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Union to fight ‘shameful’ closure of VPL bindery: O’Neill

BURNABY—CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill says a decision late yesterday to close Canada’s only in-house public library bindery is a disgrace to the Vancouver Public Library board members who voted to close it down.

“This shameful decision shows that the board is totally out of touch with the public good and community values,” said O’Neill. “Why are we shutting down a service that we should be proud of providing? This is just plain ideology at work here.”

“I also find it unconscionable that a senior manager with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—itself a much-beloved public service that’s facing increasing privatization—would cast the swing vote that, in effect, sends the bindery into oblivion.”

O’Neill was referring to the fact that VPL board chair Joan Andersen, who works as the CBC’s regional director for English Radio, cast the vote that narrowly defeated a motion that would have kept the bindery, located at the VPL’s Central branch, running in-house.

“The board was fully aware that the bindery was cost-effective, and had proven to be so,” O’Neill continued. “But I gather that the ‘no’ crowd felt it was more than their time was worth to revisit this decision in the future. Well, isn’t that a board member’s duty?”

The 7-6 vote followed two and a half hours of presentations dominated by passionate appeals from members of the general public, library patrons, BC Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair and CUPE 391 activists not to close the bindery. After the vote, cries of “shame” greeted board members from the more than 150 people who had crammed into the seventh-floor support staff lounge at the VPL’s Central branch to support the bindery.

An amendment to the motion ensures that no lay-offs will result from the bindery’s closure and calls for library management to work with CUPE 391 to relocate the 5.8 affected positions within the VPL system “at comparable wages”.

Meanwhile, CUPE 391 says the fight to save the bindery does not end with the vote.

The Local is encouraging library patrons and other concerned members of the public to write or e-mail the library board. Letters can be sent to Vancouver Public Library board, 350 West Georgia, Vancouver B.C., V6B 6B1. E-mails can go to board@vpl.ca.

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