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Hold on to Your Pagers

In 2015, the volunteer firefighters of the Village of Andrew, Alberta, resigned en masse. The cause for their discontent was the demotion of their chief and poor communication between the volunteers and the village's decision makers.

When management or elected officials make unpopular decisions, volunteers without a union may feel that a mass resignation is all that can be done. Dropping off a box of pagers is sure to catch the attention of city councillors and the public. If it goes well, it can serve as a wake-up call. But it can be a risky play that may jeopardize and anger the community. Even when it works, it's not a tactic that can be used often.

CLAC members have several tools at their disposal, which can be more effective than a team resignation. The first and most significant is negotiations. Collective bargaining is regulated by the *Ontario Labour Relations Act*, which demands that both parties conduct themselves in good faith. Unionized volunteers can expect fair treatment at the table. Before negotiations, CLAC members compile a list of requests and complaints. They bargain an agreement that all parties agree will define their relationship. Bargaining causes dialogue about the future direction and culture of a department.

Another tool is binding arbitration. If a party believes the contract or an employment law has been violated, they can refer the dispute to a third party for binding resolution.

The most valuable tool is the labour management committee. Each collective agreement establishes a committee of volunteer and administration representatives. These meetings offer an opportunity to discuss ideas, solve challenges, think creatively, and address small matters that could fester into big problems.

These tools don't guarantee that everything will go our way. But they are more effective in solving problems in a way that benefits volunteers and doesn't fracture relationships with the community. It's why so many volunteers have joined CLAC.

Ian DeWaard, Cambridge Regional Director



Presentation at Queens Park



Ian DeWaard at Queens Park

On November 26, 2015, Ian DeWaard, CLAC regional director, went before the Standing Committee of Justice in support of Bill 109, *Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act*. This bill will amend Part IX of the *Fire Protection Prevention Act, 1997* (FPPA) by providing full-time firefighters with tools that have long existed for workers who are covered by the *Labour Relations Act, 1995*.

The bill also says that a union may not expel someone from membership to cause them to be terminated from their employment as a firefighter, simply because that person is a member of another union (such as CLAC) or because they have engaged in reasonable dissent.

“CLAC has made repeated calls for a legislative solution over the years, and we’re very pleased that this government is prepared to act boldly on what has been a contentious issue,” says DeWaard.

Local 920 Board Report



Local Board 920 and reps - Martin Pilon, J.D. Alkema (CLAC rep), Chris Empey, Paul Leggatt, Marc Morin, Jamie Meyer, Mike Knowles, Jeff Wemyss, Brendan Kooy (CLAC rep)

On October 16 and 17, 2015, elected officials of Local 920 met at the Ontario Fire College (OFC) in Gravenhurst. The local officials are volunteer firefighters who are responsible for the operation of the local, its finances, staff, and provincial initiatives. The highlight of the weekend was a tour of the fire college grounds by board member and OFC trainer Jamie Meyer. The official business of the board included:

1. Appointment of board officers

Role	Member	Term Expiry
President	Mike Knowles (Quinte West)	2017
Vice-President	Jeff Wemyss (Quinte West)	2016
Secretary	Chris Empey (Kawartha Lakes)	2016
Treasurer	Jamie Meyer (Sudbury)	2018
Assistant Secretary Treasurer	Dave MacMullen (Belleville)	2018
Member at Large	Martin Pilon (Clarence Rockland)	2017
Member at Large	Marc Morin (Sudbury)	2018

2. Local board representation - The board adopted a bylaw that will ensure every department in the local may appoint at least one delegate to the board, and two if the department has more than 100 volunteers.

3. General membership meeting - The board decided to schedule two meetings per year. The spring meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual general membership meeting.

4. Local name change - The local is proposing to change the official name of the local to “Ontario’s Volunteer Firefighter Association, CLAC Local 920.” The proposal will be put to the membership for decision.

5. Review of organizations - The board reviewed the organizations that it and the members supported this year, including Fire Service Women of Ontario, Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and Firefighters without Borders.

Rival Organization—Who, Us?

Over the years, CLAC has had its run-ins with leaders of the Ontario Professional Firefighters Association (OPFFA). Most often, disagreements arise when CLAC responds to attempts to unnecessarily expand the reach of full-time responders into emergency response areas that are already well-served by volunteers.

CLAC has also been an outspoken supporter of two-hatters, calling on the government to introduce legislation that will protect firefighters who are employed by one municipality and who volunteer in their hometown. This legislative protection is necessary because since 2001, the OPFFA has been expelling (or threatening to expel) any OPFFA member who is caught volunteering. OPFFA can then demand that the non-member be terminated from his full-time firefighter employment.

In fact, CLAC first decided to represent volunteers after OPFFA would not represent them. When asked why they would not welcome volunteers into their union, a former OPFFA president wrote in the fall 2004 issue of their magazine, *Intrepid*, that it would be “impossible to effectively represent a group that you are attempting to eliminate.”

It is no surprise that OPFFA does not like CLAC, which in recent years has grown to represent more than 1,200 volunteer firefighters in Ontario. Recently, OPFFA took further steps to express its displeasure at having to contend with CLAC’s voice on issues affecting the fire service.

In September, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) was prompted by OPFFA to declare CLAC a “rival organization” under Article XV Section 2 of the IAFF constitution.

It is grounds for a charge of misconduct for a member to be found “advocating or encouraging any . . . rival organization, or acquiring or maintaining membership in any such rival organization.” Charges can lead to expulsion from membership in the IAFF.

Will this impact you? No. This declaration should have no impact on CLAC members, because they already enjoy charter protection that would limit governments (municipal employers) from discrimination in employment because of CLAC membership.

The IAFF and OPFFA do not have authority to strip CLAC members of the fundamental freedom of association that is guaranteed by Canada’s constitution. As well, union members already enjoy protection from the *Labour Relations Act*, which provides that no worker can be fired or refused employment because of membership in a trade union. Amendments to the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* (FPPA) that are part of Bill 109, recently adopted into law by Queen’s Park, will further cement this protection for full-time firefighters.

CLAC members should have no reason for concern, and they can trust that CLAC will continue to be a bold, outspoken advocate for volunteer firefighters in Ontario.

Ontario’s Firefighters

455

fire departments in Ontario

433

departments served by volunteers (95%)

227

departments served exclusively by volunteers (50%)

196

departments served by both volunteers and career firefighters (43%)

19,363

volunteer firefighters serve the province, which accounts for 63% of all firefighters in Ontario

Source: Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services – Data Current as of Oct. 22, 2015.

WHMIS Has Changed!

Get recertified through CLAC!

Federal WHMIS legislation has been amended to align with the Globally Harmonized System for Classifying and Labeling Chemicals (GHS). CLAC has developed a new online course to ensure you are up-to-date on the new standards.

This course is free to CLAC members employed by bargaining units that participate in the training fund.

Visit clac.ca/whmis2015 to register and learn more.

Helping Our Communities



In November and December, Local 911 members who are part of the Greater Hamilton Volunteer Firefighters conducted food drives throughout the Hamilton area in support of local food banks. Pictured is the Stoney Creek food drive on November 14, which collected four tonnes of food, and \$1,300 in cash donations.



Scholarship Winner



Congratulations to Jesse Jones (centre) on winning a 2015 CLAC scholarship. Jesse is studying to be a paramedic. His dad, Steve (left), is a Local 920 member employed by the City of Quinte West, Station 6. Local 920 president Mike Knowles presented the \$1,500 cheque to Jesse. To learn more about CLAC scholarships, visit clac.ca/scholarships.

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CLAC News is published semi-annually by CLAC for members working as volunteer firefighters and emergency services personnel in Ontario.

Formed in 1952, CLAC is one of Canada's fastest-growing unions. Operating through 15 member centres, it is the country's largest national, independent, multi-sector union representing over 60,000 workers in almost every sector. Based on values of respect, dignity, and fairness, CLAC is committed to building better workplaces, better communities, and better lives.

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CLAC
better together