



The Conciliator

UNIFOR Local594 | Canada

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www.unifor594.com

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Unifor 594 Roots: Part 2

In my first installment of this page I outlined a little of our history for you. Maybe I can flesh it out a little more. Some of this information comes from research, and after 1968, I can give you some personal insight, as I was then in the union thereafter, although not yet with this local. According to Google and Wikipedia, the International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well, and Refinery Workers of America was formed in the United States in 1918, after a major worker strike in the Texas oil fields in late 1917 led to several mortalities. This first union started with only 25 members, as the oil industry grew it reached 30,000 members by 1921.

Then there was the Great Depression, where jobs were lost en masse and membership dropped low again, bottoming out at 350 members. In fact, only 1 local never stopped meeting through the dark days of that time. In 1937, the name of the union became Oil Workers International Union, and in 1938 became one of the first unions affiliated with the Committee for Industrial Organization.

The CIO helped the union grow significantly between 1940 and 1946, and although Wikipedia says it didn't move into Canada until 1948, I believe overtures were made back and forth during this time frame to bring our local under the umbrella of the larger union. Neil Reimer would have seen the benefit of joining with the larger body to improve local positioning during negotiations with the company, even if in later years he was to lead us into our own national organization.

In 1950, the U.S. union had grown to ~100,000 members, and with talks under way for merger between the United Gas Coke and Chemical Workers of America and the Oil Workers International Union, in 1955, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) was formed with 210,000 members.

The OCAW had one important objective and focus, the improvement in living conditions of those who work in oil, chemical and related industries. OCAW accomplished this, not only through bargaining, but also by participating in community activities, political action, and educational work. By doing these things, the union intended to gain experience first hand by developing ways to improve government, schools, housing, recreational facilities, and other community businesses.

This was the structure of our union, and Neil Reimer became our District Director over the Canadian locals, as he had been actively organizing, not only here, but in the oil industry, mainly in Alberta. It was there too, that he became politically active, joining and eventually leading the recently renamed New Democrat Party.

Let's call this *Part 2* in a series to bring everyone up to date on the history of our union. Our roots run deep, and you should be aware of this and other facts about the union as you prepare for another round of negotiations. Knowing our past will help you focus on present goals and future goals.

Yours in solidarity,

John Sader, Former Process Vice President, Retirees Chapter

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• SHOP STEWARDS

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Section III:

Curtis Baht & Kevin Geiger

Section IV:

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Section V:

Chad Thompson & Andrew Murray

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Pipefitters:

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Mechanics:

Derek Kups & Pete Thorsen

Stores:

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Electrical:

Les Bonkowski

Instrumentation:

Jaret McCloy & Dave Mushynsky

Inspection:

Keith Britton

Fire & Safety:

Daryl Watch

Lab:

Scott Weber

Pumpers:

Ryan Dzioba

Decokers:

Jon Javorik

Welders:

Scott Wickland

Scaffolders:

Nelson Wagman

Construction:

Mike Pelzer

Boilerhouse:

Matt Wason

Insulators:

Luke McGeough & Brandon Mang

PDD Office:

Andrew Fowlow

PDD Loading:

Dylan Bailey & Justin Farrant

Packing & Blending, Warehouse:

(vacant)

Administration:

Tasha Davis & Randy Guillemin

The Future of 594

The key to the future is simple for Local 594. The membership is, and always will be the only thing that moves our Local forward. Often people view the Union as just the Union Executive. In reality, you are the Union. The Executive is only in place to be the voice of the members.

In society, Unions sometimes get a bad rap and are viewed as lazy, greedy and only protecting the weak. It does not take very long working at the Co-op to realize that 594 is different.

We are a Local that prides itself on being good at our jobs. Our dedication to our workplace and the desire to be the best at what we do is the key to our future and is our biggest strength. It is what unites us as an organization and keeps us as a solid group. We are well trained professionals working in a high-risk industry with the goal to keep our neighbors, our co-workers, and the refinery safe.

We have over 75 years of experience operating our Co-op Refinery safely and efficiently. Most employers can only dream of the high level of dedication that our members have to the Co-op and the high level of solidarity they have to Local 594. For years it has proven to be a great and profitable partnership.

Lately that partnership is under attack. The company's desire for profits (sustainability) has made a shift from embracing our dedication to being threatened by it. Our Solidarity has them worried that they have lost control and they want it back. The company views our solidarity as power and they do not like it. They do not like when we show support for our Union and try to divide us when we are showing signs of Solidarity, because they view solidarity as power. It is power, but what they do not realize is, it is power that makes their refinery great. What drives our future drives their future and is the key to sustainability for both organizations.

The truth is that they have never lost control, the partnership is what has driven the refinery to greatness and the mutual stake hold is what makes our workplace safe and profitable. We are good at what we do, we do our jobs safer, faster and more efficiently than anyone else can. We hold the key to safety at the refinery, and work around the clock to sustain profitable operations at the Co-op refinery. That is the past, present and future of our Union.

Some of you may be thinking that you just want to come to work to do your job and not worry about all the "other stuff". I understand because it is easier on the mind and body, but just because you do not think about it, does not mean it is not there. Just look at what the company did to their management team. They had money taken from them and they did not have the ability to say No. These colleagues provide just as much value to the refinery as we do, so why should they have to go backwards? It is because they do not have the backing of a Union to collectively stop it. A Union that says, we are worth it. They could stand together to say no, but without a union they are at a disadvantage. They have no one to fight for what is right. If the company is willing to do that to their own, why do you think they are not going to do it to us? They can try, but our Union is standing in front of them right now. Your Union.

When people ask me, what is the future for 594? I tell them, the people are the future. 594's strength is in you, the membership, and your unwavering desire to be good at what you do. Our membership standing together can overcome any obstacle. Together 800 united we will be strong, and that is our future.

In Solidarity,

Kevin Bittman

President Unifor 594

Weed and the Workplace

As of October 17th, 2018, cannabis became legal for recreational use in Canada. This brings with it a whole myriad of new issues in relation to the workplace. Though it may be legal to consume outside of work, it brings into question how the new laws align with the Company's current Alcohol & Substance policy.

The Union expects all workers to abide by the current Company policy that states, workers must report for work "fit for duty". This seems simple enough, but in relation to cannabis it can be very difficult to prove due to the methods that are used in impairment testing.

It should be noted that individuals that hold Medicinal Cannabis Use Authorization, still must adhere to showing up "fit to work" to perform their regular duties. Medicinal users have separate provisions in the Company's Alcohol & Substance policy that they need to adhere to in order to be in compliance.

Employees in non-safety sensitive positions though are generally not subject to the same thresholds for testing.

The standard at the refinery is that testing can only be conducted post-incident or with reasonable cause when two supervisors suspect someone is impaired. In both cases, you are entitled to Union Representation. It is the law's view that reasonable cause testing should be limited to only the substance in question and not a blanket approach.

At CCRL, the primary initial test used is urinalysis. The problem with urinalysis is that although it will prove the presence of THC metabolites, it cannot prove impairment. This is because urinalysis generally tests for fat soluble metabolites of THC that can linger in the system for a significant amount of time. The presence of metabolites in urine is not an indication of impairment. A worker could reasonably assume, and rightly so, that they are fit for work if they consumed cannabis several days before their shift.

Other tests like saliva or blood are starting to be deployed more frequently. Like urinalysis, they still test for THC metabolites, but because of the testing medium, the results from these tests are more accurate when trying to detect impairment because the metabolites residency time is less. There's no reliable consensus on how long the metabolites will remain in your system after consumption, but the numbers 4-24 hours (saliva) and 1-48 hours (blood) is often thrown around. Because those fat-soluble molecules break down at varying rates depending on many factors like body weight, diet and exercise, metabolite levels are not always a reliable indicator of impairment. That being said, blood and saliva analysis is the best "hard number" testing currently widely available and are considered the legal norm for proving impairment. Cannabis testing is still in its infancy and there's currently no test with a direct impairment correlation like alcohol and blood content (due to alcohol being water soluble). The only other drug test currently being employed on a large scale is the RCMP's use of Drug Recognition Experts (D.R.E). They use a thorough 12-step process that is intended to show a level of impairment that will lead to a drug test being performed. Unfortunately, this training is only available to law enforcement officers and is restricted to criminal law situations. If a D.R.E. were to consult or use their expertise in a private setting, they would lose their accreditation and other penalties.

The issue of workplace random testing has been fought in the courts several times and has been struck down every time. Unless the employer can prove that there is a large problem of substance abuse at the workplace, it is unlikely that any random testing can be legally enforced.

In any case, a failed alcohol or substance test does not result in an automatic termination. After a second confirmation test, the Company will ask the employee to report for a Substance Abuse Evaluation (SAE) from a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP). If an addiction (disability) is identified, all parties will work towards a treatment plan that enables the employee to return to work. The Company has a Duty to Accommodate any employee with a documented disability, to the point of undue hardship.

With legalization being relatively new, and the variability of testing, there does not appear to be a lot of legal precedence involving impairment at the workplace. These situations are generally are taken on a case by case basis and outcomes can vary because they are very fact specific.

Your biggest takeaway from this article should be that with the current testing practices available, in combination with CCRL's Alcohol & Substance Policy, there is no definitive way to differentiate responsible cannabis consumption (legal off-duty or medicinal use) from irresponsible consumption (impairment at the workplace). Employees should use good judgment when legally consuming cannabis when off duty.

In Solidarity, Richard Exner and Nic Skulski

Making the Most of your Benefits

One of the advantages of working at the CO-OP Refinery Complex is our amazing benefits package negotiated for us by our Local Union! Our dental plan as well as our extended health care coverage are excellent and chances are, we have benefits that you may not even be aware that we have.

The “Benefits Now” App from Cooperators is easy to navigate, gives you updates on your claims and shows your yearly benefit maximums. If you do not have the app and have been filling out paperwork and mailing it through work, I would strongly suggest you download the app on your app friendly device and check it out. I would guess the majority of the membership knows about our dental, vision and prescription drug coverage. However, we also get yearly allowances for many other things from chiropractor and massage appointments to custom ear plugs and orthopedic inserts for your work boots. The app will show you all the coverage you have and an up to date dollar figure on how much you have already used.

As contract bargaining negotiations move forward and the likelihood of a labour dispute becomes more and more clear, I would encourage everyone to not put off using your benefits and to schedule your checkups and appointments knowing that many of these benefits will not be covered during a dispute. If and when a labour dispute occurs, Unifor National will provide coverage for basic life insurance, basic accidental and dismemberment insurance, drug plan, out of province/ out of country medical care and semi-private hospital care. Paramedical coverage as well as vision, dental and several other things will not be covered. With there being a strong potential for this to be an extended labour dispute, covering all of your bases and making appointments for yourself and all your dependents before this occurs is a wise thing. In uncertain times and especially with a reduced income, things will no doubt be stressful. Budgeting and planning ahead is going to reduce your stress, so check your app and make some appointments. Your clean teeth, your relaxed back and your peaceful state of mind will thank you!

In Solidarity,
Wade Schnell
Sec 1A Shop Steward/UCP Committee

Last Laugh

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**“Let’s review the guidelines
for some of the chemicals we handle.”**

Bargaining Update

As of February 1, 2019, our contract has expired and we have begun the bargaining process. The Union Bargaining Committee met with the Company for the first two days of discussions on January 30th and 31st.

Each side presented their proposals, discussion items, and estoppel notices. These first two days were focused on clarification and explanation of each side’s proposals to allow more informed discussions and decisions to be made as we move through the process. Following that, each side clarified which items would be discussed in monetary and non-monetary phases of bargaining.

At the end of the first two days, six minor housekeeping language updates that reflect current practices or labour legislation have been agreed upon.

The bargaining process can be long and drawn out, but the Bargaining Committee is committed to negotiating a fair deal for our members regardless of how long it takes.

The next scheduled bargaining dates with the Company will be on February 27th & 28th when we will begin non-monetary bargaining. We will continue to keep the membership informed of the bargaining process and any developments as we move along.