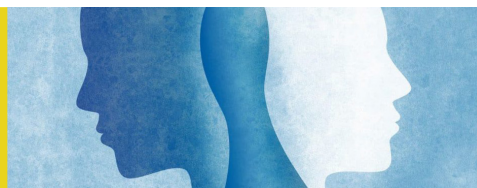




BCGEU Comp-Ten Report

AUGUST
2023



2023 COLA adjustment p.2 • Worker safety on public transit p.3 • Reopeners p.5
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Introducing SafeHighways: *Improving highway safety for everyone*

When it comes to our highways, addressing safety issues quickly and efficiently is critical. That's why our component has launched SafeHighways, a campaign focused on promptly resolving issues that could hinder safe travel as outlined in Schedule 1 of maintenance service agreements.

These agreements are part of the tendering and award process that all contractors agree to and the Schedule 1 Specifications can be found on the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) website. It's the ministry's responsibility to enforce these

specifications throughout the province and they have a process in place to monitor and address issues. However, as those of us working in the maintenance industry understand, road conditions are constantly changing, and deficiencies can arise in various locations and at different times.

That's where SafeHighways comes in. Our component deploys union-trained auditors to head out to the roads and identify safety issues. The information they gather is then sent to the ministry, allowing them to track timelines and maintain

quality control when addressing any required replacements, repairs, or deficiencies. This process not only ensures safer roads but also acts as a valuable check on the ministry's internal procedures.

We started this campaign in response to concerns voiced by our members and other stakeholders regarding deficiency processes and procedures. By implementing the auditing and reporting system facilitated by the BCGEU, the ministry now receives more comprehensive information about areas of concern, as well as those that are functioning well.

Our ultimate goal is to improve safety and minimize concerns related to deficiencies on our roads and bridges. Through SafeHighways, we aim to create a safer environment for everyone who relies on our highways.

*Rory Smith, Vice-President
Operational Services*

On the BCGEU Member Portal you can find your collective agreement or get news and updates.

**NOT SIGNED UP
YET?**

Visit my.bcgau.ca/signup to join today!



COLA MUST BE ADJUSTED TO IMPACTS OF PANDEMIC, INFLATION

Cost of Labour Adjustment (COLA) rates in highway maintenance and the electrical sector have historically produced good or above-average wage increases for workers. However, since the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis that followed, both the 2022 and 2023 COLAs have been disappointing. As a result, many members are struggling with large increases in all aspects of daily costs from gas and food to housing.

There have been many member questions about how the COLA formula works, how it has benefited us over time and what factors led to it falling short in recent years. The short answer is that COLA has fallen short because the wages they are based on have not kept up with inflation.

THE COLA GAP

While COLA increases have been greater than the rate of inflation as measured against the consumer price index (CPI) most years since 2005, this has not been the case over the last two years (and in particular this year). See the table comparing COLA increases with the Canadian and B.C. CPI.

The calculation for COLA is based on the industrial wages from the previous two years combined. For example, 2022's COLA was based on wage rates from 2021 and 2020 and this year's COLA was based on wage rates from 2022 and 2021. This reflects the formula agreed to in our collective agreements.

That said, the formula in the last two years has not produced the wage increases workers need to keep up with skyrocketing prices so we are asking government review the labour compensation for this year and increase the amount.

We have been proactive in discussing the 2023 COLA rates at tripartite, (meetings that include MOTI, Road Builders and the BCGEU). We made sure to highlight that recruitment and retention issues are tied to wages

and that this determines the long-term stability of the sector.

I was also able to raise the issue in discussion with Premier Eby. As mentioned in a recent bulletin, government has advised us they are now reviewing this information.

This doesn't come with any guarantees, and it is likely to take several months, but we will update members with any developments.

*Rory Smith, Vice-President
Operational Services*

CPI & COLA 2005 - 2023

	CPI Canada*	CPI B.C.*	Labour Index¹
Year	%	%	% (COLA calculation)
2005	2.2	2.02	4.04
2006	1.96	1.69	2.75
2007	2.2	1.76	3.29
2008	2.33	2.09	3.57
2009	0.26	0	3.74
2010	1.84	1.34	2.44
2011	2.92	2.37	1.18
2012	1.5	1.12	2.11
2013	0.9	-0.08	2.21
2014	1.95	1.02	2.5
2015	1.12	1.09	1.71
2016	1.42	1.83	1.82
2017	1.56	2.12	2.12
2018	2.3	2.72	2.62
2019	1.95	2.34	2.42
2020	0.74	0.76	2.26
2021	3.36	2.79	4.78

For the last 17 years, COLA ensured wages & benefits were 18.58% higher than the B.C. CPI and 8.27% higher than the Canadian CPI overall.

2022	6.78	6.91	3.26
2023			3.45
Totals	37.29	33.89	52.27

*CPI Canada and BC values are calculated based on Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0005-01 (formerly CANSIM 326-0021)

¹Labour Index: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0213-01 (formerly CANSIM 281-0039)

WORKER SAFETY ON PUBLIC TRANSIT

While public safety on B.C.'s transit system has been in the news recently, these concerns are not new. They have been raised continually at Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) committee meetings and at WorkSafeBC.

Recently, I had the opportunity to discuss these issues with Premier David Eby and asked for immediate action to support those members affected by the upsurge in violence.

Later in May, the BCGEU joined other unions at a meeting with Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Rob Fleming and Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit Dan Coulter to bring the workers' perspective forward as they assess how to support solutions.

All unions raised the issue of working alone as the most immediate concern.

We will continue to make the case to government, and to the employer, that ensuring workers are paired up for safety is a step we can and should take right away.

There was also recognition that transit workers are dealing with more than just violent crime. They're also on the frontlines of a public affected by the broader housing, opioid, drug toxicity and mental health crises. Solutions will only be successful if they address these underlying issues.

Overall, there was a strong sense of commitment at the table to find solutions to this pressing concern and we left feeling encouraged. Our union will continue to bring the worker perspective to future conversations as government takes action towards improving public and worker safety on our transit system.

*Rory Smith, Vice-President
Operational Services*

WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU

Component 10 members are facing many challenges, from the cost-of-living crisis to issues with working conditions.

We are surveying members about how to improve conditions and make the changes you want to see.

Take the survey here: <https://shorturl.at/hoqLP>

Please take the time to provide your input, responses will remain confidential.

**BC
forum**
www.bcforum.ca

The B.C. Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM) is a province-wide organization representing members or retirees aged 50+. The recognized voice for senior unionists in B.C., they also provide access to savings on extended health & dental plans, home and tenant insurance coverage and more.

Retiring members may request that their local/component cover the cost of an initial, one-time membership to BC FORUM.

www.bcforum.ca





WORKSITE VISITS

Worksite visits or member-to-member (M2M) meetings were difficult or impossible during the pandemic but since 2021, we've been getting back out there!

Last year we targeted six of the 12 locals across the province. We went to worksites in all those areas to discuss concerns with local chairs, workers as well as BCGEU staff. So far this year we have visited the other six locals and we are also doing other M2M visits when possible.

If you have not seen your component executive at your worksite and would like them to come by to discuss concerns, please reach out to your local chair or BCGEU area office and request a visit soon.

Get area office contact info here:
https://www.bcgau.ca/full_contact



Dease Lake yard visit May 30th. Left to right: Lana Vincent, Rory Smith, Dolly Davidson, Jeff Morgan, Dale Tashoots.



Terrace Yard S/A 26, May 29, 2023.



1009 Yard



1009 Yard

REOPENERS HELP US POSITION FOR BARGAINING

In recent months we have been negotiating reopeners with the road builders (contractors). Reopeners are a standard clause in all highway maintenance contracts that permit the reopening of a contract for new negotiations on a limited set of issues.

Because of this limited scope, we have had to exercise patience as well as manage expectations among members. We have also pushed back on employer requests for shift pattern changes and more flexibility around seniority. That said, our current negotiations have concentrated on three areas: bargaining unit work, contracting out and health benefits. Any other issues, which have been very limited, have been settled by mutual agreement.

Once reopener negotiations are agreed to at employer sessions, they are brought to a local meeting for approval (ratification) by members before becoming part of your collective agreement. To date we have ratified two collective agreements and have been inching our way towards a few more.

We recognize that members around the province are frustrated and have many concerns that require attention and action. These areas of concern cannot be ignored, and your provincial executive is doing everything possible to push employers as well as the Ministry of Transportation to address them. However, reopeners will only get us so far as we must abide by the terms of our collective agreements.

For this reason, I would like to stress as your provincial bargaining chair that now is the time to bargain in good faith with employers to ratify reopeners. Doing this will put us in the best position for negotiations in 2026/2027 when we can address our collective agreements in full.

I would also like to encourage members to volunteer some time to support your crews and your co-workers. We've had a great response at recent yard visits around boosting activism and signing up more shop stewards and yard contacts. Being part of a labor management team or on a safety committee is a rewarding experience. Each of these positions provides the opportunity to be booked off for the training and support you need to become capable and confident in the task.

We are planning more yard visits into the fall so please remember time is limited by your employer for each visit. We will be respectful of this so, I encourage you to be prepared to share your concerns by staying alert to upcoming bulletins and familiarizing yourself with your current collective agreement.

Finally, thank you to those committees that have met and engaged in the reopener bargaining process. Each of you plays a very important role in the continued safety and working conditions of your crews. Without committees and volunteers like yourselves, we would not be the proud industry of highway maintenance providers that we are.

*In solidarity,
John Cantlon
Provincial Bargaining Chair*

THE NEXT OHS CONFERENCE IS IN 2024

In 2022 we held our first Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) conference, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The conference was designed specifically for Component 10 members and addressed concerns and issues from around the province.

The Component 10 OHS committee is already discussing another conference for 2024 so keep an eye out for details and make sure you apply if you are a member of an OHS committee.



Our union's OHS department develops health and safety courses, trains worker facilitators, schedules courses, and supports their delivery. Overall, the BCGEU puts on almost 250 OHS courses and trains about 3,000 people each year.

Visit ohs.bcgcu.ca to find news, details about courses, and lots of useful OHS resources.

YOUR LOCAL CHAIR



When you have issues or concerns about work, do you reach out to your local chair?

Not only can they offer helpful advice, they also attend quarterly component meetings and can bring issues in your local forward to the provincial level. This is helpful because it may be that the challenge you are facing is part of a larger trend among our membership, and requires the support of the component executive to take corrective action.

Your component executive also creates action plans to respond to membership concerns identified through discussions with local chairs, during worksite visits, or identified and raised by staff.

To connect with your local chair, reach out to your local area office today.

Get area office contact info here: https://www.bcgeu.ca/full_contact



BLUE LIGHT PETITION

Earlier this year in March, over 400 members signed a petition created by our component calling on the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to allow flashing blue lights to be installed on highway maintenance operations vehicles.

In recent years amber lights on vehicles have become commonplace and we have seen too many accidents with our members. Blue flashing lights, in use in other Canadian provinces, have been shown to increase safety both to workers and to the traveling public.

In June the Alberta government initiated a one-year blue light pilot project permitting the use of flashing blue lights on tow trucks, support vehicles, government-contracted snowplows, and highway maintenance vehicles. After demonstrating their effectiveness, this project has now been extended to 2028 to increase visibility and safety for Alberta's roadside workers.

We are calling on the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

to permit a similar exemption by adding the use of flashing blue lights to Schedule "11" of the 2018-19 Highway Maintenance Agreement.

While the ministry has not yet responded, we will continue to advocate for this important change as part of our continued efforts to enhance the safety of crews and the public on B.C. highways.

2023 WILDFIRES

Letter from a member:

"I'm a member of the BCGEU with highway maintenance. Not only have the members with the wildfire branch been working tirelessly for months, there are many members involved in fire departments as volunteers. Many have been deployed to help with the fires and work very hard to save communities. My department rushed two members to Kelowna on August 18 to work 36 hours to fight the fires in Kelowna. I was one of the members taking time out of my holidays to help. I've been on a fire department for 33 years just to help people in need. Thanks."



Jade City yard visit. Left to right: Tim Dunk, Stephane Bourgoin, Frank Anderson, Rory Smith, Lana Vincent.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

MY EXPERIENCE AS A HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE WORKER

(Warning: Some of the following content could be disturbing or triggering).

The following experiences are mine and those of close co-workers. The intent of this article is to inform you about the incidents highways workers experience, the severe impact PTSD can have and the ways some have found to deal with it in their lives. There is help and many resources are now available. Counseling has become more recognized, acceptable, and available to our industry.

MY STORY

Like any typical fall morning as a highway maintenance worker, I got in my truck to do a short tour of road conditions. The only thing was this day was not going to be a typical day.

On Highway 97, known as the Alaska Highway, a family (mom, dad and three young kids) were making their way south near an infamous section of the road known to locals as a hazardous section of highway. That same morning a young man was headed north, loaded with equipment; my life changed this day. As they met on this section of highway the truck was speeding down the hill uncontrollably. To manage the corner, he cut to the inside just as the small van and young family were coming up the hill in their lane on the inside. The father driving the minivan hit the

ditch just as the driver of the truck had to take the ditch. The truck sandwiched the mini van to the cliff wall catching the underside and impacting the roof to the cliff. The impact was so violent, personal items were projected onto the highway and into the ditch.

As we did clean up, my coworker later said, "I will never forget picking up those kids shoes off the centre line." I felt the same, I will forever have the picture of kids' clothes in the ditch from a small suitcase that had broken open.

You know how many times through a 40-year career you see the underside of a vehicle in the ditch as a highway maintenance worker? Each and every time a quick picture comes to mind, but as bad habits go, I crank up some 80s tunes and change my picture. I knew very early in my career that it was unfair to take my bad days home to my family. They didn't need to hear about traumatic incidents and so I very rarely talked about my job to my wife or family. Those three young kids would be adults now with kids of their own.

Another time, I was on a night shift (overtime) and was desperately trying to stay ahead of a terrible blizzard to keep the roads open during the New Year's holiday.

We were tasked with keeping the snow from drifting, closing, or trapping people on the road. It was past midnight, and I was traveling 40-50 kilometres an hour with snow spewing off the frunk. The blowing wind made visibility nearly impossible. As I pushed my way down one road that was not passable to smaller vehicles, I felt I was saving the day opening the road and enabling travelers to make it home. At one point I got a very distinct feeling to slow down and over the top of my frunk, I saw some dim taillights over the top of a large drift. As I slowed and the snow dust settled, I saw a woman outside her small Ford Fiesta waving her hands back and forth. She had been stuck for some



WORK SAFE BC

If you've witnessed a traumatic workplace incident you can contact WorkSafeBC's Critical Incident Response program. It's free, voluntary and available seven days a week by calling 1-888-922-3700.

Source: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/contact-us/departments-and-services/critical-incident-response>

time and the drifts were covering her car making it barely visible to me except for the taillights. I shuddered to think what would have happened if I had hit her and her two teenaged kids in the car. Was it intuition that told me to slow down and stop?

MY CO-WORKERS' STORIES

My coworker was plowing the shoulder with a frink around a corner. An oncoming semi reefer van, carrying groceries, hit his brake then fishtailed into the path of my coworker. His plow went through the trailer like a can opener. He still sees the wall coming at him. He was injured and absent for months and carries an injury to this day.

Another coworker was on an early road patrol in a sand truck and noticed a car upside down in the ditch. He didn't notice any tracks in the snow coming from the overturned car. "After years of watching and being concerned with safety, we notice those things, even in passing" so he backed up and investigated. From the shoulder he yelled "hello" and heard a lady yell back, "get me out." All day his mind ran different scenarios and outcomes if he hadn't stopped. He later decided this wasn't the job for him and didn't want to be responsible for a possible mishap.

Each of these experiences represent what many of us experience as highway workers. The odds are the longer you do this job, the more you will definitely see. As a highway maintenance worker, we do not have the luxury of staying home when the roads are bad. We work long shifts as the roads

become worse and worse due to inclement weather. We also don't have the luxury of turning around or stopping short of an accident scene.

We are also frequently the first on site. We assist with flagging off an area, securing the site and making it safe for other commuters. No matter the conditions, when we are on shift, we know we will encounter disturbing situations. These facts don't seem to be at the forefront of the minds of those insisting we do our jobs.

All of us—labour management, occupational health and safety committees, employers, unions, and governments must make a greater effort to help individuals showing signs and symptoms of PTSD and understand the impact on their mental health. I can only speak from my personal experiences but when I know road conditions are sketchy, my first thought as a foreman is about the need to put more resources in place to ensure safety for the traveling public. When I send salt out, my thoughts are not about the expense but rather the increased safety for the traveling public.

I have been criticized because of my insistence on increasing resources or material by the employer. We must never apologize for insisting on the proper tools, materials, equipment or training to safely do our jobs! I will tirelessly and unapologetically pressure whomever and whenever for these outcomes. Not if, but when these incidents happen in our careers, it is critical we all do our part to help the coping process and healing to happen. We are all better off and safer with well

PTSD RESOURCES



People can endure a lot, but some experiences can be overwhelming. Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD is an illness that affects people who have directly experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. PTSD is part of a group of mental illnesses called trauma- and stressor-related disorders.

By visiting <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/post-traumatic-stress-disorder> you can learn more about:

- What is trauma?
- Who does it affect?
- What does PTSD look like?
- What can I do about it?
- Where do I go from here?

Source: HeretoHelp, a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Substance Use Information

trained and well-equipped workers maintaining our highways.

Each of our collective agreements includes access to our Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP). This benefit enables us to speak with qualified counselors that can help with healing and the tools we need for coping and getting back to work.

If you suffering from PTSD symptoms or you know of a co-worker that needs help, please reach out to your area office, your OHS representative or your local chair. We are here to help.

*In solidarity,
John Cantlon
Component 10 Treasurer, Operational Services*

RETIRED

/re'ti(e)rd/

1. The ability to do what I want when I want.

See also: 'Not my problem anymore'

Mike Jarvis

Service Area 24

Mike started in February 1987 and worked until May 2023, completing 36 years of service.

Kelly McDonald

Local 1006

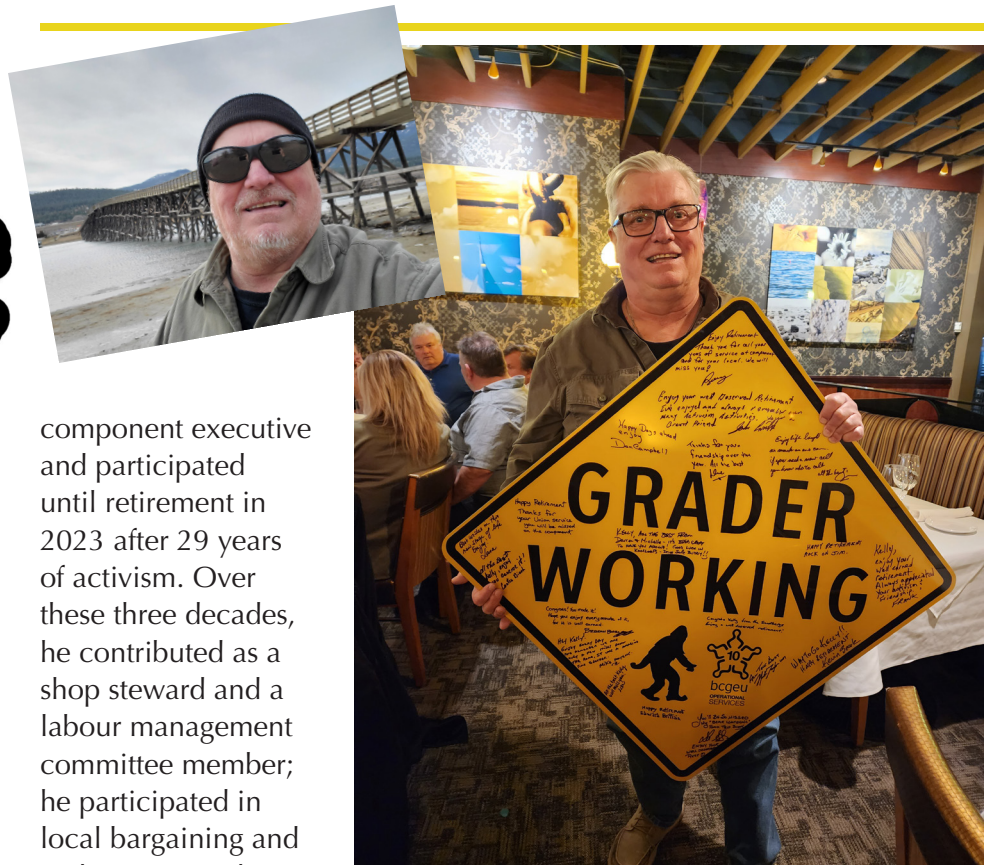
Kelly McDonald started working in highways in 1989 and retired in 2023 after 34 years of service. He worked on the road crew in Bridge Lake as a machine operator from 1989 to 1994 and after 1994, spent most of his time on the grader which he greatly enjoyed.

Starting out as a shop steward in 1994, Kelly was elected as local chair in 1995, sat on the

component executive and participated until retirement in 2023 after 29 years of activism. Over these three decades, he contributed as a shop steward and a labour management committee member; he participated in local bargaining and at the provincial main table bargaining; and he served on the component executive in all positions up to and including first vice. Kelly also served as a pension trustee and now sits as a retiree on the pension board. In 1997, Kelly started working on

this newsletter, the *Comp-Ten Report*, with others from the component, eventually taking over and producing it for 26 years.

Kelly worked diligently to ensure the concerns of the members reached component for discussion. Going on worksite visits



Kelly McDonald at his retirement party, March 2023

for decades, Kelly also attended and held local meetings whenever possible to share information and listen to the members.

Kelly will be missed by those of us that have had the privilege working and traveling with him. The relationships we build are important and we wish Kelly all the best in a well-deserved retirement. Live long and prosper my friend, I look forward to meeting up again soon.

Rory Smith, Vice-President
Operational Services

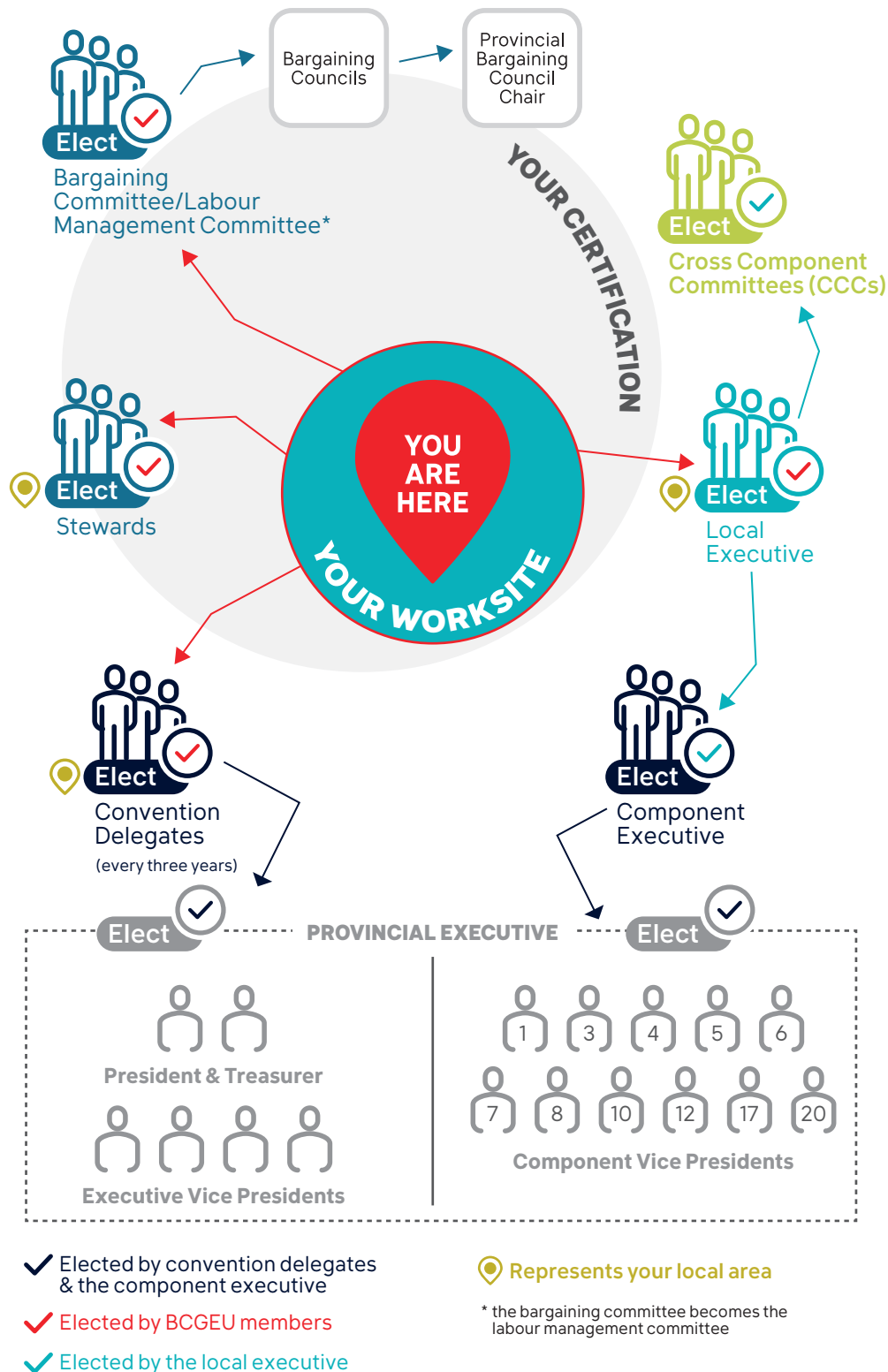


BC Highway 4 - Cameron Lake Bluffs Wildfire. Worker maintaining detour signage. B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure



Union structure

The diagram below illustrates where you fit into the overall union structure, and how stewards, bargaining councils and committees are elected along with the local executive, the component executive and finally the provincial executive.



WORD SEARCH - COMPONENT 10 CERTS

Bargaining reopeners

N J J B I D X G L O P D F I A V L Z A G S R P Z H P P Y I I
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AGREEMENTS
 BARGAINING
 BENEFITS
 BOOKLETS
 COLLECTIVE
 CONTRACTING
 COOPERATION
 MEMBER
 NEGOTIATION
 OPERATORS
 RATIFICATION
 ROADBUILDERS
 STAFF

COMPONENT 10 EXECUTIVE



**Vice
President**
 Rory Smith
 (Local 1004)



**1st Vice-
Chairperson**
 Lana Vincent
 (Local 1003)



**2nd Vice-
Chairperson**
 Earl Haward
 (Local 1012)



Treasurer
 John Cantlon
 (Local 1010)



**Recording
Secretary**
 Edward Brittain
 (Local 1012)

Members at large:

Curtis Biech (Local 1011)
 Brendan Borba (Local 1004)
 Danny Campbell (Local 1002)
 Jim Kastrukoff (Local 1009)
 Michelle McKenna (Local 1005)
 Joe Pendry (Local 1008)
 Kevin Searle (Local 1001)
 Mark Taylor (Local 1007)

For Component 10 Executive contact information go to: www.bcgeu.ca/component-10-executive

Story ideas and comments for the Comp-Ten Report
 can be submitted to Earl Haward at 1012@bcgeu.ca