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Bell Craft Bargaining



In this round of negotiations, 3520 Unifor members are united by their 24 local unions in Ontario and 8 in Quebec.

Bell Craft workers are working together to improve job security and respect at work. Bargaining updates are available from Locals, and will be posted here following internal distribution.

Campaign Update

Information Bulletin #11

3/16/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Your Bargaining Committee will begin conciliation with the Company next week via Zoom. Over the past two weeks, we have shared eight historical analysis documents about our past struggles. The series highlighted just how critical it is to fight for our future and laid clear that 21 years of concessions is enough.

Furthermore, the Company has filed to the Canada Industrial Relations Board, under section 87.4 of the Canada Labour Code, over our dispute regarding Maintenance of Activities in the event of a lockout or strike. This was an expected action, however it does not change the fact that the Company's extreme concessionary demands could lead to a work stoppage, if there is not a significant change to their proposals and recognition of our priorities.

When there is a situational change we will communicate it to the membership whenever possible. Your continued support and solidarity remains critical as we move through the stages of the bargaining process.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Better Together, but who is included in “Together”?

3/12/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 8 of 8

With the release of the company's new recognition plan, “Better Together” they claim to want to “highlight the work being done by our colleagues across the Bell group of companies.”

This goal apparently supports their strategic imperative to engage and invest in their employees.

However, for the members of the craft bargaining unit this could not be further from reality.

Training on new services and technologies is non-existent or delayed for craft members while contractors and other work groups see extensive plans put in place to ensure their training can continue during the pandemic and while new programs rolled out.

With such a vast knowledge of the company's network and services and such highly skilled members across Canada's two most populated provinces, you would expect that engaging and investing in the people of the craft bargaining unit would be a top priority.

That's why we need to ensure a clear future for craft workers, where we can lead on new technology. After all, that's the only way that we can start to be 'better together'.

Contracting Out, Arbitrary Layoffs and Targeted Retirement Incentive Offers

3/11/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 7 of 8

In Spring of 2019, while raking in record profits, Bell decided to trigger a layoff.

A claim of “lack of work” was made, however how much of that work was going to contractors. We cannot predict when Bell will make the next move to trigger arbitrary layoffs.

With no guarantee of work, or staffing levels and a company that continuously looks for ways to give craft bargaining unit work away to other workgroups and third-party contractors, our jobs are insecure. But we can work to right the scales.

Through hard work and tough decisions, the union was able to reverse the company's decision on layoffs. We could only protect workers from layoff by agreeing to target based Retirement Incentive Offers, which unfortunately lacked consideration towards some of our senior members for their years of hard work and service.

There is no telling if this would even be possible if the company were to trigger another layoff. Which is why we absolutely need to secure job security in the form of guaranteed work for the craft bargaining unit and improved language concerning the layoff of craft bargaining unit members.

The Start of the Information Age

3/10/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 6 of 8

In the late 90's and early 2000's high-speed, non-dial up internet became an available service to the public. Digital Subscriber Lines meant there was no need for a second phone line for the dial up computer modem. It started first with Nortel 1Mbps modems and then with Alcatel modems capable of 3Mbps and higher.

Bell Craft Technicians worked tirelessly to deliver these new services to customers, working through bugs, distance issues, in home/business setup on computers and wiring issues within the customer's premises, to deliver a product that would revolutionize the company's business.

However, after only a few short years, once the bugs had been fixed, with the help and feedback of these highly skilled technicians, the company used our experience and knowledge to develop training programs in order to contract out our work.

They then disbanded these high-speed technician crews, forcing them into other jobs, which at the time remained within the craft bargaining unit. Not the type of recognition you would expect for being at the forefront of a technological shift that has made the company the leader in broadband services that it is today.

“Keeping Canadians Connected” The value of highly skilled employees during uncertain times

3/9/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 5 of 8

There is no doubt that the last year has been the most unprecedented time in our lives, and from the beginning of the pandemic, through multiple lockdowns, “Red Zones” and every step of the way, the technicians in the craft bargaining unit have exceeded expectations in delivering the services the Company provides, to ensure the lives of Canadians can continue as best as possible.

“Our country’s telecom workers, and specifically the Bell team, are being recognized alongside healthcare and emergency workers for their critical work during the COVID-19 crisis”.

Whether it is virtual learning for our children, ensuring high bandwidth for video streams to work from home, or making sure the TV is broadcasting or streaming our favorite shows and live sports to give us a reprieve from the uncertainty outside our homes, there is no doubt Craft Technicians have been exceptional.

Our efforts are not recognized by the company. While Bell boasts about, keeping Canadians connected in this time of crisis, they are privately attempting to dismantle our bargaining unit.

While they bring in profits during this pandemic, Bell is continuing to erode our unit, contract out new technologies, offshore good Canadian jobs, and offers little to no real recognition in our role during the public health crisis.

The decision to contract out the Outright Sales portion of the business to a third party contractor, has left the highly skilled technicians who performed this work, and the businesses who relied on them, in uncertainty almost a year later. This move is yet another example of how the craft bargaining unit continues to shrink, even though there is ample profitable work available to perform.

The Assignment of “New Jobs”

3/5/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 4 of 8.

The telecommunications industry is ever changing. At the same time as technology evolved at a rapid pace and internet and telecommunications technologies are integrated into every aspect of worker’s lives in Canada, craft workers have seen so-called ‘old jobs’ disappear from our bargaining unit.

If industry evolution creates new opportunities, so we must ask- where are all these ‘new jobs’ going?

The introduction of Fiber to the Home and Wireless Home Internet services created ‘new jobs’ across Ontario and Quebec with a workload that could sustain and grow the bargaining unit for years to come. Yet Bell Craft workers are not seeing any of these ‘new jobs’ being assigned to the bargaining unit.

Bell Canada assigned this work on new technology not only the company-created BTS and Expertech, but also to a host of external, non-union contractors and “authorized vendors” rather than to Bell Craft Technicians.

With no guarantees of work, and no history of assigning the work of the next generation technology, now is the time to secure a guaranteed future for Bell Craft technicians, and our work.

At the bargaining table, the company has yet to agree to any minimum staffing levels and/or the commitment of any current work being exclusive to the bargaining unit. This worrisome trend has been ongoing for almost three and a

half decades and it is unacceptable considering the central role the network we built plays into the daily lives of fellow Canadians.

The Continued Offshoring of Good Jobs

3/4/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 3 of 8.

There is no secret that Bell Canada has used offshore call centers for many years. Most people think of incoming customer calls for service or installation orders, but the work doesn't stop there.

Bell employs an estimated 7,00-10,000 offshore workers who do jobs that used to be done by Bell employees in Canada.

In addition to service and installation orders, offshore workers perform testing, trouble shooting, monitoring, and programming jobs that used to be done here, at home by Bell Craft Technicians.

These jobs were sent overseas to places such as Egypt, India, Tunisia, and the Philippines.

Not only is Bell exploiting low wages and insufficient labour laws, but the employees of their foreign call and test centers don't purchase the services we sell or contribute tax dollars to Canada's economy.

This ongoing trend of shipping good, unionized jobs overseas has been a major contributor to the shrinking of the craft bargaining unit, yet the company continues to refuse to protect even a portion of the work as guaranteed to remain here.

The Proliferation of Contracting Out

3/3/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 2 of 8.

The proliferation of contracting out began in small but noticeable ways, with jobs that were described as not "aligned with the core business" such as the digging of pits or pole replacement.

The company continues to chip away, bit by bit- with the formation of Expertech and what is now called BTS, to move away certain types of work. The formation of Progistix and Transervice saw the elimination of the auto mechanics and material handlers from the bargaining unit.

Bell has now begun eliminating certain tasks from the Craft Technicians. Central Offices see a regular flow of contractors in and out doing various types of work on our equipment, and Cable Encapsulated Pit work is now given first to a contractor to see if they can fix it before engaging the cable technician. L1 and L2 tests continue to see their work functions pushed more and more to the clerical bargaining unit.

Finally, the company claims the Outright Sales (ORS) System work has been eliminated in favour of the wholly owned BTC (Bell Total Connect) system. The ORS work is now claimed to be done by non-unionized

companies such as E-WEE, a plan sounding a lot like their 1990's NEWCO residential plans, which eventually led to the creation of BTS.

There are many more examples and these are just a few but there are so many that it begs the question, what will be left for us?

The Ongoing Diminishment of the Once Mighty Craft and Services Bargaining Unit

3/2/2021 -

Bell Craft Bargaining History, Issue 1 of 8

The Craft and Services Bargaining Unit included 20,000 members (15,000 Technicians and 5,000 Operators) in 1988. Where did Bell move the work?

The company consistently and drastically reduces the number of jobs in our unit, here's how.

Between 1994 and 1996 with the formation of Expertech (Formerly part of the Bell Construction Department) and the elimination of Residential Service Technicians which had been replaced by Newco/Entourage, as of July 1st 1999, the bargaining unit had shrank by almost 63% to 7,356 members.

When Bell purchased Entourage outright in 2005 they renamed it Bell Technical Solutions (BTS). Not only has Bell cut a huge volume of employees through spinning off residential technician work to BTS, now they have begun to accelerate the pushing away of business work performed by Bell Craft technicians.

In 2012, the Bell Craft unit had been reduced to 30% (4,546 members) of 1988 staffing levels, a trend that the company committed to stopping and levelling out at 2012 bargaining.

The premise was a new wage scale and more flexible job security would result in more hiring and a stabilization of the membership count. Unfortunately, these commitments were not honoured, and the trend continued into 2016 when we saw levels continue downward to 27% (3,987 members) of 1988 staffing levels.

The Craft Bargaining unit currently sat at 3,466 members as of August 31, 2020.

This is a reduction of 83% since 1988, and a stark reminder that for the next generation of craft workers, a good job, with good compensation and benefits will be even harder to find.

Frequent Retirement Incentive Offers helped pave the way for where we are today, but the reality it is the company that has not met their end of the bargain. Jobs have not returned, work is not being replaced and so the time to question our job security is far past due.

Bell, it's time for respect and job security for the Craft and Services Bargaining Unit.

Information Bulletin #10

2/26/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

The Bargaining Committee met on Tuesday via teleconference with the Local delegates from the various regions of our unit, Southwest, North/East, Quebec and the GTA. We spoke to them about how the Company's concessionary demands would undermine our priorities on jobs as well as job security. Furthermore, they were advised the decision to file a notice of dispute was not simply made because our demands were ignored, but because the concessionary demands would eventually lead to the elimination of the bargaining unit.

Once the Committee filed the notice of dispute on February 19th, a window opened until March 6th for the Company to file with the Canadian Industrial Relations Board an application to intervene over a lack of an agreement over Maintenance of Activities in the event of a lock out or strike.

On Wednesday, we held an all delegates call via Zoom with Unifor National lawyer Anthony Dale to explain to the Local delegates what this means for our bargaining unit moving forward. The Canadian Labour Code under section 87.4 mandates an agreement between the unit and the company must be concluded by either negotiated agreement or CIRB decision prior to the process moving forward and well before a lockout or strike can occur.

This does not mean negotiations cannot restart. If talks do resume we will advise the delegates of a change of bargaining status. Currently we are moving forward with an understanding the Company will apply to the Board, as negotiations have not proceeded sufficiently to solve the Maintenance of Activities issue, in regards to the number of employees needed to provide essential services without intervention.

If this does happen, the process could be delayed, which will directly affect bargaining timelines. The Committee stands ready to bargain, but not with ourselves. We recommend members reach out to their Locals for further clarification if needed.

As always, your patience and support is greatly appreciated.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #9

2/18/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

This week we expected from the Employer a change of course in their positioning in regards to our main issues. However, the Employer clearly never intended to address our job security concerns and even tried to get concessions. Faced with this impasse we have submitted a request for conciliation to the Employer.

Information meetings will be scheduled with your Delegates in order to review the situation and give them the necessary tools to be able to answer your questions.

At this point, solidarity and your continued support in this phase is paramount.

Your Committee will keep you informed of future developments.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #8

2/12/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Negotiations continued this week with the Company and as previously communicated, we will continue to bargain until we reach an impasse.

This week we clearly stated to the Employer, that if the Company does not move their position significantly in regards to our priorities, we will be obliged to file a notice of dispute which will initiate a conciliation procedure provided for by the Canadian Labour Code.

Stay tuned for upcoming communications and let's show solidarity.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #7

2/5/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Your Bargaining Committee remains engaged in negotiations with the Company via Zoom and will remain at the bargaining table until we reach a tentative agreement or find ourselves at an impasse. If either of those events occur, your Local Bargaining Delegates will be advised and a communication sent out informing the bargaining unit of the positional change.

The Committee is given strength by your continued patience and support.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #6

1/22/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Negotiations with the company have continued via Zoom for the past two weeks. Despite the challenges related to COVID, discussions are advancing at an adequate pace. We are working hard to reach a negotiated agreement.

Thank you for your support, it is of the utmost importance. Your committee will keep you informed of future developments.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #5

1/8/2021 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Negotiations with the Company continued this week via Zoom. The Union and the Company have finished exchanging proposals and completed negotiations of the non-monetary demands. Due to the provincial lockdown we will continue to meet via Zoom next week and begin monetary discussions. The Committee will keep you updated as the process unfolds.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #4

12/10/2020 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Negotiations with the Company continued this week in Ottawa via Zoom. The Union and the Company have exchanged proposals and have started to work through the non-monetary demands. We have engaged the Mobilization Committee, to distribute an educational document regarding the process of Federal Bargaining. We will continue to keep you updated as the process unfolds.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #3

11/30/2020 -

Sisters and Brothers,

As previously communicated, due to current government restrictions in the Toronto area, we have been forced to find an alternative location to begin negotiations with the Company. For the next three weeks your Bargaining Committee will be together at the National office in Ottawa and will begin negotiations with the Company via Zoom.

The parties have agreed to exchange proposals on Tuesday December 1st and begin formal negotiations on Wednesday December 2nd. We will continue to meet via Zoom until December 18th, at which point we will break for a period of two weeks.

After the Christmas break, we will resume bargaining (in person), at the Holiday Inn Waterfront in Peterborough, ON.

We appreciate your support and understanding as we continue to work through these difficult and unprecedented times. We will be sure to provide you with updates when necessary.

In Solidarity,

Your Bell Craft and Services Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #2

11/24/2020 -

Sisters and Brothers,

This letter is to inform you that due to current government restrictions in the Toronto area, we have been forced to find an alternative location to begin negotiations with the Company.

Negotiations, which were scheduled to begin in Toronto this week, have been temporarily postponed. We are currently working through the logistics regarding a new location and COVID-19 protocols, with a tentative date to begin on Tuesday December 1, 2020.

Your Bargaining Committee is looking forward to starting negotiations and will be sure to provide you with updates when necessary.

We appreciate your support and understanding as we continue to work through these difficult and unprecedented times.

In Solidarity,

Your Bell Craft and Services Bargaining Committee

Bell Craft and Services – Bargaining Bulletin # 1

10/30/2020 -

Sisters and Brothers,

Caucus

As new restrictions are being put in place on a daily/weekly basis, and to enable the Committee to move forward with Bargaining this fall, the following structure has been discussed and approved by the delegates, to be utilized in lieu of Caucus;

A series of meetings will be scheduled for the Bell Craft and Service delegates in lieu of Caucus. The proceedings of these Regional meetings will be based upon the Recommendation Document. The National Representatives and the Bargaining Committee in collaboration with the Unifor officers have met in Ottawa this week and have prepared the Recommendation Document.

A compilation of the demands received from the membership through the local unions, will be compiled for reference of the Bargaining Committee. Regional meetings will provide each Delegate with an opportunity to review all Local demands, the recommendation document, as well as, the ability to vote on and discuss the top 10 demands. The Delegates, using a point system, will determine the final package.

The Regional meetings will be held next week in Hunstville, London, Mississauga, Kingston and Sherbrooke and will be conducted over the course of 4 days, beginning Monday November 2nd.

Negotiations

Bargaining Dates and Location have been established as follows;

Location: Sheraton Centre - Toronto, ON

Dates: The parties will exchange proposals on November 24, 2020

Bargaining will then commence on November 25th and will continue each week Monday through Friday until the Christmas Break. We will then resume on January 4, 2021.

Your committee is looking forward to starting negotiations and will continue to provide you with updates when necessary.

In Solidarity,

Your Bell Craft and Services Bargaining Committee

Information Bulletin #1

7/14/2020 -

Brothers and Sisters,

We are all going through an unprecedented period and we sincerely hope that you and your families are well. For several months now, since the start of the confinement period, your Negotiating Committee has been holding weekly calls with representatives of the Company. The purpose of these calls is to identify and try to resolve as many of the issues you're experiencing as possible, in relation to Covid-19. Obviously on a few occasions, the parties have dealt with items which are typically general labour relations issues, however, nothing exhaustive since we have continued with our meetings of the joint labour relations committee, as per the collective agreement (4 per year).

It is important for us to update you on certain files, which are more problematic for us and which we deem necessary to share with you.

ORS PRODUCTS

It was in April 2020 that Bell Canada made the decision to stop selling PBX and electronic key system products to its customers. The existing contracts will be honoured and we will continue to do the work, however, this will not be extended. The Company's objective is to migrate its customers to Bell Total Connect products. Technician training has started and Bell has informed us that they will provide technician training as customer migration evolves on BTC products.

One of the problems we face, is that Bell is advising customers who want to continue with their ORS products, to refer to an external firm that will support this technology. We see this as a form of subcontracting, in the context where Bell tells its customers who to contact for support. The position of the Company is to the effect that it has decided to no longer sell the said product, and therefore this does not correspond to subcontracting. Please be aware that we are evaluating our options regarding this decision.

We also questioned the Company regarding the negative impact this decision may have on our jobs. Bell replied that it intends to migrate customers to the new BTC products and that the volume of work would always be present for our members, who are responsible for supporting these products. Any member in need, will receive the necessary training to support BTC products. We questioned the company as to whether they were considering a decrease or an increase in the volume of work related to this decision. Bell's answer is that the forecast for the BTC product is growing. Rest assured that we will be following this matter closely and that if any of you have information to share with us, please do not hesitate to speak to your respective delegates.

ADDITIONAL INTERNET CHARGES

As you can see, the various internet service providers in the country have made the decision to terminate the additional internet charges for all customers across the country. In general, this particular attention during the Covid period ended on June 30th. Once Bell made the announcement, we asked the Company if this would also apply to our members who currently work from home. Bell's response was "yes" and that from now on, employees would have to assume the difference in cost. Obviously, the cost will vary from member to member, depending on their plan. Of course, most of you have unlimited plans, with enough bandwidth to support applications for your work. However, some of you may have had to modify your plans accordingly, or rather have seen your bandwidth data far beyond your normal usage. We believe that the onus is on the employer to pay these fees. We have provisions in our collective agreement which clearly indicate that the costs related to telework are reimbursed by the Company. Thus far, Bell refuses to honor these provisions, arguing that the few dollars of difference that some of you may have are minimal, compared to the transportation costs saved for those who are teleworking.

During our last meeting, we notified the Company of our position, which is that a Bell employee should not have to contribute out of their own pocket. We intend to file the necessary grievances, with the objective of changing our employer's decision. Any member affected by this change should get in touch with their respective shop steward.

NEW PRODUCT: AUTO INSTALLATION FOR RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

As of July 14, 2020, Bell will offer its residential customers whose homes are connected to the Fiber Optic network the option of self-installation for Internet services. Our fear is quite simple, the negative impact it will have on the workload. It is difficult for us at the moment to quantify the impact that this will have on our members, however, Bell has estimated that out of the 18,000 or so connections expected by the end of December, that 4% of them would be done in auto installation mode. Of course, the technician will be responsible for configuring the receivers and the modem, but the installation will be carried out by the customer. As you can see, the real impact on our jobs can really

only be a negative one. Once again, we will closely monitor the development of this file and its potential impact on our jobs.

RUMOURS SURROUNDING NEGOTIATIONS

It has been brought to our attention, some of your directors have raised the possibility that there may be an agreement with Unifor, to extend our collective agreement for a period of one year. It is important that you know this has not been tabled and/or discussed with us and that this information is an unfounded rumor.

Our collective agreement will expire on November 30th. Obviously Covid-19 and the containment period which followed, has affected our preparations for negotiations, however, we will be working diligently in the fall to catch up and in accordance with all health and safety guidelines and restrictions. Our timeline may be changed, but the information circulating on a one-year extension agreement rumor is unfounded.

JULY JLRC CANCELLATION

As indicated above, we have an agreement in place that the members of the Negotiating Committee (Company and Union) are to meet at least 4 times a year to raise various issues that arise in our workplaces, which cannot be resolved by way of grievance. These meetings allow us to resolve issues as quickly as possible rather than waiting for the upcoming negotiations.

Bell Canada refused to grant the necessary travel and accommodation permissions for your bargaining agents, mainly alleging the following:

- Travel ban except in critical business situations;
- Prohibition to allow more than 3 people to meet in the same conference room.

The Negotiation Committee is 8 people for Unifor. The provincial authorities of Quebec and Ontario authorize a larger number for meetings. In Quebec, we can be up to a maximum of 50 people. In Ontario it's a maximum of 10 people outside of the Greater Toronto Area. The sanitary rules of our provincial authorities allow us to hold these meetings while respecting preventive measures. Bell Canada's position prevents us from defending your rights. Alternatively, videoconferencing tools combined with simultaneous translation services have been tried without much success. They are certainly practical for current meetings, but the nature of our meetings means that discussions require fluidity and an ability to consult, which these tools do not offer. Throughout this difficult period, the employees and representatives of the union greatly collaborated in maintaining the activities of this company. But when opportunities / suggestions to resolve our problems arise, Bell Canada outright rejects access to these important tools for our daily challenges. In other words, when it is good or makes sense for the Company, everything possible is done, however, when it is time to work for its employees, it is no longer possible. We are disappointed with the Company's position. For unionized workers in our certification unit, JLRC meetings are critical to the business. We will challenge this decision by way of grievance and we will continue to ensure that Bell Canada takes the Health and safety of our members seriously, while making the appropriate and/or necessary changes to our everyday working conditions. Since the beginning of this period, you have all demonstrated strength and shown exactly how resilient you can be and it's time Bell provides you with the recognition you deserve.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, we work for you. Your support is directly linked to our ability to influence Bell Canada's decisions. Thank you for your unwavering and continued support.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Committee

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