

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Research Council Employees' Association
Wednesday, October 5, 2011
Auditorium, Building M-50

Minutes

The President, Serge Croteau, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. He welcomed attendees, and introduced himself and the members of the head table: Cathie Fraser, 1st Vice President; Joan Van Den Bergh, Negotiator and Senior Labour Relations Officer; Greg Kresko, Treasurer; Greg Scriver, 2nd Vice President.

1. Rules of Meeting

The meeting was conducted using Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting – October 20, 2010

Motion: That the minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held October 20, 2010 be adopted.
Moved by Vaughan Benson; seconded by Pauline Kulbaba.
Motion carried.

3. President's Report

Bienvenue, welcome to the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

I would like to welcome representatives from the regional institutes and technology centres to Ottawa. It is important to acknowledge the work of all Institute representatives your commitment in helping your fellow members by taking on the duties of shop steward; it is greatly appreciated, thank you again.

During this past year the RCEA was faced with many challenges since the last AGM; an outlook on some of those challenges and up-coming changes will be addressed. In January 2011, the RCEA included the participation of all representatives to the monthly meeting of the executives via conference call. This has been a welcome change and a challenge due to the different time zones. We have also included the participation of regional representatives on the bargaining committee. With a member distribution of more then 40% being outside the national capital area, it was important to consider the participation from the regional institutes and centres.

I was hoping to report to you with a draft of the RCEA constitution at this year AGM. Unfortunately we will not be able to present to you the proposed new constitution. The committee did meet several times to review the draft of the constitution. We are presently working on finalizing the draft that will be submitted to our Legal for advice. We anticipate submitting the revised draft of the constitution to the members by mid 2012.

You will have the opportunity of viewing the Treasurer's Report; it will give you a better understanding of the financial demands on the RCEA when serving its members. Also this year we have the opportunity of having our auditor present to you the financial report for the RCEA for the fiscal year ending June 2011. He will give an overview of the report and will be available to answer questions on the RCEA financial statement. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Simon Lavigne for his time.

In the last update on the pension surplus litigation undertaken by the coalition of 18 federal public service unions together with the FSNA and the RCMP, I mentioned that, in October 2010 the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed our case. Further to this decision, the bargaining agents met to discuss the next steps. Applications for leave of appeal were filed by the bargaining agents and organizations. The Supreme Court of Canada has granted the public service bargaining agents and representative organizations the applications for leave, to appeal the 2010 Ontario Court of Appeal decision. Any updates on the Pension Litigation will be posted on our website as we receive them.

The activity in bargaining for all of our groups has started. You will have the opportunity to have more information about the upcoming bargaining.

The RCEA continues to attend numerous committees, the Joint Consultation Committee or JCC meets every 3 months. Attending the committee with me is; Joan Van Den Bergh, Negotiator, Labour Relations, Cathie Fraser, 1st Vice-President and Greg Scriver, 2nd Vice-President. At these meetings we raise issues and items of national concern for discussion. Typically, the RCEA brings forward issues that are of concern to a majority of members. Some of the topics have included: term employees, the application of medical dental leave, Workforce Adjustment situations, time recording, grievance handling, and overall labour management relations. Minutes of these meetings can be found on NRC Zone.

I am co-chair of the National Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH) with PIPSC and NRC. The NCOSH is a national level committee devoted solely to safety and health issues at NRC. We meet four times each year. The committee puts together recommendations that are brought forward to the Senior Executive Committee (SEC) for approval. Any new policy that deals with Health and Safety must get the approval of SEC before its implementation.

The RCEA is a member of the National Joint Council, which is a bilateral body made up of most public service employers and all public service bargaining agents. The NJC is responsible for the development, negotiation and management of the public service health care and dental plans. It is also responsible for the negotiation of public service wide directives or policies, such as government travel, relocation, occupational safety and health, official languages, Foreign Service directives, etc. As President of the RCEA, I sit on the National Joint Council itself, as well as on the Occupational Safety and Health Committee. Joan Van Den Bergh is a member of the Government Relocation Committee which recently negotiated a new Relocation Directive.

The classification renewal project at NRC has started; The RCEA had several consultations with the classification renewal committee. The terms of reference and the project charter have been submitted to the committee. I am co-chair of the "Project Consultation Committee" with Sue Tolson who is the project manager for the classification renewal. As mentioned at the last AGM, we have hired Percy Fisher as consultant for the RCEA for the classification renewal project. The NRC Senior Executive Committee has approved the HAY classification system for the AS and AD groups - the first groups being reviewed. We also have selected a representative for each of the groups; they will also be part of the Project Consultation Committee.

The classification is the foundation of pay and we have to get it right. We also have to try and ensure that no one loses as a result of any changes to the classification system.

The announcement on August 4th of the creation of the Shared Services Canada institution came as somewhat of a surprise. The centralization of part of the IT for the government under one roof is mind-boggling. We were informed shortly after the announcement that the NRC was also affected by this announcement. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to get information on the transfer. The

impact on the RCEA is significant; we are losing members from our CS group represented by the RCEA.

The Order in Council for the transfer of the remaining departments was to happen October 4th, 60 days after the announcement on August 4th. The last information that I received is that the Order in Council has been delayed a few weeks.

We visited most of the Regional Institutes and technology centres. We were unable to secure dates for NINT, PBI and IBD prior to the AGM. These visits are important and are great opportunities for the members to express their concerns or just have discussions. The feedback received from the members of the regions is positive. They appreciate the opportunity of meeting face to face with Joan and me.

The RCEA continues to give high level of support to its members. The RCEA is committed to ensure that our members are always supported.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of those representatives who have left or will be leaving the organization; Michel Gagnon from IRAP, Pauline Kulbaba and Tony Wessel from IBD Winnipeg, thank you for your willingness in helping your fellow members.

Constant communication between the RCEA and our regional representatives continues to be maintained via the 2nd Vice President. Since January we have included the participation of the regional representatives at the RCEA regular meetings of the executives. We continue to look at better ways of improving their involvement.

Earlier I mentioned the impact the Shared Services announcement will have on the RCEA. I regret to inform you that we will be losing approximately 74 members of the CS group. From those members going to Shared Services, the RCEA will most likely lose its 2nd Vice President, Greg Scriver, our Treasurer, Greg Kresko, Robert Walker, our representative at HIA, Victoria, and Nadine Vibert, our representative at AMTC in Montreal.

Changes this past year in NRC's re-organization with the introduction of flagships and programs have raised many concerns and worries for the members. These changes brought on by the NRC President are of great concern for the RCEA. We had no consultation on these changes. Of course we have a great many concerns about where this is all going and the impact it will have on the membership.

I would like to acknowledge the help of the members who participated and continue to do so, on the various committees; starting with, Greg Scriver, Jim Jennings, Cathie Fraser, Dave O'Neil and Greg Kresko for the Constitution Committee and the participation of Gordon Fougere on NCOSH.

At this time I would like to acknowledge the participation of Floyd Toll for the Technical Category Committee.

At this time I would like to give many thanks to the office staff, Laurette Ernst, Joan Van Den Bergh and I welcome Suzanne Clarke to the RCEA. Without saying, I am always impressed to see the extraordinary amount of work being produced. Special thanks also go to the 1st Vice President, Cathie Fraser, to the 2nd Vice President, Greg Scriver and to the Treasurer, Greg Kresko, for all of their support during the year.

Thank you. Merci.

4. Treasurer's and Auditor's Reports

Greg Kresko highlighted key points from the Auditor's Report. Meeting expenses have gone up a bit because more labs were visited this year and airfares have risen. The items regarding realized gain on disposal of investments have been listed separately according to accounting recommendations. Legal costs are down as this number varies a lot year to year. They are expected to be high in the coming year. Rent has increased substantially because NRC is moving to market rate. It will be rising again in the near future. Wage costs have jumped from \$81,000 to \$94,000 mostly because of the addition of post-retirement benefits. This amount will go down in subsequent years. The forecast is fairly stable. The balance is shown as increasing slightly. The loss in revenue shift to Shared Services has been factored in, and in fact will have less impact than forecasted.

The Auditor, Simon Lavigne of Deloitte commented that the audit had gone according to plan and that there had not been a need to discuss the financial plan.

Discussion

Pauline Kulbaba, IBD Winnipeg: What were the post-retirement benefits comprised of?

Answer: This was for the three staff at RCEA last year and covers 50% of the cost of their benefits from retirement to the age of 69. It was approved last year so staff would have the same benefits as members. The cost of \$13,000 will drop to about \$2,000 in the coming years. Benefits for new staff will have to be addressed.

Motion that the Treasurer's and Auditor's reports be accepted as presented.

Moved by Frank Zarboni; seconded by Kerry Foster. Motion carried.

5. Collective Bargaining Update

Joan Van Den Bergh gave an update on the collective bargaining process. Notice has been served to bargain for five of six bargaining units. Notice to bargain has not been served for the CS group; the collective agreement for the CS group expires in December. Bargaining for the TO group has started; three more groups are scheduled before the end of November; the other groups are preparing demands. The TO group will be the bellwether. Most groups have just started, so there haven't been many settlements in the core yet. NRC usually has to wait for the larger groups and then see if there is a mandate to bargain. The same wage increases as the public service got last year were approved last week: 1.75%, 1.5% and 2% over three years. Severance pay on resignation and retirement were removed. There is a split among management as to whether it's OK to let these go or not. We will have to see what can be improved in bargaining. It is hoped that an agreement will soon be reached with NRC on the workforce adjustment policy.

Discussion

Frank Zarboni: What is the cost to people of accepting those terms?

Joan Van Den Bergh: If the TO group decides to accept getting rid of severance pay for those two types of departures, it will influence the bargaining groups for the rest of NRC. Three groups from the PSAC and the teachers for the Canadian Military College have accepted losing retirement severance. The PSAC deal had no more severance at retirement or resignation. New employees wouldn't earn severance pay for those scenarios and current employees would stop earning it and be given a choice of cashing it out (or partially) or leaving it there. This will affect everybody depending on how many years of service they have.

6. Question from the Floor

Renee Auger, CISTI: How will the common services affect NRC employees?

Serge Croteau: We haven't heard much yet.

Greg Kresko: On the IT side, the move is going ahead as part of the Shared Services amalgamation. The CSs will either stay at their institutes, if they support something unique, or will move to IMSB or Shared Services. There has not been a lot of consultation on common services.

Joan Van Den Bergh: We have asked about purchasing, admin, HR and finance and we don't have any answers yet. We know pay and benefits is going to be centralized in several waves. This will affect NRC by 2015. There will be no more pay and benefits advisors at NRC – they will be in Miramichi, New Brunswick. Staffs were asked if they were interested in going to Miramichi and no one wanted to. NRC is putting some things into place to offer these people training or assignment opportunities, so those who want to stay may be able to get into new positions. NRC is now keeping us up to date on that.

Janet Condie, PBI: Is RCEA looking at changes to volunteer day – to be able to take half days off officially?

Joan Van Den Bergh: That is not one of the changes. We are seeking that they won't be able to ask you what you're volunteering for.

Dan Booth, IRC: Asked about an email from HR regarding changing classification systems.

Joan Van Den Bergh: NRC started a classification review and decided to adopt the HAY system off the shelf for the AS and AD groups (also used for MG group). Hopefully, as they proceed through the groups they will use the same system for everyone. HAY can apply to the whole organization and many public sector organizations have adopted it. The TO and operational groups would be a long term project. It is very complicated to convert from one classification system to another.

Brian Jahraus, IAR: Are there plans to address the inequality regarding prior military service being counted in the calculation of continuation of service?

Joan Van Den Bergh: Yes, that demand is in for the TO group – for A, B and C reserve to count as prior service for the calculation of vacation leave. We think many other unions will also be asking for that.

Leanne Macdonald, HRB: Are crown corporations also being looked at for prior service?

Joan Van Den Bergh: No. In all of our collective agreements, it says "all service, whether continuous or discontinuous, counts for vacation leave." "Public Service" is as defined in the Labour Relations Act. This didn't include military service, but NRC's HR manual does, so there has been a push/pull. There has been no demand regarding other crown corporations, because it would be difficult to define how broadly inclusive "crown corporations" should be. It would not be accepted if it's not in the Public Service Act.

Leanne Macdonald, HRB: Asked about leave with income averaging.

Joan Van Den Bergh: Yes, we had demands on that last time, and we will again. NRC does have a policy on self-funded leave (e.g., putting aside 20-25% of your salary for four years and taking the fifth year off); but there are no provisions for shorter periods of time. We had a demand last time but we didn't get agreement at the table. They said they would look at introducing a policy, but they didn't, so it is back on the table.

Pauline Kulbaba, IBD Winnipeg: Thanked the RCEA staff and the management team for the great job they do.

Dave Smith, DFS: Employees are worried about re-classification and layoffs. Does RCEA have a strategy to counteract what the government wants to do? Are we lobbying?

Serge Croteau: All the bargaining agents met in Moncton to initiate a campaign with the focus of convincing Canadians that anything targeted against the public service will affect them. PSAC, PIPSC and CAPE have a petition that anyone can sign. That's the focus – to get rid of the picture that the public service is a big expense for government and doesn't do anything. PSAC shop stewards are going around with the petition all over the country. We can put it on our website. Signed copies will be presented to Tony Clement.

Dave Smith: Good. Nothing will change unless the people lobby the government. They need to be told that research is critical and maybe we shouldn't be going to applied science.

Joan Van Den Bergh: PIPSC has a PR machine and are doing lots of press releases. We don't have a PR & communications section. Our experience is that TBS ignores our letters.

Comments: NRC has tons of private sector partners and we should be talking to them so they'll talk to their MPs. Perhaps union Reps should put the word out to all our employees and let them know that if they don't participate, they'll be out of a job. We have to prove to them that we're doing something important. The climate right now is one of industry; potential cut backs have been halted by industry concern over jobs. The Minister of Industry will hear the message from industry more. Requests to private sector would have to be tactful; but every Canadian has the right to speak their mind.

Greg Kresko: RCEA is here to represent its members. What you're talking about has to come from the members. PIPSC has commercials; but they have money for that.

Jason Sanderson, INH: Industry could have concerns if negative messages about NRC get out.

Comment: The positive message that we're doing great things is what needs to get out there.

Pauline Kulbaba, IBD: In Winnipeg, we have brochures about our research, and we hand them out to the general public to get them on our side. Each of us could see what is in print at our institutes.

Randy Hartwig, INMS: It's fair to ask external customers that you're doing services for to send a letter to management. Some will, and this can feed into large contracts (e.g., there was not a lot of press about NRC helping to develop the Blackberry for RIM).

Eric Estwick, IMS: NRC does a terrible job of telling what we do. Very few know outside Ottawa. There is no funding for advertising. Until the average person knows what we do, or how it affects them or their parents' health, they will think cut-backs are from money to run that clock.

Greg Scriver: Environment Canada is now shutting down their ozone monitoring stations and access to ice core samples. It would be nice to know those things ahead of time.

Comment: Someone knowledgeable should put together press packages.

Greg Scriver: Harper has also put a strict media layer between researchers and the public.

Joan Van Den Bergh: When IRAP cuts were announced, responding to negative press wasn't allowed.

Pauline Kulbaba: We were told to go to Communications for one issue, but got no response. The story ran and then there was trouble.

Comment: The CTV interview with the President (on flagships) gave the impression of a dysfunctional organization. If the leadership is making such comments, what must the public think?

Dan Booth, IRC: With the new programs that are coming on line, is there any indication of how the new matrix model would organize staff?

Serge Croteau: There is not much information on that yet. A lot of people are concerned. Even the DGs don't know where they'll be.

Randy Hartwig, INMS: Has there been any feedback on the CTE process?

Joan Van Den Bergh: There has been a lot of feedback and member concerns are being conveyed. It is a commitment-, not a goal-setting process. We have asked that the first year be a trial run and that nobody be disadvantaged by the results. We have the impression that they will do that.

There was discussion of whether the commitments are supposed to be quantitative or qualitative. Different managers may be interpreting this differently; but the intention is to encourage dialogue.

Joan Van Den Bergh: It could affect your job if you got a lot of unsatisfactory CTEs.

Marvin Zaluski, IIT: Could it affect whether you get a measurement if you're not in the top 2 levels?

Joan Van Den Bergh: The only way to not get an increment is if you're rated unsatisfactory. There are a couple of ways to get a promotion: 1. Apply in a competition. CTEs might be used for this. We're questioning if this is part of the reference check. 2. Be re-classified.

John Underwood, ASPM: Is the system an improvement?

Joan Van Den Bergh: It is the flavour of month. If it goes according to plan, it will probably be better; but there is no "one way" to do performance management.

Vaughan Benson, IOT: There is concern that it doesn't seem to rate your performance on what you do every day.

Joan Van Den Bergh: It should reflect your day-to-day job, and should be re-visited if operational requirements change.

Comment: It should make managers more aware of what people they supervise are doing, and employees more involved in setting their commitments.

Joan Van Den Bergh: Right. It's new and we need to know from our reps what issues people have with it. There will be a review at the end of the year.

Tony Hoffman, HIA: If the supervisor is pushing too much down on an employee, they shouldn't agree. What happens then?

Joan Van Den Bergh: Supervisors have the final say, but there should be attempts to reach agreement, and they should take employee concerns into consideration. We've tried to convey that employees are not happy, given all that's going on at NRC, and so they should treat this as a trial run.

Mark Robertson, IFCI: Would an evaluation process for RCEA staff be beneficial? It could allow Serge to get commitments from you and to look at resources for your goals.

Serge Croteau: With our small staff, we are in constant communication about what needs to be improved. There is such commitment, I don't see the need.

Mark Robertson: You all do a great job; but would it be helpful in achieving priorities to lay out yearly goals and review them?

Serge Croteau: That is done all the time – daily.

Greg Kresko: We do say what we're going to try to accomplish each year; but we are often responding to outside influences beyond our control. If you hear of things that are going to happen, please let us know.

Joan Van Den Bergh: No other union has three staff to do everything. It is extremely onerous. We don't necessarily all need someone to evaluate our performance.

Cathie Fraser: We all discuss everything all the time.

Mark Robertson: Would it be an opportunity to pin down resources?

Joan Van Den Bergh: We are all able to ask when we need additional resources, and management does address those issues.

Andrew Anderson, CSTT: (About bargaining) many at the end of the pay scales are not keeping up with the cost of living.

Joan Van Den Bergh: We have not submitted a pay demand yet to NRC; but rest assured that increments are always in our thinking.

David Smith, DFS: Regarding having only three staff, should we be aligning ourselves with a bigger public service union and access to their resources?

Greg Kresko: Dues would go up from \$28 to \$55 per month. A lot might say they would be willing to pay that for those services; but whenever we look at even a small increase in dues, it is always turned down.

Andrew Anderson, CSTT: I think right now is the time for you to expand – given that the climate is so bad. All Reps could pitch this to their members. Everyone is looking at losing their jobs. Now is the time to push for a big increase and expand RCEA.

Joan Van Den Bergh: The organization has to ask itself what it wants to do. We negotiate six agreements. We don't have a PR shop and we don't lobby the government. If that's what people think is necessary, then maybe you're right. If we joined another union, we would get those things, but not a difference in the fundamental things. You can't join another union for some things and still keep your own union for negotiating; the whole union would have to switch over. And PIPSC wouldn't accept us.

Comment: There are risks too, e.g., we could be in a strike situation when others are.

Greg Kresko: RCEA is more personal. Finding a steward in a bigger union can be hard. If you are lacking something, then come to us.

Andrew Anderson, CSTT: I'm not for joining another union; but Serge was hinting at doing bigger things (e.g., more training). If we need funding, now is the time to go for it. I suggest polling people now and seeing if they would agree with increases. Use PIPSC dues as an example of what we would pay if we lose our jobs. No one wants to pay for the army in peace time. Good lawyers and good accountants always pay for themselves.

Serge Croteau: There are a lot of expenses coming our way. We will be doing forecasting. If it will keep the organization healthy, we'll go for it. The membership will have the final say. We will prepare something so the membership knows where the money would be going.

Mark Robertson, IFCI: I think a communications person would be vital to counter the negative things about NRC in the press. Members of Parliament make the NRC look like the enemy.

Pauline Kulbaba, IBD: RCEA funding goes directly to our needs. We also need to take responsibility and start selling ourselves. We are the good press. I agree with funding for a communications person; but would never want to go to a larger union. At our institute, we have people from PIPSC coming to us to stay in the loop, because they don't even know who their Reps are.

Greg Kresko reminded participants to keep in mind that RCEA is here to represent the members with NRC.

Serge Croteau thanked participants for their input and said that they will be incorporated.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Moved by Brian Jahraus; seconded by Frank Zarboni.

Motion carried.