



# The Comp-Ten REPORT

MARCH, 2009

Story ideas and comments for the Comp-Ten Report can be submitted to: comp10report@bcgeu.ca

## Contractors caught operating unsafe vehicles

BCGEU SAYS reports of widespread safety violations involving vehicles and equipment operated by B.C.'s highways contractors are very troubling and highlight the need for tougher oversight and enforcement by the Campbell government.

From a freedom of information request, Kamloops radio reporter Angelo Iacobucci received copies of more than 100 inspection reports filed by commercial vehicle inspectors detailing safety violations involving contractors' vehicles.

**Turn to page 3 to read more!**



**JOHN DEERE TO THE RESCUE** Can you believe it? This was the scene north of Enderby on Highway 97A in January, with a plow strapped on to a John Deere farm tractor operated by Argo Road Maintenance. It's a

scene that's symbolic of the problems with B.C.'s privatized highways maintenance system, where a lack of government oversight means contractors can get away with not having enough equipment to do the job.

## Incentive work or our work? Only time will tell

By Mike Nuyens

RECENTLY AS part of Gordon Campbell's response to the growing economic crisis, highways and infrastructure minister Falcon announced a work incentive program to be administered by our highways maintenance employers.

Our employers are to subcontract specific work activities to local contractors in an effort to create new work for idle contractors or unemployed workers they may hire to perform the work.

Time will tell whether this has any real value by generating new work for unemployed workers or does it

become yet one more scam to pad the pockets of already busy contractors.

For now the issue we need to monitor is whether this contracted work has any negative impact on our members.

To get a handle on this program each bargaining unit has been asked to schedule a labour-management meeting and to seek clarification on the program.

How much money has been allocated to your employer for this program? What work is going to be subcontracted?

How is the work being awarded? When will that work be done?



NUYENS

Will any member be laid off or not recalled to perform work they are qualified to do while this contracted work is on-going? Will there be a delayed impact due to lost work opportunities in the summer or fall?

It is too early to know the real impacts on members. We hope there are none,

and we will track this pro-gram carefully to protect our interest. After all no one else will do that for us.

-Nuyens is Component 10 chair

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Labour-management meetings

Labour-management meetings are an important part of communications between members and employers.

Component 10 is monitoring communication issues and agenda items in the labour management meetings throughout the province and will track their progress to learn what some of the challenges may be.

We will work with committee members to try and produce a positive relationship and to help with the issues that need to be addressed.

If there are any questions or problems contact your committee members, local chair, Mike Prystae or Rory Smith.

### Port Mann Bridge Project

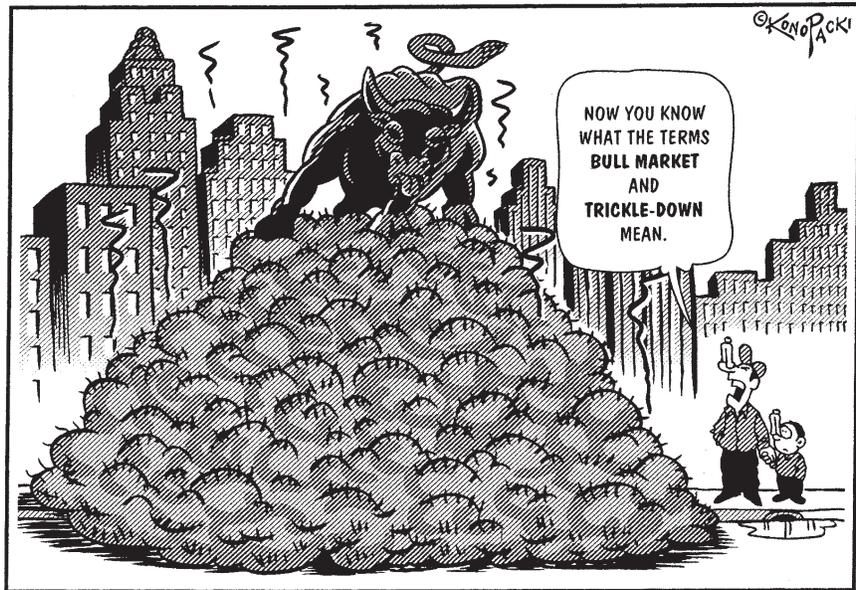
This project may affect members in Local 1004, regarding the highway maintenance in that area. These members have been affected in the past when previous projects have cut down the number of kilometres of road that our members help maintain, resulting in layoffs. We are still watching to see what will happen to our members in that area.

### Surrey Nurseries

Originally part of the B.C. Forest Service in the 1960s, Surrey Nursery closed down at the end of December.

The nursery employed up to 250 members early on and after several downsizes they were reduced to below 30 members.

It is always a sad day to say goodbye to our Brothers and Sisters.



## STRESS ON THE OPEN ROAD

By Kevin Staneland

**T**HE END OF 2008 saw the start of winter delayed in most of B.C. until we were well into December. Although the year before saw winter snows start five weeks earlier, by the time Christmas 2008 arrived we had 17cm more where I am than the year before.

Needless to say this meant long hours, and much overtime for many members during the holidays as we were hit by storm after storm in most parts of the province.

I heard from members working as long as 15 hours a day, many not stopping for coffee or lunch breaks in order to keep up with these storms.

It's a must to stop and take a break during these long hours to lessen the effects that stress puts on us all. We notice our patience running out and tempers start to shorten.

At the end of the day we also need to make it home safely and stress free.

I talked to one member who told me that after a long day during a storm he was asleep when all of a sudden the sound of a plough truck going by woke him and he thought he had

fallen asleep behind the wheel of his plough truck.

Far too often we fail to recognize the early signs of stress. In some work places there are employee and family assistance programs to help employees and their families deal with issues that arise in our lives.

However, some members prefer to use a union counselling program that we are seeing in other components. Other unions already have language written into their contracts for a union counselling program. Union counsellors are trained to offer a confidential ear and if further help is needed they will direct the member to the appropriate agency.

Stress, whether it is at work or home, can be devastating for the family of the member and costly for employers. So it only makes sense to do what we can to recognize stress as soon as possible so we can lessen its effects before it takes hold and results in time off or affects us at home.

I suggest you talk to your OH&S or Labour/Management committees to find out what sort of program is in place at your work site.

*-Staneland is Local 1008 chair*

# Extent of highways vehicle safety infractions troubling, says BCGEU

A freedom of information request by a Kamloops journalist has uncovered widespread safety violations involving highways maintenance contractors' rolling stock.

A total of 427 violations were written up in more than 100 inspection reports by CVSE staff in from Sept. 1, 2007 to the end of October last year.

Based on a BCGEU analysis, 232 of the violations were very serious infractions, 102 serious, and 92 minor. Violations involving 35 trucks and 11 trailer units were so serious that these vehicles were immediately ordered off the road.

"It's truly disturbing to know how many vehicles have faulty break system, tires ready to blow out, or unsafe loads and major parts or equipment ready to fall off trucks and trailers," says BCGEU president Darryl Walker.

"These contractors should be ashamed because they have put the

welfare of the travelling public and front-line highways maintenance workers at risk," Walker says.

Emcon Services had the most failings of any contractor with 123, including 83 categorized as very serious violations. VSA with 78 violations, and HMC Services with 74 also made the top three.

Meanwhile, a Cariboo Road Services Kenworth tractor pulling a trailer unit outside of Prince George wracked up 15 violations including damaged tires, faulty breaks, an exhaust leak, and steering deficiencies.

A Western Star dump truck operated by Emcon south of Castlegar wracked up 13 safety violations including

badly worn breaks, a leaky exhaust system, a driver's door that wouldn't open properly, air lines for the breaking system "worn through", a rusting axle and a tailgate that didn't close.

The union is demanding that transportation minister Kevin Falcon order a system-wide safety audit to get unsafe contractors' vehicles off the road.

And Walker warns that CVSE inspectors will face an even tougher job keeping roads safe because of a five per cent funding cut made in the Liberal's recent budget.

BCGEU is looking at new records it obtained about additional safety violations and problems with contractors' preventative maintenance programs. Stay tuned.

*A Western Star dump truck wracked up 13 violations including badly worn breaks, a leaky exhaust system, breaking system air lines worn through, and a rusting axle.*

## BCGEU pension is for everyone, including auxiliaries, temps

BCGEU auxiliary and temporary workers often question when the earliest point is that they can enroll in the pension plan.

The eligibility criteria in most collective agreements are that the employee must be allowed to participate once a certain period of time and earnings have been achieved.

Simply put, once the BCGEU member has worked two consecutive years (with no less than 350 hours worked each year) and has had earnings in excess of 35 per cent of the maximum pensionable earnings (YMPE) for each of those years, they must be allowed to participate in the pension plan at the beginning of the third year.

The YMPE is determined by the federal government. The YMPE figures for the last 5 years are as follows:

- 2005 \$41,100 (35 per cent=\$14,385)
- 2006 \$42,100 (35 per cent=\$14,735)
- 2007 \$43,700 (35 per cent=\$15,295)
- 2008 \$44,900 (35 per cent=\$15,715)
- 2009 \$46,300 (35 per cent=\$16,205)



Lastly, it is important for members to monitor their earnings thresholds and make written application for pension plan participation directly to their employers. Please note that not all highways maintenance employers participate in the BCGEU Pension Plan.

*-Information submitted by the Board of Trustees of the BCGEU Pension Plan*

## Severe winter conditions...and politicians tax patience

Over Christmas and into the New year, our transportation system has had to deal with severe winter conditions in the lower mainland. And with slightly more than a year left before the world comes to Vancouver it has failed miserably.

From understaffed privatized highways contractors in their aging fleet of unsafe vehicles, to the continuing saga of a Skytrain and bus system that simply doesn't work in cold weather, or an airport authority that can't or won't keep their runways in a safe operating condition, all highlight the inability of both the provincial and federal governments to perform their fundamental duties around transportation issues.

Where was Gordon Campbell? Where was Kevin Falcon? Where was the federal minister of transport? Unavailable was the comment in the press.

At the busiest travel time of the year, these people were "unavailable". Only politics can be incompetent and AWOL and keep their jobs. When will the voters figure out that the only people the Campbells and the Falcons care about are the corporate donors who fund their campaigns.

Lets see if they can put enough makeup on to cover up their tans when they get back and try to explain why everybody else is at fault except for them.

-Dave Cumming  
*Cummings is 2<sup>nd</sup> vice for Local 1003, and an AirCare employee.*



**XMAS PARTIERS** AirCare activists celebrate at their Christmas dinner in December in Burnaby. From left are Eric Wong, Simon Ingram, Paul Mei, Harry Shum, Dave Cumming, Hill Escat, Amir Nikzadeh, and Tamin Satari.

## Dan Baker says thanks—and so long!

*By Dan Baker*

I WANTED TO take this opportunity to thank all my Brothers and Sisters from Local 1012 for the support they have given me during my time as local chair.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the work site visits I have done over the last 10 years including Dease Lake, Telegraph Creek, Jade City, Tattogga Lake, Atlin, Bobquin, Houston, Southbank, Burns Lake, Terrace and several other areas of the province.

Because of my involvement with the BCGEU I have been exposed to as much education as I could handle. This education has benefited me tremendously and I would highly recommend to anyone interested to get involved and run for a position in your local.

When you get elected you will have the opportunity to do as much as you desire. You will receive training to help you become a leader in your work place and gain the ability to help your fellow workers. I can't say enough about the positive experiences I have had as a chair.

I would also like to thank the executive of Component 10 as they have given me great opportunities along the way and, in doing so, have become a part of my family. I feel that without making that first step—of putting my name forward in local elections, I would not of been able to successfully apply for the position of area manager with the Ministry of Transportation.

In closing get off your butt and run for your local executive because YOU will benefit the most, and your co-workers will benefit as well!!!

Thanks all and I'm sure I will see a lot of you in the future.

*-Baker is the former chair of Local 1012 who is now area manager in the ministry's Terrace office*

## New Local 1011 chair

Dan Danroth from Bear Lake who works for YRB has been elected as the new chair for Local 1011.



**DANROTH**

Dan has indicated he is eager to get down to business and looks forward to meeting the membership in Local 1011. Good Luck Dan!

## Contracting out: Where will it stop?

Last winter, Cariboo Road Services (South) contracted out a portion road maintenance in SA 21, south Peace, to a local Hutterite settlement. Included in the move was the sale of a grader and a plow truck.

At the same time, CRSS closed the local maintenance yard. In all, upkeep of 48 kms of roadway was taken from BCGEU members.

We continue to monitor standards in the subcontracted stretch.



**SHOWING SOLIDARITY** Along with other trade unionists from the community, BCGEU Local 1009 chairperson Mike Prystae helps bolster the picket line spirits of library workers in Grand Forks.

CUPE members Renee Milaney, left, and Win Black, centre, and their colleagues have been locked out since Jan. 21 in a fight against employer concession demands.

As this issue of the Comp 10 Report is printed, the strike is moving into its sixth week. News reports indicate that both sides may get back to the bargaining table soon, and a settlement could be near.

## THANK YOU FOR THE MEMORIES

I have been actively involved with the union for about eight years as a shop steward, local chair, and bargaining chair.

It has all been quite a journey for me but unfortunately I have made obligations to my wife and my plate is full at home.

And because of this I will no longer be able to hold the local chair position in Local 1002.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have

mentored me along the way and especially Component 10 executives for their encouraging help and confidence building.

There have been many ups and downs during my time as chair and I will miss helping my fellow Brothers and Sisters of Component 10.

I would like to remain on as the bargaining committee chair for my area into the next round of negotiations.

Finally, to all the staff at the Courtenay area office thank you for all your help it would have been a

lot more difficult without your support.

With all the challenges we have faced down these past years I am

sure that Component 10 and the BCGEU will continue to look out for our jobs well into the future.

Elections for local 1002 executive will be held in the next little while and I am confident the next elected chair will face those challenges head on.



**DYER**

In Solidarity

Reg Dyer  
Local 1002 Chairperson BCGEU

# What's happened to road maintenance?

To the editor:

Twenty to 30 years ago, I lived in a different snow belt; this is back before the government contracted winter road maintenance. What has happened since then?

We'd go to bed, not a snowflake in sight, only to wake up in the midst of a snow storm.

I'd get up and get ready for work, leave and I'd be fighting snow removal traffic all the way through town. I'd head out on my 16 mile trip to the sawmill. The highways were busy with ploughs and sand trucks. It seemed as though the flakes would barely hit the road and a blade would scoop them up. The sand was nice and fine. I don't remember rocks "clacking" off my windshield like they do now.

By the time I was off work, all secondary and side roads were clear; the job was completely done everywhere (on the highways and in town). And I'm not talking "light snow"; I'm talking a full-out Snowfall, with a capital S!

Are the contractors under-bidding the job so far that they can't afford to hire employees or buy the needed equipment? Is sand so expensive that you have to litter the highway with rocks instead? Tell us what is going on here. What are you doing with our taxes?

I have no beef with the snow plough drivers; they are all so very considerate to the traffic. They are always pulling over when ever possible so that vehicles can get by.

There has to be an upper management problem here. You either need to quit under-bidding or you need to pull some of that money back out of your own pockets and hire some more equipment and/or employees.

Why do you have to wait until you get a call or calls before you can do the job? We had a day out here where the roads were glare ice; and they were like that all morning before a sand truck came out.

Thing is, we could all tell the night before that the roads were going to be this way. Man, the vehicles could hardly move, and there were vehicles that couldn't move at all; they were stopped on the highway. Were you waiting for the sun to come out and dry it up or something? Why do you have to wait for the police to ask you to sand a bridge or road?

Ian Brown  
70 Mile, B.C.

-Brown's letter was published in the 100 Mile House Free Press

## Could you repeat that?

Internet/CALM

An old man slowly crossed Pennsylvania Avenue after sitting for while on a park bench across from the White House. He went up to the U.S. marine standing guard and said, "I would like to go in and meet with President Bush."

The marine looked at the man and said, "Sir, Mr. Bush is no longer president and he no longer resides here."

The old man said, "Okay," and walked away.

The following day, the same man approached the same marine, "I would like to go in and meet with President Bush." The marine again told the man, "Sir, as I said yesterday, Mr. Bush is no longer president and no longer resides here."

The man thanked him again, and just walked away.

The next day, the same man approached the White House and spoke to the same U.S. marine, saying, "I would like to go in and meet with President Bush."

The marine was annoyed. He looked at the man and said, "Sir, this is the third day in a row you have been here asking to speak to Mr. Bush. I've told you that Mr. Bush is no longer president and no longer lives here. Don't you understand?"

The old man looked at the Marine and said, "Oh, I understand perfectly... I just love hearing it."

The marine snapped to attention, saluted, and said, "See you tomorrow, sir."

