

# UNION MATTERS

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*My local works  
because I participate*

Date and time of  
General Membership  
meetings are posted  
at each worksite and  
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**"The role of a labor union is to ensure that the balance is not tipped in favor of the employer when employees do not receive wages and benefits commensurate with their contribution"**

~ William Burrus ~



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## President's Podium

### Exploitation of Precarious Workers and Volunteers

The issue of massive growth in the number of volunteers at the Calgary Public Library (CPL) is of grievous importance to your union and should and must be of importance to the membership of CUPE Local 1169. The number of volunteers at the CPL is staggering in comparison to the number of paid employees. Currently, CPL boasts of over 2,400 volunteers compared to a workforce comprised of both unionized and non-unionized employees of approximately 1,200. As your President it is my responsibility to ensure that there is no cross over of responsibilities between unionized workers and the tasks assigned to volunteers. To the point, I am talking about the threat to your jobs. This podium will address the growth in the presence of volunteers and highlight the fine line between volunteer activities and the legally recognized work of the members of the bargaining unit (BU). This podium will not identify the specifics of the volunteer activities within the CPL and will be mindful that many of us, including union activists, are volunteers within our community. Volunteerism is both a constructive and positive component reflective of a progressive society.

Your union acknowledges that the direction and organization of the workplace is the exclusive prerogative of management. It is management who has the authority to define the nature of the work, recruitment, terminations, workplace assignments, job classifications and a long list of em-

ployee tasks.

Your union has little or no say in these basic decisions. For clarification, one of the few areas in the organization in which your union, as the legally recognized representative of the members of the BU, has a voice is in determining the terms and conditions of employment. Further, even in this limited scope there is a sharing of authority as opposed to a unilateral exercise of authority or power by your union.

The challenge for your union is that CPL volunteers are not organized. There is no one to speak for the CPL's volunteers in any organized way. If the union identifies an issue relating to the use and function of volunteers there is language in your Collective Bargaining Agreement, specifically Article 1.05, which identifies a process for resolving union/management disagreements.

What about the volunteers? Management can exploit volunteers who are generally not aware of what constitutes the work of the BU, by asking them to contribute to programming initiatives that are normally done by you, the members. If a volunteer refuses to participate in a specific initiative management has the flexibility to replace those volunteers with no consequences.

With whom do the volunteers negotiate? Who represents the volunteers? When dealing with new volunteer initiatives your union deals directly with management. Often the proposed participation of volunteers has a negative impact. Job descriptions for members of



the BU is a small part of the structural challenges through the very broad and commonly used phrase “other duties as assigned”, which provides no protection to either the union member or the volunteer and can be innocently or deliberately manipulated by management. “Other duties as assigned” creates a challenge in identifying what the duties of unionized members are and what management would like to assign to volunteers. A shady definition for the work of the BU leaves an opening for management to introduce volunteers into the workplace.

Your union continually intervenes with management to ensure that volunteer initiatives are not replacing work normally performed by members of the BU. Further, volunteers must not be exploited by management to undermine or negatively impact the working conditions or job security of BU members. Let’s be clear, your union is not anti-volunteer. Your union is tasked with and committed to ensuring that management does not erode the work of the BU members.

The CPL’s workforce is primarily female and the majority of the work is precarious. It is pub-

lic sector employers in predominately female environments that exploit volunteers rather than redress abuses, such as low wages and lack of benefits for precarious part-time and substitute employees. The continued growth of volunteer initiatives at the CPL exploits both volunteers and precarious employees as a cost saving measure to continue the expansion of library programmes and services at any cost.

The work of the BU must be respected and it is the responsibility of your union to call management to task to protect your rights. Your union cannot rely on management’s “good will” when the goal is always to do “more with less” and prop up programming and services with the introduction of more volunteers into the workplace. As members of the BU you must be part of the monitoring process by ensuring your union is informed of any volunteer activities that are the work of the BU. Remember, it is your jobs that are threatened!

*In solidarity,  
Rh’ena Oake, President CUPE Local 1169  
Calgary and Cochrane Public Library Workers*

## Contract Corner: know your rights under the collective agreement



### Article 1 – Purpose and Coverage

1.05 (a) The use of volunteers shall not lead to the replacement, transfer, reassignment, or layoff of bargaining unit employees, to a reduction in their hours of work, or to the elimination of positions in the bargain-

ing unit.

1.05 (b) Written statements describing all volunteer contributions shall be provided to the Union; all volunteers will receive statements appropriate to the program(s) in which they participate, to ensure that they are aware of the parameters of

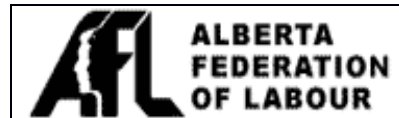
their contributions.

### What does this mean?

The Calgary Public Library must discuss any new volunteer initiatives with the union. The work of volunteers is invaluable for certain programs but we must always be vigilant that they are not doing your work. For example, they can assist patrons with technology, as in Computer Technology Coaching, but they cannot teach a technology class. Your union counts on you, the front line staff, to inform us of any volunteer initiatives taking place at your location. Call the union office, talk with your worksite steward or contact the Chief Steward regarding volunteers at your location.

*Respectfully submitted by,  
Terrill Budd, Vice President CUPE Local 1169*

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