

June 30, 2023

Greeting CCLC Unifor members

I cannot believe that we are in the process of negotiating **our second collective agreement**. Much has happened since we unionized, and I would like to take this opportunity to pause and reflect on everything we have accomplished so far.

Being in a union has enabled CCLC employees to come together as a **united voice**. If you have been at the CCLC as long as some of us have, how many times did you try to get a salary increase and got nowhere? How many times did you try to speak up and felt unheard? We have **collective power** now.

CCLC is a social justice organization. Have you ever pondered what this means? In simple words, social justice is about having equal rights, opportunity and treatment. The example should start at home and having a union makes it all more achievable. Our collective agreement is our best tool against discrimination, unfair treatment, favoritism, arbitrary hirings or layoffs and so much more! **The rules are in writing and CCLC is bound by them.**

**Many of you may wonder what the union have done for me at CCLC.** Let me start by saying that your elected steward team has worked tirelessly on your behalf (usually behind closed doors as we are bound by confidentiality and on numerous occasions, after working hours). **It is an unpaid position** and a vital one as our ultimate **goal is to build a healthier & better workplace for all CCLC members.**

Still want **examples**, I understand. Here are a few:

- 1) Unionized job postings: jobs within the bargaining unit need first to be posted internally. This means that our members have “priority” if they have the skill, ability, qualifications, and seniority required for the job. **So, if you switched jobs internally within the last two years and a half, you benefitted from this new rule in our collective agreement.**
- 2) Terminations and layoffs: in the past if a position lost its funding, the employee’s position would be terminated. **Now, thanks to our collective agreement, we have a fair and more objective decision procedure based on seniority.**
- 3) Pay equity: the union conducted a review of CCLC pay equity plan, identified pay gaps and successfully negotiated **pay equity retro-payments** for eligible employees. This resulted in many CCLC employees receiving a lump sum payment. **Would you have been able to get a retro-payment had we not been unionized?**
- 4) Permanent vs. temporary positions: we have been advocating for temporary positions to become permanent after a certain period of time. **Permanent positions offer better job security, seniority, pension, and benefits.**
- 5) Client harassment: Article 24.05 of our Collective Agreement establishes that “*abuse and/or threatening behavior by clients is not tolerated*”. A harassment-free environment is key for a healthy and happy workplace. **CCLC employees deserve**

**dignity and respect. Our collective bargaining contains provisions that deal with client harassment and CCLC cannot look the other way.**

- 6) **Discipline:** we have protection in our collective agreement. **Remember that if you are called to a fact finding or disciplinary meeting, you have the right to have a steward present.** You also have the right to know the subject of the meeting and to consult with a steward prior to it.
- 7) **Accommodations:** we successfully assisted several employees with their accommodation requests.
- 8) **Health and Safety:** we now have two certified health and safety union representatives. Inspections of the workplace are to be conducted at least once per month. Have a safety or health concern? You don't have to wait for accidents to happen. Talk to your health and safety union representative today!
- 9) **Accidents in the workplace:** we are educating managers and employees alike. If you had a workplace accident, you need to report it. If you need further treatment, your manager should not be telling you to take sick days. There is a procedure in place. Unsure? Talk to us!
- 10) **Wage grid:** the CBA played a crucial role in standardizing CCLC's compensation practices and implementing annual wage increases upon ratification, in April 2021, in April 2022 and for years of service. The wage grid ensures fair and unbiased compensation for all employees while promoting transparency, equity, and fairness.

**Members also have questions about union dues. Let me explain.** Union dues are tax deductible, are paid to support our bargaining unit and the union. The dues play a central role in ensuring the union's effectiveness and ability to represent and advocate for members. The union -through the bargaining team- negotiates on behalf of all unionized employees, pooling members' interests and resources together, increasing our chance of achieving better outcomes. **Would you be able to do that if it was just you?**

Union dues also go to support member services (providing legal representation, assistance with grievances or workplace disputes all the way up to arbitration). Among other things, they pay your stewards' and your health and safety reps' training, sustain the union's operations and the strike fund.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your trust and support. We have made significant strides over the past two and a half years, and it is through your active participation and engagement that we were able to bring change at the CCLC. We could not have come this far without you.

We also know that our work is not done and there is still lots to do. That is why your union reps, your bargaining team and Unifor remain committed to the task at hand and will continue to work tirelessly on your behalf.

In solidarity

Deb Szelepski

