



The Conciliator

UNIFOR Local594 | Canada

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Refinery Health and Safety Discussion

On November 7, 2018, Professor Sean Tucker and Eagleclaw Bunnie, of the University of Regina hosted a Refinery Health and Safety Discussion for the community to attend. Sean intended this to be a way for the residents of Regina and area to ask questions and learn about general oil refinery health and safety. The first of the two-person panel consisted of Dan Josephson, an experienced worker at the Co-op Refinery and a former Unifor 594 Executive member. The second panelist was Perry Feltham who travelled from Newfoundland to join the discussion. Perry has been an employee at the North Atlantic Refinery for many years, as well as, a member of United Steelworkers Local 9316. The panel was moderated by Dr. Carol Schick, a retired Professor of Education at the University of Regina. It was noted at the beginning of the evening that the Co-op Refinery, Federated Co-operatives Limited and Canadian Fuels Association were invited to add a member to the panel, but declined as they each had no speaker available.

Dr. Schick welcomed the panelists and encouraged attendees to ask questions and share remarks. Both panelists began by stating who they were, what they do and the experience and training they have. Perry has been working as a Fire & Safety technician for 29 years in Newfoundland. Perry started, “You should not have to go to work with the fear that you may not go home at the end of the day”. This feeling is one that many of us know very well and is always at the back of our mind. The main goal for everyone is to ensure you and your coworkers get to go home at the end of each day. The only way to reach this goal is to understand that refinery safety is an extremely important and serious part of a work shift.

“You should not have to go to work with the fear that you may not go home at the end of the day”

Dan has been working as a process operator at the Co-op Refinery for 38 years. He explained that he is there to represent the unionized workers at the Refinery and does not speak for the company. He gave the attendees an overview of the products that are made at the Refinery. He then gave an extensive list of all the training that is required to be a process operator. I tried to keep up with his list, but lets just say we have very highly trained workers. Dan agreed with Perry that the most important part of the work day is to go home safe. He said, “safety is paramount – important in everyday work. Our lives are on the line”

And with this, Dr. Schick opened the discussion up to the floor.

As I scanned the room, I noticed a couple members of the community with sheets of pre-made questions. As if they had been waiting for this specific type of discussion for years. The questions came fast and the majority were responded with, “I cannot answer that. You will have to contact the Co-op Refinery”. These questions included, but weren’t limited to: specifics about emissions, soil and sludge inspections inside the refinery, how to deal with the new marijuana legalization, blast radius, evacuation zone and waste disposal.

Continued on Page 2...

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Inside this issue:

Health & Safety Disc.	1
Health & Safety Disc.	2
Budgeting	3
Union Event Update	3
UCP Committee	4
Staying Connected	4
Last Laugh	4

Section IA:

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Refinery Health and Safety Discussion Continued...

Other questions that did receive answers included; if there is a buffer zone for city building, how long the refinery has been and will be in operation, how the safety of the workers and operations are regulated, whether technology will help or hinder the future of the refinery and how product travels in and out of the refinery.

There were many good questions that created great discussion between Dan and Perry. One community member with a long list of questions began by asking, “Is it safe to have a refinery in the middle of the city?” to which it was replied, “When the refinery was built, the city was not there. The city was built around the refinery, not the other way around”. Dan went on to explain that an oil refining business is hazardous, dangerous and cannot be sugar coated. The safest way to run one is with the experience and safety of highly trained workers that know the units like the back of their hand, and we as employees take that seriously. Perry added that it is quite safe to have a refinery in a city. There are no incidents because of the safety, training and experience of these workers.

Another question that created quite the conversation was directed to Perry, “What do you think about short term workers coming in”? Perry thought for a minute and answered, “you can’t run any business unless you have experts in it”. Dan followed, “the best way to run a refinery is with highly trained, highly experienced people. That is what we have. Taking away experienced workers raises the risk for a dangerous occurrence”, which adds to an earlier comment that was made, explaining that a refinery that does not have incidents is a refinery that makes money.

In one of the last questions of the night, a community member asked, “What barriers exist that prevent workers to do their safest job”? It was agreed upon that there were a few. Perry suggested operator fatigue and workload is far too great, 12 hour shifts are hard on the body and safety culture must come from the top-down. Dan added, communication between workgroups, a willingness to cooperate, communicate and working together is necessary. He suggested that these are opportunities to do better rather than barriers.

With that, Sean Tucker took the microphone. He gave Perry the opportunity to speak on what types of community discussions the North Atlantic Refinery has for their people. He explained that they have town halls and liaison groups to ensure the community feels safe, secure and heard. Sean was thoroughly upset that the Co-op Refinery has not given our community that type of conversation and that they were unable to show up to the discussion. In a Facebook post he created after the event, Sean suggested organizing a public event where the Co-op Refinery shares information about the work they do, or even as a first step, engages in listening to community questions and concerns and responding at a later date via in writing or a follow up forum. He said, “These kinds of actions better reflect co-operative values”.

The night ended with a thank-you to the panel and people that helped plan and execute an important discussion for the community of Regina.

I would encourage you all watch the video of the discussion. It is now posted on the University of Regina’s YouTube Channel as well as re-posted on our Unifor594 Facebook page. Hats off to Dan Josephson who did a wonderful job representing Unifor 594 members. Finally, thank you to all of you hard-working members for encouraging and embracing the highest standard in regards to safety. We all just want to go home safe at the end of the day.

In solidarity,
Ashlyn Heintz
Laboratory Technician

Budgeting for Uncertain Times

There have been plenty of different discussions around the proverbial water cooler since our last contract. We have seen the company's path forward; they have shown their hand so to speak. As difficult as this can be to swallow, as the company brings in record profits, we can use this foresight to our benefit and be prepared.

What can we do to prepare for this unprecedented stressful and restrictive financial period?

First, we must remember that we, as members of our union, share the same concerns and are in similar situations. We will get through it together. Although we will all be in a similar situation, our individual financial responsibilities and priorities will vary. Preparation is key. Each of us will need to examine, scrutinize and review our personal financial situations. If you have a spouse, this will be better done as a team. Be open with your spouse, discuss and work together. Create a budget and make cuts early. Identify the priorities: mortgages, groceries, healthcare, bills, etc. It is important to go into "preservation mode" earlier rather than later with a looming lockout. The painful truth is that we are going to have to make some cuts to be well prepared.

Determine which bills are due and when. For things like credit cards and loans, explore repayment options. In some cases, the lack of income during a lockout can qualify persons for income-based repayments. Our union will provide a letter explaining the situation for you to provide to your financial institution. Each financial institution has different specifics, but will work out an interim solution. Just remember, the banks do not want to lose your business and are likely to help. Re-evaluating your credit strategies is important in the lead up to a lockout. Not only can paying down credit cards and line of credit's help, but so can going to your financial institutions to ask about options, such as increasing the borrowing amounts or transferring to a lower interest credit card. Borrowing companies are hungry for business. Make them work for yours!

The expensive holiday season is on its way. We all want to purchase nice gifts and spoil our friends and family with our hard earned money. However, this year may require some restraint. You can decide to spend a little less or be creative and make a gift. Buy the kids a couple small, inexpensive gifts, instead of 1 or 2 grandiose expensive presents. As we know kids are more quantitative than qualitative. Perhaps this year will include no new toys or trips. There is usually an area we can all cut back on. Soon after we will receive the greatly treasured Savings Plan cheque. This is a valuable tool for enduring the financial stresses of any bad bargaining situation. Much can be done with these funds. They can be put into a savings account in preparation for next year. It will help top up our lockout pay received from National and our local union. Another option with the Savings Plan funds is to pay off credit cards and lines of credit. Most important, do not then use these credit systems throughout the year. Ensure you have credit space available in case of crisis during a lockout.

Another savings strategy is not banking overtime for holidays. This year keep the funds and put them aside for next year.

Let us not forget our benefits. During a lockout we will not have access to our current medical and dental plans. There are some emergency exceptions that our union will help with, but not for everyday kind of issues. Therefore, we need to take care of dental cleanings, repairs, etc. before we run into an emergency situation. Any medical ailments that have been put off too long, now is the time to have checked. Make sure all ongoing prescriptions are filled as far ahead as possible. Not just for yourself, but for your whole family.

Lastly, once we are forced to the picket line we will not be left with absolutely no income. We will receive cheques from our union and the National. It is nearly half a month's net earnings. Couple that with preparation, budgeting and savings; a household can survive months as we strive to maintain our earned benefits.

In conclusion, preparing now and thinking ahead will help us weather the storm. A good solid plan starting now will not only help financial hardship in a lockout, but will help alleviate some stress from an already stressful time. Just remember we are all in it together.

In Solidarity,

Ryan Luedtke

Union Continuity Plan (UCP) Committee Member

Union Event Update

November 1-30: Unifor 594 has partnered with the Co-op Refinery in support of Movember: Refinery Stache for Cash. Mo team captains are Mike Neigum and Daryl Nysten. The Movember Foundation is saving and improving men's lives through projects focused on prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention. Join the team or make a donation at: <https://ca.movember.com/team/2299422>

November 30: The 2018 Holiday Social is being held at the Italian Club. Doors open at 5:30PM and supper will be served at 7:00PM. Tickets can be picked up from your shop steward or social committee member for \$10.

Until December 16: Kiwanis Club Campaign has donation tables by maintenance locker rooms & in Section 3 control room for Regina Women's Shelters. Donations may include cleaning supplies, clothing, baby products, food and household items. A more specified list was sent out in the Membership Update e-mail on October 18, 2018.

Union Continuity Planning Committee

Hello from the Strike Committee. We hope everyone enjoyed their summer and are prepared for winter. We wanted to update everyone on what we have been working on as a committee.

There have been a few changes to our committee over the last year or so. Nathan Kraemer has stepped aside and is now your Negotiating Chair. We know he will do a great job in his new role. Chris Peterson has also stepped aside for the time being, but I am hoping he will return as we get closer to contract negotiations. With these members leaving we needed to find a few new members to fill in the roles that were left vacant. We have added Kelly Murrell (Accounting), Ryan Luedtke (Pumps) and Krista Shields (Inspection Clerk).

These members are already getting familiar with our mandate and the roles they need to play within our committee. There is no lack of work to do and they will be a huge help to our committee.

The other big change our committee has completed recently is a name change. Formally we were called the Strike Committee, but we determined that name didn't reflect what the committee was trying to accomplish. Our group does much more than just plan to "strike". Our committee prepares for any event that prevents union members from going to work. Therefore, we will now be known as the Union Continuity Planning Committee, or UCP for short. We can be reached at our new email address: ucp@unifor594.com.

Which brings me to the next topic. We need the members to make sure that your contact information is up to date and correct. We don't want to be racing around at the last minute trying to find people and get them the information they would need. With over 700 members it is extremely important to keep everyone informed and up to date. Our stewards did an awesome job during the last contract negotiations of collecting all this information. It is vital we keep our records up to date.

The UCP Committee will be working extremely hard over the next few months to build many plans for all possible scenarios. We also welcome any input from the membership in regard to potential ideas.

We would like to thank everyone for your support in our committee and hope you have a great fall.

In Solidarity,
Jim Milton (Welders)
UCP Chair

Stay Connected

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Last Laugh



"As a part of a cost-cutting experiment all of our safety measures will be replaced with these good luck charms."