

Town Square Project Reshapes the Heart of Esquimalt



Esquimalt Town Square Construction Moving Forward
Aragon Properties Ltd. | (PC: Western Investor)

Esquimalt has a long history that dates back to the First Nations people approximately 4000 years before European Settlement in the late 1700s. The original town has disappeared within the Canadian Forces Base and little of the village heritage remains. Today, the township is characterized by its proximity to downtown and its mix of commercial, residential and industrial development. The area is home to some of the largest employers on the South Island such as CFB Dockyards and Seaspans Victoria Shipyards, which together employ approximately 400 Local 230 members.

Exciting things are happening in Esquimalt as construction moves forward in the Esquimalt Town Square. The planning of this project has spanned over 11 years with planning and public consultation a large part of it. The four-building development will be a colossal step towards reshaping and revitalizing the heart of the town.

The land is currently being developed by Aragon Properties Ltd., a Vancouver-based corporation. The developer has a great reputation and has other projects in development in Victoria such as 755 Cordova Bay Road and Cook Street Village. The Square is adjacent to the existing Esquimalt municipal hall and is supposed to host a number of sustainable and progressive initiatives. Included are alternative management methods for rain water and energy, bicycle and pedestrian friendly spaces, easy access to

transit and green building concepts in all buildings and infrastructure. As a mixed-use development, the Esquimalt Town Square will incorporate a public square, rental and commercial spaces, the public library and office spaces, West Building Residences and East Building Residences, and an Art Walk. The two condominium towers will be six-storeys high with 32 and 34 units.

The rental and commercial/office portions are due for completion at some point in 2021. Plans also include ground-floor retail space and a spot reserved for a restaurant.

I went to visit the construction site and met with some of our members working for Houle Electric at the Esquimalt Town Square project. Construction started in May 2018, which has kept members employed for over two years now. With more density anticipated in the Esquimalt downtown core, we are hopeful for more projects like this to come in the near future. Occupancy for the first residential building is expected this Fall 2020.



Brother Logan R. and Brother Rhys U. on site at the Esquimalt Town Square.

Volume 1: 2020

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Member's Dues Autodeposit

To send dues payments via e-Transfer, just email dues@ibew230.org

Remember to include your name and IBEW *card number in the e-Transfer "message" section

*Note: your card number is printed on your yellow dues receipt

News & Notes

Wishing all our members a safe and Happy New Year.

Upcoming Training:

Feb. 6/21 | Code Update | Online

Mar. 13/21 | Code Update | Online

Apr. 10/21 | Code Update | Online

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Business Manager's Report



Phil Venoit
Business Manager/Financial Secretary

Over the last two months, we held two meet and greet meetings with the employees at ESC Automation, as about half of them work out of Nanaimo, and the other half work from the Comox Valley and Campbell River area. The first round of meetings was to explain the Bridging Agreement we signed with their new parent company, Ainsworth Electric, out of Ontario, and a second round of meetings was to present the Local 230 New Member Orientation program to them, so they could get a general overview of the "what, why and how" the IBEW works. I'm happy to report they are a good bunch of electricians and encourage the membership to welcome them if you run into them on the job or at the wholesaler.



I had a video interview with the BC Labour Heritage Museum. As there was no video or voice record of the impact of the Spanish Flu in BC through the years of 1918 through 1920, the museum directors thought it made a good deal of sense to document the impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Movement and construction industry in BC as a historical event

in 2020. They will be following up with me through next year, so we are on record regarding the virus's impact on our work, the job sites, our personal health and safety, and as a Union.

We wrote an article for the Electrical Workers Without Borders North America website and FB Page highlighting Local 230's members voluntary work on the Island in 2019.

Read it at:

<https://ewwbna.org/ewwbna-considers-domestic-projects/>

We picked up the construction collective agreements from the printers, thanks for your patience, the binding company that has historically glued the booklets together went out of business (another hit from COVID), and we will begin distributing them to the members currently working at their construction job sites. They will also be available to members at both offices, in the event you come in for other business, and once we return to regular meetings, they will be available there as well. Our construction overtime meal allowance has gone from \$17 to \$23 per meal, tax free, in conjunction with the CRA regulations on meal allowances.

We applied for, and had our "IBEW Local 230 Training Society" name approved as a separate stand-alone society for the purposes of providing electrical training for our members. We need this to be separate and stand-alone so we can apply for and receive government funding specific to training. We have drafted a set of Bylaws and Constitution that mirror those of the Local 230 Building Society. In the past 15 years, there has been no real issues with this model, so it makes sense to continue with that as a framework. Of course, with a different purpose, which is to train our membership.

We attended this year's virtual All Canada Progress Meeting, via Zoom. The Conference focus this year was on diversity and inclusion, and again I'm proud to report that the cultural, racial and gender diversity our WATT classes provide are answering that call in a very real way and displays the progressive and welcoming attitude we value here at Local 230.

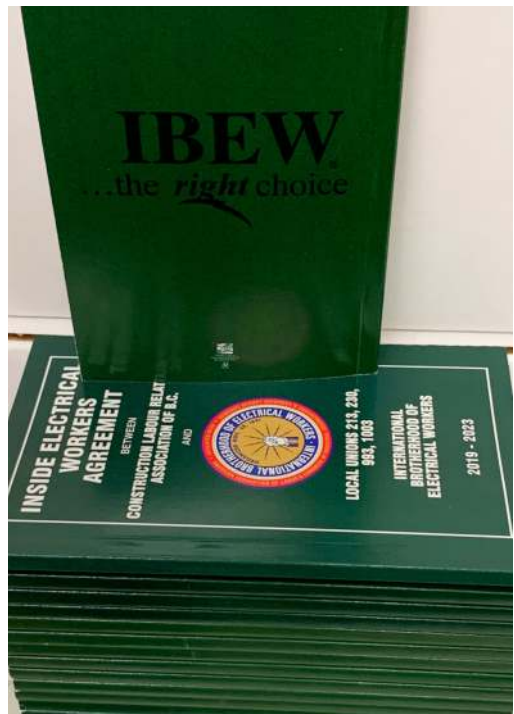
On July 14th, 2020, the BC government tabled legislation which will make several huge amendments to the Workers' Compensation system.

One of the key changes proposed is:

Maximum Wage Rate

High income earners have really been ripped off by the system in recent years due to the WCB's maximum wage rate being so low. Currently it's at \$87,100 a year. Of this you would get paid 90% of net. Even if you were earning \$150,000 a year before you were injured, if you don't have a lot of tax deductions, this could mean your WCB benefits are slightly more than \$50,000 yearly. Bill 23 makes the new maximum wage rate \$100,000. They still ding you an extra 10% of net (don't want to reward you too much for getting injured!) however, it's still a significant improvement. For more changes go to the Local 230 website "In the News and Newsletters."

We are now staring directly into the light at the end of a democratically called provincial election tunnel. The Premier, saw his and the NDP's popularity rise due to the public's view on how they have stick-handled the recent crisis in COVID, along with the other two provincial parties in a state of disarray and made a smart but risky choice to call an election. If successful, and the voters in BC give them a majority for their work over the last three years, they will be able to deliver on some of the outstanding issues we have hoped for.





Premier John Horgan pictured on June 11, 2020 speaking about COVID-19. (PC: Mike McArthur/CBC)

With the BC General Election fast-approaching, I would like to remind you that it is your right and civic duty to vote. We often forget that there was a time in Canadian history when not all individuals were allowed to vote. Voting is a way for your voice to be heard and you'd be mistaken if you didn't think your vote is meaningful! I realize that politics and elections can be convoluted and overwhelming, especially with an influx of information available from social media, the news and people around us. For that reason, I'd like to take the opportunity to shed some light on the two parties that will most likely form the next majority government, the incumbent New Democratic Party (NDP) or the BC Liberals.

Many of you may not realize, but our Union (and unions in general) is heavily affected and tied to government's decisions. As I've said in the past, from the moment we begin working until we are long-retired, governments control what we do and how we do it. For example, that apprentice contract you signed was written by the government and that bursary or grant you received, as well as the course content itself, also mandated by the government. Whether you receive Employment Insurance while in school or not, the safety standards on the job site, payment for injuries, and even how you should build something is all determined by the government. Also, the benefits you enjoy such as medical and dental, and even your wage is influenced by our government. This means that your vote directly affects your job and your life!

As previously stated, I will focus on reviewing what the Liberals did in their sixteen years in office, and what the NDP has done in their three years in office. This will be done with a focus on our local Union's interests.

LIBERAL GOVERNMENT 2001 - 2017

In 2001, the Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums were \$36/month for an individual. Within 15 years the Liberals doubled the rates making individuals pay \$72/month, couples \$130.50 and families of three or more \$144. They did not make any changes to this regressive tax. In this case, someone making \$200,000 a year was paying the same MSP premium as someone making \$42,000 a year - it's hardly fair.

Likewise, minimum wage was stagnant under the Liberals remaining at \$8/hour for 10 years until they decided to increase to it. Throughout that decade, BC held the lowest minimum wage in Canada while also being one of the costliest provinces to live in. The Liberals slashed other working standards for the worst. **Bill 29** was aimed at making healthcare services cheaper, which led to services being contracted out and 9,000 union members laid-off. The repeal of **Bill 26** (the skills development and fair wage act) had a similar anti-union and anti-worker perspective that declined unionization in construction. It simply disabled unions to be competitive against non-union.

A long-standing battle between the Liberals and the NDP have been their stance on construction work for public projects. Under Christie Clark's administration, an open-shop construction contract was imposed for Site C, one of BC's largest construction projects. This open shop model, similar to the Alberta oil sands, does not guarantee that BC residents are hired and replaced the Building Trades model of building dams for the past 50+ years in BC. We were able to save the John Hart Dam from the same fate by negotiating directly with SNC-Lavalin.

Also let's not forget the disgraceful legislation that allowed children as young as 12 to work, dramatically increasing child-injury rates. While the

Liberals did pass on a balanced budget, a strong economy, and the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at the time, it wasn't without consequences. BC social programs were severely underfunded, education had been left behind, and middle-class workers were left no better off than they were in 2000.

NDP GOVERNMENT 2017 - CURRENT

By comparison, the NDP promised to eliminate MSP premiums. In 2018 MSP rates were slashed by half and then completely eliminated by January 1, 2020. This resulted in a funding holiday for our Health & Welfare Plan that has allowed for our Collective Agreement increases to go directly into wages and our member's pockets. Under the NDP leadership, BC has switched to an Employer Health Tax that is tied to payroll to finance our public healthcare.

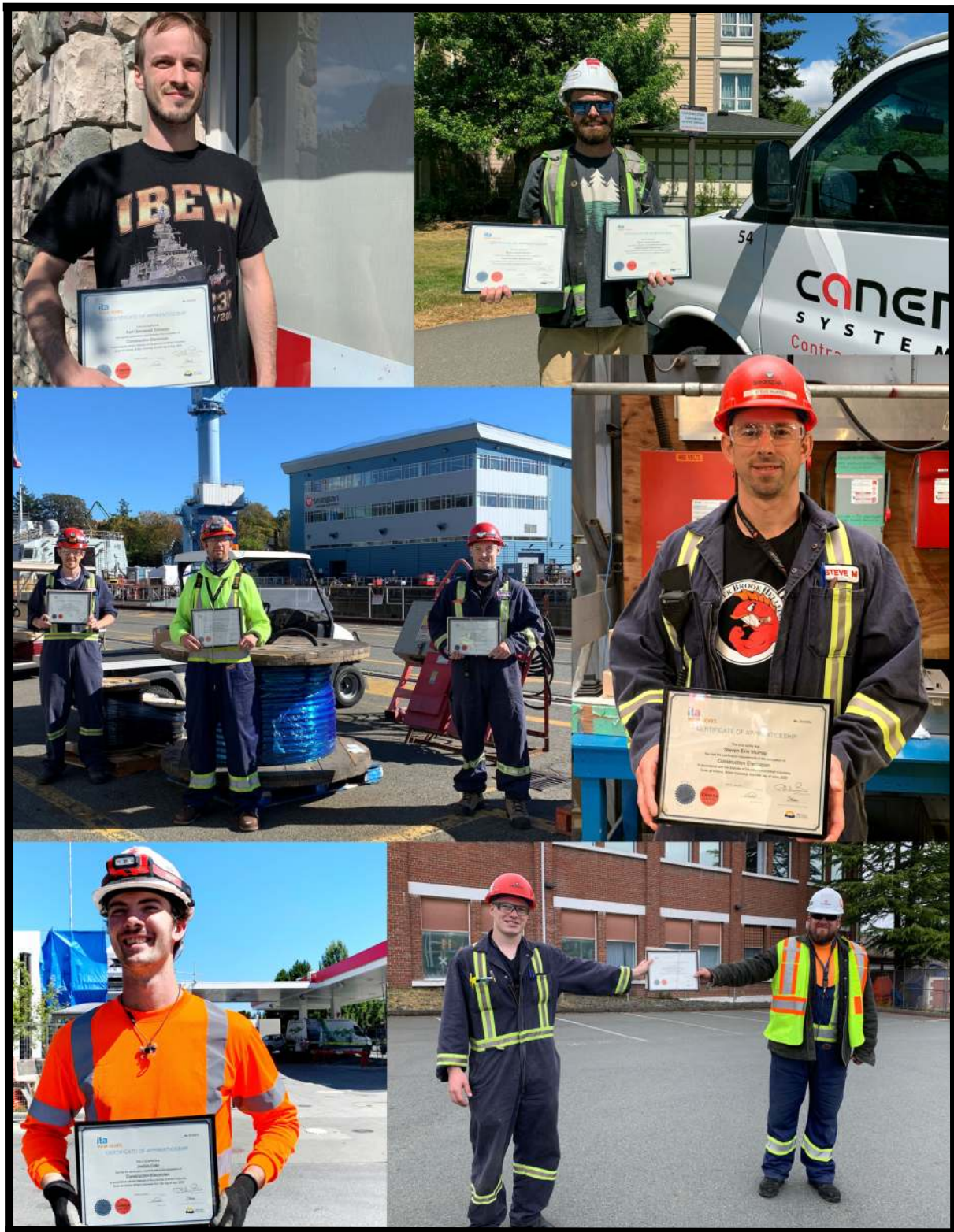
Minimum wage, which has been much neglected, is finally seeing a real increase. The NDP have raised minimum wage from \$11.35/hour to its current rate of \$14.60/hour and is planned to be \$15.20 by June, 2021. This gives the minimum wage workers a chance to live on Vancouver Island.

The NDP has also rolled back several of the Labour Relations Code legislation implemented by the Liberals. As the NDP listened to the top unions in BC, they extended the successorship rights so that workers are protected from contract flipping. They also raised the minimum working age from 12 to 16, allowing 14 and 15 year olds to perform restricted light work with parental permission. Ultimately, this has brought BC back up to international standards on child labour. In addition, the definition of "essential services" was changed so that education workers (and later BC Ferry workers) could have the right to strike again.

Among other things, the NDP put their money where their mouth is and put funding behind a number of social programs that were much needed such as: BC Child Opportunity Benefit, investing in emergency care, tackling the overdose crisis (which disproportionately affects construction workers), mental health and addictions services, and more.

Lastly, NDP's Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), which goes beyond the traditional CBA model, ensures that locals are put first for public construction projects. The CBA will allow all companies to bid on projects, but workers must be union members. The first two projects that were procured with this union only model will be the Pattullo Bridge replacement and the Kamloops-Alberta Highway 1 extension. Keep watch for further announcements after the election!

Congratulations to our Apprentices on achieving their Red Seal!



Top-left: Karl S., Ryan H.

Middle-left: Hunter H., Darren D., Anton P., Steven M.

Bottom-left: Jordan C., David V. presented by Brother Lucas L. VSL Superintendent