation
 - Victor's turn will be in June. Everything is in place for him to complete his probation as well
 - We have set up a working group to discuss the case files attribution to LROs, with Gabrielle Galand, Faye Kingyens and myself. A first meeting is to set shortly
 - Discussion with Daniel Aubrey and Daniel Richer, HC Director LR
 - LROs and some VPs had issue with some of LR
 - Usually, the National office do not intervene in first level grievances hearings, but we felt we had to
 - I have set the first LRO training sessions to Locals for the week of April 19th or 26th. We will find a way to improve those sessions as we go along
 - I have worked with LROs on some difficult and outstanding cases. LROs have some sensitive files and are trying to bring closure to the files to the members satisfaction, but it is not an easy task
- OFFICE 365 and Outlook:
 - We have moved successfully to Office 365. All Council and Staff now work with Outlook for emails. To my knowledge, there were only minor issues: everyone were invited to check with GridWay to resolve any problems
 - I have provided all alt-RVP with an UHEW-STSE email account
 - I have look with GridWay to provide emails account as well to our Locals. We have two options:
 - **First option:** through GridWay, UHEW could provide all 58 Locals with 4 UHEW-STSE email accounts. I'm waiting to get a quote from GridWay

- **Second option:** still through GridWay, UHEW could provide all Locals with any number of free emails accounts (shared mail box). RVPs would have to manage them
- Finally, I would like to thank the staff for the good job they have done

2- UHEW FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Regular calls with National Bank of Canada (NBC) and Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) to discuss our investments. Nothing to report besides the fact that our investments are doing good
- Work with UHEW finance officers for a 2-year budget (2022-2023)
- Discussion for a UHEW Office Manager (see Appendix 1 of Finance Committee report)
- Discussion for expenses (perdiem & draws) at Virtual Convention (see Appendix 2 of Finance Committee report)
- Calls to validate various purchases

3- UHEW AUGUST CONVENTION

- Planification for the 2021 virtual convention:
 - Discussion with Encore
 - Discussion with Hyatt Hotel, for cancellation fees for the Vancouver Convention
 - Were able to reduce fees to \$10 000 (value of Deposit) on the promise UHEW would hold its next meetings and National Convention in Vancouver
 - As of Feb 2021, bi-monthly meeting with Finance Officers

4- COVID-19 TECHNICAL BRIEFING WITH BA

- Weekly to Monthly videoconferences for national COVID updates
 - 699 Leave, ergonomics and telework, surveys, mental health, confirmed cases, mask protocol, etc., with different Department. Shimen and I are sharing those meetings
- ECCC has requested to have only one longer meeting per month, where Rubin Kooner and myself participate. They have also disbanded the four Return-to-Work Committees

5- NJOHSPC MEETINGS

- Discussion on COVID related topics such as:
 - # of cases
 - Rapid testing and vaccination
 - Resuming field work operations
- General topics:
 - Training

- Mental Health
- Ergonomics
- GC Workplace
- Etc.
- Specific to DFO:
 - Noise level and potable level on ships
 - Helicopter safety
 - Drug and Alcohol Policies (Cannabis)
- UHEW OSH Committee will have its first meeting on April 12th. We are to talk on our mandate, frequency of meeting, TORs, SWP, Departmental policies, etc.

6- NATIONAL UMCCs

- COVID related topics are a main part of those meetings like testing and vaccination for frontline workers, mental health, RTW, 699 leave, etc. But UHEW is bringing issues such as:
 - C-65
 - Fear of reprisal
 - Training and staffing
 - PMA
 - Etc.

7- C-65 TRAINING

- Following C-65, the Departments have the mandate to make sure employees have the training on the prevention of Violence and harassment in the workplace. The online training is available through CSPS.
- Shimen has tasked me to look with the Departments and see how to provide additional resources to employees. So far, I had a number of meeting with ECCC HR. And discussion has just started with HC

8- SURGITE (DFO) – FISHERY OFFICERS (FO) RECLASSIFICATION FILE

- We have increased the pressure on DFO's national management to try to resolve this 25 years reclassification issue
 - Regular calls with FOs to update them and decide on the best strategy to move on
 - Regular calls with management
 - Over the last year, there have been a change at the head of C&P. We are making sure they hear our side of the story
 - Campaigns
 - Orange face mask, Respect Us – Reclassify Us

- Letter Campaign on the UHEW Website (<https://uhew-stse.ca/about-uhew-stse/campaigns/>)

9- ECCC WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE (WED) OFFICERS REFUSAL TO WORK

- To make a long story short, this file relates to a problem that dates back to a number of years. But it took an interesting twist last fall, following a refusal to work from the Ontario WED officers (no access to a reliable radio system for communication in the field)
- UHEW involvement was sometime limited, but Stephen Vanneste and Rubin Kooner offered plenty of support to the members, when requested
- ESDC has reviewed the file and claimed in its report the employees were in their rights, and agreed entirely with their claims. The reports also ask for ECCC to provide a Compliance Plan by early January
- Sheldon Jordan (DG) have been in charge of this file for many years. But following a rather disastrous informal call (for Sheldon) which I took part with WED officers, management decided to give part of this file to Martin Lemay (acting DG). I had 2 discussion with Martin following this call, and he seems determined to solve this long standing issue
- Last development: Atlantic WED Officer have also filed a refusal to work
- Talks are ongoing between Martin Lemay and Officers
- UHEW has raised the importance of clear communication between management and employees, and making sure field employees are involved in the discussions

10- EXCLUSION REQUEST FROM DEPARTMENTS

- Departments are sending us exclusion request for members
- Shimen and myself were reviewing those request, but we asked Gabrielle Galant to take over
 - She will make the analysis and sent it to Shimen for final approval

11- RECLASSIFICATION FILES WITH SMALL CRAFT HARBOUR (SCH) AND REGULATORY OPERATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT BRANCH (ROEB)

SCH

- Some regions have already had either first or second level hearings
- Gabrielle Galant is providing assistance to Locals, in preparation for the upcoming hearings

ROEB

- We are still trying to set a date for the first hearings

- I had some discussion with the Senior Labour Relations Officer for Health Canada and find a plan to move ahead

12- REVIEW OF UHEW BARGAINING DEMANDS

- Shimen, Julie and myself went through all bargaining demands for the upcoming PSAC Conference
 - All were classified in an Excel spreadsheet and translated
 - Discussions with RVPs on our decision's rationale (rejected, out of order, to be referred to NJC, etc.)
 - List of UHEW delegates to the Conference
 - I will be and observer to the Conference at the PA table

13- DISCUSSION WITH ECCC MANAGEMENT (LR) ON OUTSTANDING GRIEVANCES

- Management has provided me with a list of longstanding grievances they wish to address
- In some cases, they are willing to proceed with an answer without having the first/second hearings
- We are trying to reason with them and expressing our concerns. They have to realize Local exec and RVPs are volunteers, and there might be others issues that would explain the delay to hear some grievances

14- OTHER FILES / ACTIVITIES

UHEW:

- Assisted one RVP with Violence in the workplace complaints
- Assisted Rubin with Local (70712) issues
 - Disregard of the RTW three weeks' notice
 - Changes in work schedule
- Participate to get a MOU for a new work schedule, Local 10714 (ECCC)
 - Discussion with Gail Lem, PSAC
- Five days of virtual mediation with member, Local 10098
- Second level hearing for a Local 10098 Work Description grievance: transferred it to the third level
- Still working on cases of complaints of workplace violence (Reg XX). I provided support to members while I was RVP
- Main speaker at DFO's "Let's talk mental health in the workplace and at home" Feb 28th session
- Given and interview with CBC national on Health Canada employees being dispatched to border crossings
- AGM season

- Shimen and I have been to quite a few AGMs to introduce ourselves, talk about the work being done by the National Office and to answer any questions Members would have
- Shimen has also started a series of “Coffee and Convo” to chat with the new executive

JOINT LEARNING PROGRAMME (JLP)

- The JLP is still analysing how they could resume their workshop, but in a virtual way
- I have facilitated another eight session on “Refocusing in Times of Uncertainty”
- I continue to promote the JLP with all Departments when we raise the mental health topic

PSAC-QUEBEC NATIONAL OFFICERS

- I participate to conference calls with PSAC-Quebec
 - Update on COVID-19
 - Ongoing campaigns
 - PSAC Quebec Regional Conference Info

TRAINING

- Mandatory training for Violence/Harassment in the workplace
- Webinar on workplace violence and harassment prevention
- Bargaining training sessions with Gail Lem (PSAC)
- Webinar on mediation by videoconference (FPSLRB)
- Demystifying the NJC grievance process