

August 14, 2007

CUPE's response to Judy Rogers' letter to Vancouver's exempt staff

City Manager Judy Rogers' letter to exempt staff that was issued to media late Monday, August 13, 2007 is a complete mischaracterization of what happened during the most recent negotiations between the City of Vancouver and CUPE 15, CUPE 391 and CUPE 1004.

It is unfortunate that the City continues to resort to spinning the truth to the media rather than exerting their energy at the bargaining table. Judy Rogers took the time to write this letter, but never showed up herself at any of the CUPE bargaining tables. Perhaps that helps to explain why the account is completely inaccurate.

Besides Rogers, the other top decision maker on labour relations issues for the City of Vancouver, General Manager of Human Resources, Mike Zora was also not present at the bargaining table.

Please find below a list of some of the glaring inaccuracies in Ms. Rogers' statement:

- It is well known, and widely publicized in the media that it was CUPE that called the City of Vancouver back to the bargaining table, not the employer. In fact, it was CUPE 15 that booked and paid for the rooms for all locals and the employer.
- The City of Vancouver NEVER presented CUPE with a complete offer or counter-offer at the bargaining table. Instead they reviewed their last position the union's last position and gave the union a list of union issues which they clearly stated the City would simply NOT negotiate. The list includes the union's three major issues and is provided below.
- CUPE agreed at the bargaining table that the term would be 5 years for all locals and that the wage would match the regional settlement pattern. These claims of a 2 and 4-year CUPE demands are simply not true and are a total non-issue.
- Many of the City's major demands remain on the table. They neglected to mention what these are and that the City of Vancouver is the ONLY municipality in the region seeking these kinds of language and other concessions.
- CUPE willingly signed the Olympic Partnership Agreement in Richmond and made it clear to the employer that we would enter into discussions on the agreement as negotiations came closer to an end.
- CUPE never agreed that the media blackout could only be dropped mutually. CUPE lifted the media ban because it was so restrictive that it barred us from communicating even with our members who were optimistic that "no news was good news" and we felt

we could no longer continue without letting them know that there was actually no real progress being made at the table.

- On the day the media blackout was lifted, CUPE had been waiting the entire day to hear back from the employer, who told us at 10:30 a.m. that they would get back to us regarding their position regarding locals 15 and 391 as "soon as they have finished up their caucus". We finally broke the media ban at 5:00 p.m. after waiting yet another day to get called to the table with no progress.
- The proposed rally was being organized by CUPE members who (due to the media blackout) assumed that negotiations might be concluded by Friday (day of rally). They did not inform the union leadership and the employer knew about it (we saw that a leaflet was faxed to the City) before we did. The City did not express any dissatisfaction with the potential event at the time.
- The GVRD Labour Relations Bureau has been undermined and deemed ineffective by its own actions, not by anything that CUPE has said or done.
- The UNION ISSUES of CUPE 15, CUPE 391 and CUPE 1004 are comparable to issues addressed in the regional settlement pattern. Please see www.fairnessforcivicworkers.ca for a complete list of details of the recent contracts ratified.

List of items the City of Vancouver said were NON-NEGOTIABLE.

Many of these items were actually NEGOTIATED in other regional settlements (i.e. Burnaby, Richmond, Delta and North Vancouver).

The employer's exact words expressed through GVRD Labour Relations Bureau negotiator Richard Scott on August 6, 2007 at 5:05 p.m. at the bargaining table were that "*these are things that WILL NOT be in the collective agreement*". We cannot reach an agreement with an employer who says they will not negotiate any of our union issues. The reason why deals were made in Richmond, Surrey, Delta, Burnaby and North Vancouver is because the union's unique issues were addressed at the bargaining table.

CUPE 15 (Vancouver inside workers)

- issue of no layoffs for duration of contract
- exclusions (expand def'n bargaining unit work)
- increments (union wants to reduce length of wage increments)
- vacation improvements (for current bargaining unit members)
- significant benefit improvements
- changes to sick-leave plan (no improvements)
- 9 day fortnight (like in Richmond deal)
- posting and filling vacancy issues (union seeking more accountability)
- union workload issue
- whistleblower protection language
- harassment resolution language

* CUPE 15 counter-offers included dropping six of these items and providing a full proposal on all remaining issues.

CUPE 1004 (Vancouver outside workers)

- whistleblower protection language
- significant benefits
- cemetery issue (premium union seeking re: work where contacting bones or body parts)
- gratuity pay
- union jurisdiction language
- indexing LTD (long term disability)
- amendments to the sick leave plan
- our issue on the posting language
- conversion of temporary full-time employees to permanent
- threshold ability clause – language that says where two workers are of equal skill and ability, the senior applicant gets the job
- rest break (union request to put existing 15 min coffee breaks in agreement)
- vacation improvements
- equipment greasing issues
- OT shift assignment wording

** CUPE 1004 counterproposal included dropping six of these items, and providing a full proposal on all remaining issues.*

CUPE 391 (Vancouver Public Library)

- Pay equity and job evaluation
- Job security
- Scheduling by seniority
- Vacation improvements
- Significant benefit improvements
- Any issues on part-time benefits
- Payment for doctors notes
- Increments (union wants to reduce length of wage increments)

**CUPE 391 continues to try and achieve a number of these goals as they represent an already substantially pared down offer.*

A certain way to scuttle negotiations is to state that you WILL NOT discuss and/or negotiate any of the issues that one party presents at the table – especially when these issues are normal, reasonable and within what has been negotiated in the regional settlement pattern.