



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
BRITISH COLUMBIA DIVISION

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July 6, 2004

***An Open Letter to the Members of Local 339, City of Nelson***

Brothers and Sisters:

I know you are all frustrated at being locked out by the City of Nelson. You would far rather be providing services to your community than standing on a picket line. Your determination to stick it out, in the face of that frustration, deserves our congratulations and our thanks.

This week, our water and wastewater workers deserve particular thanks from us, and from the public they are trained to protect. Despite bitterness and anger at the councillors and management who have locked them out, Jim Cavers and his crew immediately put aside their differences when they learned the community was threatened by a public health catastrophe.

Twice in the past week water safety has been seriously endangered by the continuing lockout of our members. Three weeks of reduced work hours had overloaded the sewage treatment plant, allowing effluence with high levels of coliforms to be released into Kootenay Lake. The presence of coliforms indicates possible contamination with disease causing organisms. Our workers immediately volunteered to extend their service hours to ensure the digesters are operating safely. A day earlier, the same workers narrowly averted a raw sewage spill into the Kootenay River across from Lakeside Park.

The effects of shutting down City Services are not usually as dangerous or dramatic as this near miss. However, they are cumulative – the longer we are locked out, the more likely the effects will add up to another disaster. For water, things can only get worse as we progress through the hot summer months. You can be assured that we will do all we can to assure that such instances do not occur, and we're hopeful that city council will do the same.

It is time for the City to stop playing roulette with the health and safety of your community. It is time for them to get serious about reaching a fair agreement. It is time they let Jim Cavers and his crew, and all the other dedicated and skilled workers in Nelson, get back on the job.

Again, thank you to each and every one of you. Myself, Sister Colleen Jordan, the BC Provincial Executive, and most importantly, the 70,000 members of CUPE are behind and beside you every step of the way. I am receiving calls and correspondence from the Alberta Federation, CUPE Alberta, labour councils in Washington, the AFL-CIO, as well other Trade Unions in Western Canada who pledge their support to you and your struggle.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry O'Neill', written in a cursive style.

Barry O'Neill  
President  
CUPE BC Division