

Mandate of the Committee

As per the November 2017 general membership meeting, the mandate of the committee was to explore the continuation of the second paid position for the local which was approved at the January 2017 membership meeting, and propose any necessary changes if continued.

Committee Members

Robert Cadigan, Christine Gillard (executive), Christine Gollop (executive), Shawn Organ (executive), Steve Smith, Bobbie Whelan

Strategy and Timeline for Committee

The timelines below reflect the overall approach of the committee to reviewing the second paid position. While it was originally proposed that the committee would organize in-person drop-in sessions for members, due to the logistical difficulty in organizing drop-in sessions, these sessions were not conducted by the committee. This could be an assessment tool for consideration for any future committee on paid positions.

Nov. 30 – Dec. 14: Preliminary assessment of committee, assign committee chairs, discussion of committee strategy, meet with president

Jan. 3 – 20: Develop strategy and timelines

Jan. 21 – 27: Research issue (meet with former leadership) and Develop Assessment Tools (membership surveys)

Jan. 28 – Feb. 3: Research issue (meet with former leadership) and Develop Assessment Tools (membership surveys, face-to-face sessions)

Feb. 4 – 10: Send membership survey

Feb. 11 – 17: Research Issue (meet with current leadership)

Feb. 18 – 24: Membership drop-in sessions (in-person discussions with members during semester break)

Feb. 24: Deadline for Feedback

Feb. 25 – Mar 3: Review Feedback and Deliberate

Mar. 4 – 10: Construct Recommendation

March 13: Present recommendation at membership meeting

Results and Discussion

In meeting its mandate, the committee identified five key areas for study before making any of its recommendations. These areas were: (1) Leadership structure; (2) Operation of other locals versus our local; (3) The history of our local with respect to paid positions; (4) the impact of our second paid position to date; and (5) Membership feedback. A summary of the results associated with the study into these key areas are as follows:

1.) Leadership structure

- a. Executive boards are the governing leadership bodies of locals and typically consist of:
 - i. President
 - ii. Vice President(s)
 - iii. Secretary Treasurer
 - iv. Recording Secretary
 - v. Correspondence Secretary
 - vi. Sergeant at Arms

- b. From the committee's research on the executive leadership structure, it was found that both the president and secretary treasurer positions were the harder positions to fill, they had the largest workload, and they were arguably the positions of higher impact on the local. In fact, in smaller locals, it was discovered that the secretary treasurer's position had more work than the president's position.

2.) Operation of Other Locals versus Our Local

- a. The committee conducted interviews with the current and former leadership of our local, as well as with leadership from other locals in order to ascertain how locals typically operate and how this local operated in the past.

- b. The committee found that other locals operate through a volunteer or share model where every task is completed by those who volunteer their spare time to complete it. This includes all tasks ranging from clerical work to work associated with representing members for all types of issues.

- c. From the committee's research, the committee found that while other locals operate on a volunteer model, this model is neither efficient nor effective for our local due to an inadequate volunteer base relative to the size of our local. This is related to the dependency of the volunteer model on a high number of well-trained volunteers. In addition, this is related to the effectiveness of volunteers to operate in a state of fatigue and mental stress as volunteers would have to address our locals' issues or complete tasks while managing the stresses and workload of their own jobs.
 - i. From the committee's discussions with the NL local comparable in size to our own, it was discovered that they have difficulty keeping up with the workload, they constantly miss things, and member issues get unresolved. They also stated that they have a major concern with respect to member privacy and confidentiality as they have to constantly conduct union business in their own work space. In fact, it was discovered that this local is in the process of moving towards having a paid executive position and is looking towards our local for leadership as they make this transition.

 - ii. From the committees discussions with current and former local leadership, it was discovered that prior to having a paid position, things were constantly missed and it was difficult keeping track of member issues and grievances. Since having a paid position, the local has operated more efficiently in addressing member issues and the local has had stability in leadership. Many grievances that were on the books for some time are getting addressed while the number of grievances moved forward today are decreasing as issues are being resolved by our leadership prior to being moved to a full grievance.

3.) History of Our Local with Paid Positions

The committee found it difficult to determine the impact of paid positions on locals in NL as we are the only local in the province to have such positions. The committee did not have the time to conduct a global analysis of the impact of paid positions on locals throughout cupe in the country. This could be an objective of a future committee on paid positions. Although such an analysis would be valuable, it would not capture the uniqueness associated with our region in the country, which face different issues and concerns than those in other parts of the country. The only point of comparison the local could find was within our own local and was associated with our paid president. So, why did the local move towards having a paid president? What was its impact? What can we learn? To be clear, the committee is not reviewing the president's position. The committee is simply studying the only paid position known by the committee to be in a local in this province in an attempt to extrapolate knowledge regarding paid positions.

a. Why did the local move towards having a paid president?

- i. In the past, the majority of issues (especially those issues requiring a shop steward) were dealt with by the president as members expect the president to deal with their issues directly. It was discovered that former presidents were constantly overworked. In the past, presidents had stepped down multiple times due to the stress associated with completing the duties of president in addition to managing the stress and workload of their own job. This was not a unique characteristic of our local and it is still an issue faced by other locals today without a paid president. Overall, as a local, we moved towards having a paid president to add stability to our leadership and to ensure that members' issues were addressed directly and not missed.

b. What has been the impact of having a paid position?

- i. Since having a paid president, it was discovered that the local has operated more efficiently in addressing member issues and the local now has stability in terms of the presidency. With this statement, this does not mean that ALL member issues and concerns get addressed. It means that less of them get missed. Moreover, this does not mean that what a member expects to happen and by what time necessarily happen.
- ii. In terms of member engagement, it was discovered that there wasn't an appreciable change in member involvement as a result of a paid president. It was discovered that there were people who stopped being involved but this was due to them being exhausted from previous involvement. It was discovered that the number of active shop stewards prior to having a paid president was only 2-3, which is actually less than or the same as now. However, the level of detail and training required for being a shop steward now is more than that in the past.

c. What can we learn?

- i. Similar to the president's position in the past, our local struggles with maintaining a secretary treasurer. This is concerning as this position deals directly with our finances. For example, over the past two years, we have had three secretary treasurers, of whom; two had stepped down within the past year. This is attributed to the workload associated with the position, and the difficulties associated with being an unofficial accountant. This is not a unique problem to our local and it is a problem faced by other locals.

4.) Impact of our second paid position to date

- a. In researching the impact of our second position on our local to date, it was found that the cupe office is more responsive to member inquiries. There has been an increase in the number of calls and emails to the office in conjunction with a faster response to these inquiries. Moreover, the number of members on the local's listserv has increased from approximately 200 to over 500. This may be correlated to increased member engagement; however, the number of volunteers has not changed. This is more than likely a reflection of the fiscal climate within the university and the province, which has led to a feeling of increased job insecurity.
- b. In researching the impact of our second paid position on the president and the rest of the executive, the second paid position to date has reduced the stress levels of the president and the rest of the executive. This has resulted in an increased focus on other important issues, such as pensions and redundancies.
- c. The committee found that the files kept by the local are better organized and are still continually being updated. There is currently a push to digitize all local files which would be very valuable to current and future leadership in its decision-making.

5.) Membership Feedback

- a. The committee conducted interviews with current and former executive members. The committee also surveyed the membership by sending a survey asking three questions to all (approximately 900) members of the local. The survey was sent through the local's listserv and via print to the internal mailing address of each member.
- b. Approximately 5% of the membership (or 45 members out of approximately 900) responded to the membership survey. The distribution of responses was evenly distributed among being in favour of a second paid position, not in favour of a second paid position, and undecided.
 - i. The committee reviewed all feedback received through the membership survey regarding the second paid position and agreed to use this feedback as a guide for items to address in the final recommendation of the committee to the membership. The committee agreed that extrapolating a consensus from the membership on the second paid position based on a 5% participation in the membership survey is not statistically valid.
 - ii. Through the feedback received by the survey, there were issues identified by members which were outside of the objective of the committee. These issues were items which the committee agreed needed to be addressed by leadership. These issues included dues levels, membership engagement, and membership communication.