



December 15, 2017

Information Sheet: Cleaning Staff at Langara

In response to recent developments on campus, the Langara Faculty Association has assembled this information sheet for its members about the working conditions of cleaning staff at Langara College. The LFA believes in transparent processes. We also want all the players on campus to know that we stand in solidarity with the hard-working people who keep our campus clean.

About BEST, CLAC, and contracted cleaning services at Langara

- Currently the janitors at Langara are almost certainly the most poorly paid employees on campus. They are vulnerable workers who often do not speak English well and who may not know about their rights as workers.
- In June 2016, BEST Service Pros (BEST) was awarded a cleaning contract at Langara College. Upon winning the contract, BEST contracted the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) to negotiate a 10-year agreement with minimal wage increases and no benefits, before any workers were hired.
- CLAC has a reputation in the house of labour for being a 'management' union that signs "Voluntary Recognition" Agreements that favour management rights. They are not members of the BC Federation of Labour (BC Fed) or the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). At the request of the CLC, CLAC's membership in the International Trade Union Confederation was suspended in September 2011.
- The **ten-year** Collective Agreement between BEST and CLAC representing Langara janitors includes these terms:
 - Workers get 3 sick days a year (with no roll over from one year to the next)
 - In 2016 the lowest paid worker made \$12 an hour
 - In 2026 when this contract expires, the lowest paid worker will make \$13 an hour
 - There are zero guaranteed health benefits (extended health, dental, STD or LTD)The full agreement can be found here: www.lrb.bc.ca/cas/WWT26.pdf

About SEIU and Justice for Janitors

- Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has been running *Justice for Janitors* organizing campaigns in Ontario, across Canada and in the US. Local 2 is now trying to organize in BC. See www.justiceforjanitors.ca.
- Janitors at Capilano University also work for BEST and have been SEIU members since June 2017. Cap U workers never voted to leave CLAC, as they were never part of it. They reached out to organize with SEIU January 2017 and voted on February 20. BEST applied to the BC Labour Relations Board (LRB) to bar the vote, claiming that as an employer it had a proliferation of bargaining units. In June the LRB ruled this was not an issue, since

BEST had entered into a Voluntary Recognition Agreement with CLAC in 2016 while they still had bargaining relationships with other unions. See

<https://www.biv.com/article/2017/6/capilano-janitors-win-right-join-union/>

- Usually union 'raiding' of this nature is frowned upon in the labour movement, but CLAC is not recognized as a *bona fide* union by the BC Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress.
- Capilano U cleaners are currently in bargaining with BEST. BEST is allegedly offering more to CLAC workers at other institutions to prevent workers from switching to SEIU, i.e. rolling out some kind of benefit plan in the middle of a contract.

About SEIU Local 2 organizing at Langara

- Union members in BC have two months a year during which they can organize to certify with a different union, during the 7th and 8th month of their contract.
- In the case of Langara janitors, this window occurs in December 2017 and January 2018. SEIU organizers are legally allowed to be on campus and to attempt to organize in this time period.
- If the SEIU is unsuccessful in its organizing drive at Langara, then it will have to wait 22 months before it can run the next organizing drive.
- The BC Federation of Labour is supporting SEIU's efforts to organize the janitors at Langara, VCC, BCIT and UBCO.
- SEIU Local 2 organizers have alleged that BEST and CLAC have used a variety of tactics to intimidate workers at Langara and to keep them from talking to SEIU organizers.
- SEIU Local 2 organizers have asked the LFA to take action in solidarity with our janitorial colleagues.

Actions that the LFA Board has taken to date

- Investigated, assembled and posted this information sheet for LFA members.
- Written a letter to the College outlining our concerns about janitors' current working conditions and supporting their right to organize.
- Asked SEIU Local 2 organizers to keep us informed of developments on campus.
- Liaised with the BC Federation of Labour on best ways to support our janitorial colleagues going forward.

LFA Contact

Scott McLean
President, Langara Faculty Association
604.323.5355
scott.mclean@lfaweb.ca