**Bonnie Robichaud Bursary 2021**

**Submitted by Danika Beaudin**

**What do you foresee as the role of organized Labour in the future?**

Covid-19 Pandemic, the words we will never forget. Who would have thought that every aspect of our life would be changed forever? This is showing how resilient we are and can be. We adapted to the changes at every step possible. This was not without challenges, and we will continue to face challenges along the way.

The unions, including PSAC and its Components had challenges prior to the Pandemic. Membership does not seem to be interested or understand the unions. I know the values of Unions, because I have lived in a family that understand its value. This is a challenge that the unions need to focus on to remain relevant to the diverse membership. For a new member, it is often unknown who is their union and to understand the structure.

To remain relevant, the Unions will need to be proactive in identifying the diversity in its membership, workplaces, regions. Diversity is in numerous form such as Diversity in Culture, Groups, location of Workplaces, Nature of the work being performed daily, Family status, etc. Which means a challenge in one location might or might not be the same in other areas.

Prior to the Pandemic, unions were trying to reach to membership by posting on bulletin boards. While it seemed to work for some, it certainly did not work for all. With the Pandemic, most members are now working from home, while others have continued to perform their duties from the workplace. The employers have continued to have contacts with their employees via electronic methods. The union needs to find a way to do the same. Tracking personal emails for "all" members has proven to be a real challenge for everybody. A suggestion would be to have a "live" access to an agent from the union on the website to assist members looking for information, or to update their profile. That way, the member could have a confirmation that someone is looking after them. It could be a great opportunity for the unions to gather personal emails and receive ideas on how to engage membership by hearing directly from membership what they are missing and looking for. Electronic Bulletin Boards could be an option for Unions on their website to promote education or feature events. While the website is already doing somewhat of a virtual board, the content is lost when there are numerous messages within a few days with all the same color scheme.

Another suggestion is that Education was usually delivered on weekends and in person. This method needs to continue; however, some modifications also need to happen. Members are working all week and need their weekend for family which we have heard again and again. Now that most membership have adapted to working and doing training online, it is something the Unions need to see the possibilities of doing the same. A balance of both would be possible and would benefit all. By doing online courses, the member could be doing it at their own rhythm on their own time and the Unions could quiz them at the end before giving them the certificate of completion. Another suggestion would be for the union to do follow ups with the members who took training to see how they have applied their new knowledge and to keep them engaged. The unions have offered numerous Webinars on specific topics during the Pandemic, those should continue with a variety of subjects with panelists or guests to share their expertise and knowledge.

Unions also need to be visible and participate in their communities. Participation in events is a great way to promote and gather support not only from membership but also from other unions, local businesses and other allies who support the same causes. By being consistent and visible, that is how we get to know each other, and we gather support instead of being reactive to a situation only when it happens. Solidarity could be built within our union but also with other unions by sharing the same concerns and fighting together for members' rights in the workplaces and in society in general.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am looking forward to being in a Unionized Workforce after my studies and will continue to be involved and encourage my colleagues, friends, and family to do the same now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Danika Beaudin