

Private Interest Monopolies Should Not Exist for Basic Staples

ICBC, BC Hydro, and BC Ferries are examples of monopolies that were created by the people for the people; and when operated well, should result in better pricing and services.

Late last year the federal government met with Canada's largest grocery retailers to talk to them about what they could do about the rising costs of groceries. Rising grocery prices have been a major pain in the ass for middle and low-income Canadians, as they disproportionately impact our disposable income. This time last year Grocery priced inflation was climbing towards 10% percent, and grocery prices continued to accelerate faster than the rate of overall inflation.

In fairness, looking at the G7 countries, Canada had the third lowest food inflation rate at 9.1% as of June 2023, after Japan at 8.9% and the US at 4.6%. By comparison, the UK experienced the highest food inflation rate at 17.4%. In October 2022, the Competition Bureau, an independent federal agency, launched a study of grocery store competition in Canada. The aim of this study was to look at market concentration and competition and address food prices that were increasing above the inflation rate.

Canada has a concentrated grocery industry. According to a recent report, 80% of the grocery market is controlled by five companies: Loblaw's (29% market share), Sobeys/Safeway (21%), Costco (11%), Metro (10.8%), and Walmart (7.5%). The Canadian grocery merger mania is resulting in a monopoly over our grocery prices, harming the Canadian economy and resulting in higher profits for grocery stores.

The following section is a Letter to the Editor I wrote, and it was published late last year. In reply to, "Loblaw raises affordability alarm as grocery code of conduct almost ready" printed in November 8th Times Colonist.



Grocery Store Gouging Has to End

COVID, double digit inflation of basic staples, and decades of wage stagnation has caused Canadians to hit an affordability wall. Social media is now full of tearful testimonials from citizens who after taxes don't have enough left over to meet their basic needs without going further into debt, going hungry or even becoming homeless.

Over 1.5 million Canadians a month have visited a food bank in 2023 which represents a 35 percent increase over the last four years while unemployment has dropped to decade lows.

When it comes to buying groceries, most Canadians buy their food in stores owned by a handful of industry giants. In 2022, Canada's three largest grocers reported more than \$100 billion in sales and earned more than \$3.6 billion in profits compared to \$2.4 billion in 2019. That's a 50% increase in profit in only four years, during a global pandemic! A study by the Competition Bureau of Canada concluded that more competition is needed in the grocery sector.

Wage increases, which have largely flat lined relative to productivity growth since the 1980s, need to be allowed to rise significantly so that full time workers have a living wage that allows them to meet the costs of food, clothing, transportation, and housing. Without these changes, we are going to see more people, including children, going hungry, more crime, more suicides and more employed people becoming homeless.

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Inside This Issue

Page 1:

- Private Interest Monopolies Should Never Exist for Basic Staples

Page 2:

- Business Manager's Report

Page 3:

- Update from our Retirement Consultants
- Retired & Fallen members

Page 4:

- Welcome New Signatory Contractors!

Member's Dues Auto-Deposit

To send dues payment via e-Transfer, 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 and Notes

Unit Meetings are back and held in-person. Please check our Facebook page for updates!

Business Hours

Main Office: 8:00am - 5:00pm

Training Centre: 8:00am - 5:00pm

Upcoming Training

1-3 Mar | Fiber Optic | Victoria

16 Mar | Conduit Level 1 | Victoria

17 Mar | Conduit Level 3 | Victoria

23 Mar | Code Update 2021 | Online

20 Apr | Code Update 2021 | Online

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Business Manager's Report



Phil Venoit
Business Manager/Financial Secretary

Carpenters Go Solo

With a hot construction market, Rat unions are crawling out of the woodwork looking to eat our ch-ch-cheddar and leave a mess when they're done. The formation of the newest Convenience "union" calling themselves the National Construction Council made up of the CUSW-BC (the Canadian Union of Skilled Workers), CWU (Canada West Construction Union), and the UWG (United Workforce Group).

This newly formed council of convenience unions have come together with the hopes of providing a source of cheap labour to primarily deal with the escalating costs of your wages and benefits.

In other words, some Developers, General Contractors and their ideologues are not happy with the wage increases we negotiated for you and want to create a way and means to pay for your skilled labour at a cheaper rate.

I am openly declaring these pretend unions HOT, what that means is we have plenty of work, and there is no reason why any member has to go to work through these fake "unions" hell-bent on diminishing your own worth. If you do, you will be charged under the IBEW Constitution, and live with the consequences of your own actions.

On the east coast, the Carpenters Union in New Brunswick signed a deal with Bird Construction for the Carpenters to deconstruct and reconstruct all the electrical work from 50 Windmills, taking work away from IBEW members.

After a complaint was filed at the N.B. Labour Board the IBEW was able to retain the electrical work away from Sentry Electric.

They aren't trying to raid the workers, they are trying to raid out our work, with the hopes they can attract the necessary craft workers to do that work or use cheap help to get the work done. This is an old Clickity-CLAC trick. This news all comes with mixed feelings reporting the BC Building Trades Managers met to decide on the fate of the Carpenters. We decided to offer them the opportunity to resign prior to kicking them out, they understood our position perfectly, and resigned. It was twenty years ago, as the President of the Vancouver Island Building Trades, I was the first President in North America to kick the Carpenters out of the Building Trades Council for similar poor behavior. I've seen this all before, and it didn't work out for them the first time, but I guess they will have to see this again for themselves. It's just so disappointing that, at a time when the wind is at our backs, and when all the right factors to drive positive change for the construction industry are aligning, the Carpenters think it's time to fight amongst ourselves.

Cowichan Hospital Travel Pay

I'm happy to report our Travel Pay Grievance heard by Mark Brown resulted in a positive Decision stating, the workers need to get paid, and at the time of writing most of our members onsite have been paid in full. I would like to thank the members for their patience while we resolved this issue to their benefit, and like to point out, when we use our grievance procedure to resolve our problems, we get the results that benefit us without disrupting the project. This is the right professional response.

The Island Building Trades Council hosted a Job Fair on January 27th at our joint office located in the Duncan Mall. With the Hospital and the High School, we will need about 250 electricians and apprentices in that area just for these two projects, and we have a responsibility to supply. So, we will be looking to bring in as many "qualified" new members into the IBEW consistent with our Constitution.



IBEW 230 Organizers Rob Mangat and Russ Alexander (centre) are joined by Plumbers and Sheet Metal Workers Organizers

Health & Welfare Plan Changes

At our Meeting in early February, the Trustees of the Plan overseeing the construction/private shipyards and Motor Winder Shops, had a good conversation with DA Townley outlining our members frustrations due to recent poor services. Over the last few years, DA Townley was purchased by Pacific Blue Cross and offices merged, then COVID hit and many of their workforce began working from home. Then retirements came and they lost a good number of people on the front lines who held a great deal of institutional knowledge. Imagine running a construction job or building a ship with all early term apprentices (from home!). There are going to be mistakes. That's why I've asked members to bring your problems to me, so we can assist firsthand with cleaning up the mistakes, and we can all be part of the solution.

Further to this conversation we decided;

"that effective March 1, 2024, the definition of Immediate Family has been expanded to include stepparents and stepchildren, as well as mother-in-law and father-in-law" for the purposes of our Bereavement Leave.

Just over a year ago, TELUS Health acquired Morneau Shepell/Lifeworks and started rebranding our Employee/Family Assistance Program product to TELUS Health. In Q1 2024 they intend to decommission the Shepell EFAP website and operate solely under the TELUS Health site.

January 1, 2024, the maximum weekly benefit under EI Sickness increased from \$650 to \$668 and, as the Plan's WI benefit is equal to the EI Weekly benefit maximum, the benefit level was increased automatically and will be adjusted for any new claims this year.

Effective January 1, 2024, a special provision will be made to offer Members with active coverage under the Plan, who are birthing parents, a freeze of their hour bank balance during the period while such Member is specifically in receipt of EI Maternity Benefits, for up to a maximum of six consecutive months. This provision is intended to provide support while they undergo health and other stresses of late pregnancy, birth and recovering from birth. Such Members will be required to make application with the Plan Administrator for this hour bank freeze and continuation of coverage and provide evidence that they are in receipt of EI Maternity Benefits. While collecting EI Maternity Benefits, the Member's hour bank balance will be frozen for up to six months maximum, at which point coverage would be continued based on the balance of hours in their hour bank.

And finally, those who are on self-pay, you should see a new feature coming soon with the ability to email transfer your monthly remittances.

It's RRSP Tax Savings Time!

Top up your group RRSP on or before the **February 29, 2024** deadline.

Pay less tax today. Grow your savings for tomorrow.

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3 ...

- 1 Decide on the amount you want to put in your RRSP.
- 2 Sign in to your Manulife secure site, or the Manulife Mobile app.
- 3 Go to My Account > Make a lump-sum contribution.



Questions?

To learn more about RRSPs and how they work, scan the QR code below or

visit manulifeim.ca/retire/group-rrsp.



Mailing and online availability dates for RRSP contribution receipts from Manulife are as follows. You may receive up to 3 RRSP contribution receipts this year.

Your RPP contributions show on the T4 you get from your employer. You will not get a contribution receipt for your RPP contributions from Manulife.

If you have any questions about the amount contributed to your RRSP or RPP by your employer, please contact DA Townley at 1-800-663-1356 or email pensions2@datownley.com

Description	Format	Date Available
Mar-Dec 2023 RRSP contributions to old policy number 56264005	Mail delivery only	Mailing – February 5, 2024
Mar-Dec 2023 RRSP contributions to new policy number 20005188	Mailed and online	Online – February 5, 2024 Mailing – February 5, 2024
First 60 days of 2024 RRSP contributions to new policy number 20005188	Mailed and online	Online – March 25, 2024 Mailing – March 25, 2024

Retired Members of 2023

Jerry Baron 9-year member
Wayne Conolly 42-year member
Alex Gibb 35-year member
Mark Hackwell 41-year member
Michael Harbar 42-year member
Gary Hicks 16-year member

Dale Lavender 48-year member
David McMuldroy 43-year member
Roy Parkhouse 48-year member
Dale Pittman 22-year member
John Robin 10-year member
Anthony Rose 41-year member

Don Shillington 20-year member
Douglas Spence 8-year member
Robert Thackeray 32-year member
Kevin Walker 46-year member

In Memory of

With sadness and fond memories, we said goodbye to thirty members. They will be deeply missed and forever in our thoughts.



Richard Carroll 68-year member
William Cornell 56-year member
Lionel Courtenay 25-year member
Robert Ellis 44-year member
James Goodman 72-year member
William Hadfield 60-year member
Henry Harding 64-year member
Thomas Hartford 11-year member
Darwyn Henry 21-year member
William Horsland 58-year member

Richard Konschak 71-year member
Richard Kowalyshen 62-year member
Herbert Mayr 70-year member
Stu Murland 37-year member
Gunter Neumann 37-year member
John Ostwald 56-year member
Benjamin Plaxton 62-year member
Charles Reeves 44-year member
John Reid 53-year member
Greg Rowden 12-year member

Burt Rumsby 57-year member
Jack Smith 60-year member
Frances Smith 57-year member
John Soohochoff 44-year member
Allan Taylor 55-year member
Edward Toffey 34-year member
Dennis Waller 49-year member
David Walsh 44-year member
John Warrender 49-year member
Donald Williams 57-year member

WELCOME NEW SIGNATORY CONTRACTORS!



APPROACH ELECTRICAL

Approach Electrical focuses mainly on service work and upgrades/renovations in the residential sector in the Greater Victoria Area.



FETTBACK & HEESTERMAN

Provides electrical services that cater to both commercial and industrial markets with work on Vancouver Island and the Mainland. Recent projects include Solar projects for CRD, Electrical integration for Trans Mountain Pipeline, Ogden Point generator upgrade, EV Tugboats for Port of Vancouver and a busy work picture for 2024.



AURORA ELECTRIC

Aurora Electric, whose home base is in Penticton. Aurora specializes in condo/highrise projects, and has been engaged in such projects all over Vancouver Island, ranging from Victoria to Campbell River.

Daeco Installations is a family owned and operated company founded in 2018. Daeco specializes in provincial, municipal, and private installations, such as, traffic signals, street lighting, sports field Lighting, LED retro fit, commercial and industrial projects of any size. Majority of work is between Campbell River to Victoria, with some projects being in the Lower Mainland and Southern Interior.



ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE ELECTRICAL



Island Lighthouse Electrical does a variety of service/maintenance work for multi-unit buildings and residential renovations in the Greater Victoria Area.



ARM ELECTRIC

A full service electrical contractor ranging from standard residential wiring to high voltage main distribution centers for commercial and industrial institutions. Recent IBEW projects include Belmont Market Condos, Hackett Road Condos, Service Work, M Wave (Medium warships and auxiliary vessels in service support).