

# Faculty Matters

Views and News of Douglas College Faculty Association Members

Number 13, Summer 2019

## The Impairment Policy for Employees - safety vs a right to privacy

BY ERIN ROZMAN

I first became aware of the proposed draft Impairment Policy for Employees in December 2018, and I was immediately disturbed by many parts of the draft.



ERIN ROZMAN

One of my primary concerns was for any of our members who were following the direction of their physicians and taking prescribed, or over-the-counter medication. They do so in order to stay at work and complete their courses without disruption, even in the face of medical issues. Further, it has always been my understanding that no faculty member in this position should be forced to disclose private medical information to their Responsible Administrator.

As feedback, I submitted a lengthy document to Rebecca Maurer, AVP Human Resources. In it I detailed my concerns with issues ranging from the purpose statement through the definitions and into the gist of the document. To her credit, Rebecca took many of our members' concerns quite seriously, incorporating some into the next draft of the policy. Unfortunately, the changes made were inadequate by our measure.

The next step was a discussion at Labour Management Relations Committee (LMRC), which resulted in another draft, and then further discussion at the Senior Management Team (SMT) Constituency Group Leaders (CGL) meeting. At this time, both Ryan Cousineau, Local President of the BCGEU, and I made comments and raised concerns about potential misuse of the policy. Our concerns were recorded in

the minutes, and, along with those registered by the DCFA at LMRC, will provide a record of the intent of the College with respect to the policy. This is exceptionally valuable should the policy be misused in the future. At that SMT meeting, I was also assured that, should there be any problems with the implementation of the policy, revisions could be made prior to the posted revision date of October, 2021.

The position of the College from the outset was that the policy became necessary after the legalization of non-medical cannabis on October 17th, 2018. Other institutions within the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators have had varied experiences with the same issue. In some cases, new policies are being drafted, while other institutions feel that their existing policies cover the changes. Our smoke-free policy covered some of the issues raised by the legalization of non-medical cannabis, such as whether or not a College employee or student with a medical need should be accommodated with a smoking/vaping space on campus.

I want to be clear that I understand the need for a policy that ensures safety in the workplace, while addressing the needs of our individual members. We recognize that the workplace should be safe, and that members should not be reporting to work unfit to perform their duties. We believe that the individual member is capable of making such a determination, and that there should be no requirement to report use of medication to one's Responsible Administrator.

The College has been extremely receptive to our suggestions and concerns about this

## INSIDE

### The Impairment Policy for Employees

Erin Rozman 1

### The BC Electoral Reform Referendum

Darin Nesbitt 2

### Ill-gotten gains?

Chris Maguire 3

### Ask Lenny

Len Millis 4

### Academic Freedom

Glen Stanger 5

### Meet Jasmine Nicholsfigueiredo

Ivana Cikes 6

### Interview with Crozier

Raquel Chapdelaine 7

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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## FACULTY MATTERS

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

policy, and I ask you to alert your Area Steward if you feel that the College is applying the policy unfairly. Also, if you have suggestions for further improvement of the language, please forward them to your DCFA representative or directly to Rebecca Maurer, AVP Human Resources.

Many thanks to members of Executive Council and Contract Committee for their feedback on this policy, as well as to members who commented at the January and February DCFA General meetings, or directly communicated their feedback to me. Varying perspectives always help us inform our actions, and we appreciate very much your participation in this process. 

Sincerely, Erin Rozman

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## Taking Stock: The BC Electoral Reform Referendum

BY DARIN NESBITT, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Last year British Columbians were asked to choose between keeping first-past-the-post (FPTP) or using proportional representation (PR) to elect our provincial legislators. Elections BC announced the results of this referendum on electoral reform in late December. 61.3% of ballots cast supported FPTP, an outcome consistent with research showing referendums tend to preserve the status quo. A review of the referendum campaign, who did and did not vote, and the final results provides some grist for future referendums and electoral reform.

Angus Reid Institute surveys indicated about 60% of British Columbians supported the idea of PR prior to the start of the official referendum campaign period on July 1, 2018. Surveys during the campaign signaled divisions over the efficacy of electoral reform and the merits of the proportional representation options. By September, polling suggested voters were almost evenly divided between those who supported, opposed, and were undecided about PR. The rise in the number of undecided voters, despite broad support for electoral reform and the principle of PR, can be explained by the emergence of partisanship and the role of the media.

The referendum campaign turned partisan, with Premier John Horgan and BC Liberal leader Andrew Wilkinson becoming the de facto leaders for proponents and opponents respectively. This was a predictable yet regrettable development. There is no compelling reason why party preference or political ideology should determine one's assessment of PR. Public figures such as conservative commentator Andrew Coyne support PR, while former NDP political strategist Bill Tieleman was one of the organizers of the NO PR campaign. Nonetheless, the positions adopted by the party leaders influenced their followers. An Angus Reid post-referendum poll found that 84% of BC Liberal supporters voted for FPTP whereas 70% of BC NDP and 74% of BC Green supporters voted for PR.


The partisan turn likely did more to undermine than to foster a robust and thoughtful public discussion about electoral reform. Mr. Wilkinson challenged Premier Horgan to a public debate which took place on November 8. The squabbling by the two leaders during the televised debate did not expand knowledge of the choices confronting voters. Indeed, both had an inherent conflict of interest since they had a direct stake in the referendum outcome. In the end, neither leader could credibly claim to be balanced. British Columbians would have been better served had the party leaders remained quietly in the background. Partisanship fuels public cynicism as undecided voters struggle to distinguish principled from crassly strategic party positions on electoral reform.

The No PR side ran a disciplined but negative campaign: the PR options were confusing for voters, PR would lead to unstable minority and coalition governments produced by “back-room deals,” and PR in general would encourage the formation of extremist groups. The proponent side focused on the fairness of proportionality, that votes would no longer be wasted, and that PR would lead to greater legislative accountability and cooperation. Proponents tried youthful messaging such as Mr. Horgan’s televised debate quip “if you were woke, you’d know that pro rep is lit.” Angus Reid surveys revealed that when asked which system should be used for provincial elections, 67% of voters aged 18-34 supported PR whereas 65% of voters 55 and older supported FPTP. Older citizens invariably vote at much higher rates, so it is reasonable to assume age also impacted the outcome.

George Hoff’s study of the 2007 Ontario referendum on electoral reform found the mass media powerfully shaped voters’ preferences. Fair Vote Canada commissioned a study on the BC mainstream print media’s role during the referendum and found clear evidence of bias: a majority of opinion columns opposed both the process to decide the referendum and PR itself, and they tended to focus on dissension between the BC political parties rather than the merits of FPTP and PR. In addition, there was little in-depth investigation by the print media into the accuracy of claims by proponents and opponents. If the media in a democracy is supposed to expand citizens’ understanding of issues and policies, then in this instance the print media failed to do so.

The mail-in ballot return (i.e., turnout) rate likewise raises some questions. Elections BC reported that 42.6% of ballots were

returned, a participation rate that would have entrenched doubts about the legitimacy of the outcome had PR prevailed. It was also lower than the 2005 and 2009 electoral reform referendum turnout rates of 61.48% and 55.12% respectively, although these referendums were held simultaneously with provincial elections which tend to have higher turnouts. Obviously there needs to be further research into why only four in 10 British Columbians mailed their ballots, but there may be merit in claims by some PR opponents that voters had a difficult time understanding the options on the second ballot question which asked them to rank PR preferences. The Canada Post job action must have impacted the response rate, but we can only speculate to what extent it did.

What can we take away from this most recent referendum experience, the third on electoral reform since 2005? There may be good reasons to ensure that a future referendum provides a standard binary (i.e., yes or no) choice for voters rather than ranking preferences. Given that it is inappropriate for those who directly benefit from laws to influence their content, elected officials and governments should stand at some distance from electoral reform initiatives. A broad review of the current referendum law, specifically its financing provisions, should be undertaken to consider, among other matters, whether the current spending limits encouraged strategic campaigning by groups rather than broader engagement with all British Columbians. In the end, a referendum, no matter its outcome, should remind us of the incalculable values of deliberation, decision making, and democracy. 

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## Douglas College’s Surplus: Ill-gotten Gains?

BY CHRIS MAGUIRE

An embarrassment of riches is a figure of speech denoting an overabundance of something, too much for one’s own good. My College has just that – an embarrassment of wealth, an uncomfortable amount of money. With over \$90,000,000 dollars in our coffers, and annual profits that will surpass the ten million mark to total over 100M next year, you would think this cause for celebration. It seems that DC Board and Douglas Senior Management do not want to vaunt this achievement, though. They make scant if any mention of this stash of cash in communiques to their employees or the public. Why not?

First, Douglas College is a non-profit institution. Yes, non-profit. Ironically, it turns a great profit. Sadly, it has amassed this

enormous surfeit almost entirely from its students. Despite their non-profit status, and their inherent community responsibility, our College Board continues to seek more, increasing tuition fees, keeping them, it seems, as high as they can possibly get them. Year after year, domestic tuition fees have been rising by 2% per year, the maximum allowable by law. Worse yet are the increases to International student tuition fees. Foreign learners, who now comprise over 25% of our student body, pay a differential of 550% -- yes, these youngsters pay over five times what Canadians or Landed Immigrants pay. So a little arithmetic shows the truth – over 50% of this operating money comes from off shore. Why is this

significant? Because the Board are bent on increasing the number. They even chose to raise International fees at twice the rate of domestic ones. The rise to international fees this year was 4%, well above the rate of inflation.

Since Canadian citizens pay taxes the visiting learners do not, and will contribute to our society in the future, it makes sense to charge foreigners more, but how high do we go? The differential, which is growing, used to be closer to 3:1, not the gouging 5:1 experienced by our International students today, many of whom are far from rich.

Undeniably, the intellectual, cultural and social benefits of having foreign students are tremendous, and no one should argue

against that. Some, though, claim that the inclusion of international learners keeps tuition fees down for domestic students. Clearly, this is not happening, as Douglas College Board persists in boosting profits by raising the cost of tuition to its legislated maximum. If they were to lower or freeze domestic fees by using rather than banking their revenues, their accounting and financial motives might seem noble, but they do not.

No matter which way you count it, money earned by unnecessarily overcharging students smells foul. If the increases continue unabated, access to our college will be limited to all but the wealthiest students and a few poorer students fortunate enough to win full scholarships. Only with reasonable (affordable) tuition fees can learners have full and equal access to a post-secondary education. Meanwhile, the College operates like a corporation, focusing on the fiscal resources to the detriment of the community. Douglas International scour the more developed parts of the globe, recruiting those scholars who pay the most, thus displacing immigrants, permanent residents and citizens. Why the frenzied focus on the fiscal? Is it really for the new pavilion rumoured to be built across the road on 8th Street? Wait a sec!


That money belongs to the taxpayers of BC, to all of us, or at least it is counted as revenue by the Ministry of Education. It would be unreasonable to expect Douglas College students to shoulder these projected building costs through increasing tuition fees.

It's not just rising tuition that makes our mad stacks of money awkwardly incongruous. Look at past and recent cuts to developmental education, and the loss of the Literacy Program. Then a few years ago the College opted to cut access to domestic ESL learners. The Dental Assistant Program was closed and faculty laid off, even while BC faces a shortage of these professionals. Elsewhere, faculty-driven curricular/program initiatives have suffered. Notably, a proposed Biology degree was nixed for reasons that appear more market-based than pedagogical. Don't forget the English Language Learning and Acquisition Department, who are again laying off faculty, including several regularized members of our bargaining unit. Here the college could mitigate the looming layoffs at very little cost, but have made no effort. Time and again, the Board members follow some cold, bottom-line corporate philosophy, one that ignores the human element in such equations.

It is unclear why we need to amass more money at this time. We should instead act as pacesetters by lowering tuition fees. We should strive to alleviate, not add to the heavy burden carried by today's young scholars. We should sacrifice profits for access and fairness - we should freeze tuitions at the very least. We might also consider using our lucre to establish scholarships that target students in financial need, because, as we all know, increases only widen the gap between social classes.

Our College is flush with cash. Sadly, the College Board have neglected to do the right thing with our abundant wealth. The Douglas Core Values Vision Statement reads, in part:

- that it is our duty to be thoughtful and caring stewards of the personal, physical and fiscal resources entrusted to us. We practice social, environmental and community responsibility.

The Board amass and hoard well enough the "fiscal resources" referenced above, but appear to disregard that vital human part about "community responsibility". I believe that by failing to focus enough on the humanitarian core values, our leaders fail the students and the society we live in. 

## Ask Lenny

Dear Lenny,

I was recently questioned by my Dean about not being available for a meeting with her during Study Break. The Dean told me that I had not indicated on my PD/Vacation form that I was on vacation that week, and that I should be available to the College if I was needed.

I routinely work long days and weekends to prepare for classes and to return assignments in a timely way. I take my work seriously and usually work far more than 40 hours each week. I am insulted and feel devalued by the Dean's questioning my work ethic.

I have two questions.

1. Should I be keeping a record of all the work I do, so that I can prove what I was doing on all the days that I do not mark as Vacation or PD on the forms?
2. Am I to believe that everyone except me blocked off that week as vacation on their PD/Vacation forms? I was in on the Tuesday of Study break, and in walking through my Faculty Area, I saw no signs of faculty presence.
3. (Oops three questions, not two) - If I took three days off during Spring Break because I worked weekends for the previous 5 weeks, am I still expected to identify those days as vacation on the Vacation/PD forms?

Dear Insulted,

Thanks for raising these important questions.

The simple answer is "No" to all three questions.

, but each "No" comes with some important qualifications and clarification.

It would be an impossible task to define exactly how much time each faculty member should spend on activities associated with college instruction. Although the Collective Agreement identifies 16 hours as the contact time for the a full workload, for most instructors,



I expect that professional development, curriculum development, preparation for classes and exams, marking, communications, and the numerous other tasks associated with teaching require considerably more work out of classes than in classes.

With the bulk of faculty work and associated time commitments poorly defined and subject to the professional needs of faculty members, it would be difficult, if not impossible for management to meaningfully monitor faculty work time. The PD/Vacation forms are not adequate as a monitoring mechanism for faculty work, nor are they intended for that purpose. So, what is the appropriate use of the PD/Vacation forms? That question was addressed and resolved in a grievance initiated in 2012 by Erin Rozman, then VP Stewardship. The resolution of the grievance came in a letter from then President, Scott McAlpine. It offered a resolution proposed by Dr. Kathy Denton, then VP Academic and Provost. The letter reads:

*The only purpose of the PD/vacation form is for regular faculty members to block off intended vacation and PD time. Days not blocked off for vacation or PD are days within which you arrange your own work schedule. There is no provision in the collective agreement for recording time worked or for banking time, and you are not being asked to provide that information. We recognize that PD and vacation plans and schedules may change and ask that if*

*your plans change, you update your form to reflect those changes.*

*It is understood that workloads may fluctuate greatly within the accountable time period, and faculty members are responsible for managing their own assigned workload over that time.*

*Other than approved overloads, faculty members cannot bank time for use in the current or subsequent academic year.*

Regarding your first question about recording all the times and days that you work, the grievance resolution makes it clear that you are not expected to keep a record of or account for your work schedule, and the vacation/PD forms do not constitute a work plan for your term or any particular time of year including Study Break.


If some or all of the Study Break days represent days “traded” for days worked on weekends or evenings, it would not be necessary or appropriate to mark those days as vacation days. I expect that some faculty may have booked some or all of the Study Break days as vacation, while others did not, depending on their circumstances.

Study Break week may, for some Departments, be an appropriate time to schedule professional development events or important committee meetings with the expectation that faculty who are not on vacation might reasonably be expected to attend. If your advance planning for the year includes taking vacation during Study Break, or any other time during the

year, marking those times on your PD/Vacation form as vacation, makes it entirely appropriate for you to be unavailable for meetings or other College activity during those times. Otherwise it is reasonable to expect faculty members to be available during Study Break or times other than weekends, general holidays, Vacation days, or PD days.

Faculty members necessarily determine and control much of their own workloads and work schedules. This provides considerable flexibility, and faculty members must rely on their professionalism. Only they can best determine how best to fulfil their work commitments to the College.

The Dean was wrong to use the PD/Vacation form as a basis of her concerns. The Dean may have also been unreasonable in demanding a meeting when you stated you were unavailable, if that meeting could reasonably have been scheduled at another time. However, the Dean is correct in stating that Study Break days are not vacation days simply because there are no classes scheduled that week.

Should you feel insulted because your Dean expressed concerns about your availability? I would suggest not. Deans have the right to be wrong, and when they do make mistakes, they may need to be corrected. 

Sincerely,

*Lenny (aka Len Millis)*

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## Academic Freedom

BY GLEN STANGER, DCFA VP NEGOTIATIONS

The Douglas College statement on Core Purpose, Vision and Values states: “We believe in fostering a dynamic, accessible and supportive teaching and learning environment that prizes excellence and innovation. We value creative and critical thinking and the will to challenge and be challenged.”

This core values statement, in particular, “the will to challenge and be challenged”

forms a fundamental element of academic freedom. The fact that this principle is recognized by the Douglas College Board reflects public expectations of the vitally important role that post-secondary academic institutions play in a constitutional parliamentary democracy and the trust that is bestowed on the Board to govern itself accordingly.

The Douglas College Faculty Association (DCFA) bargaining position is that the Douglas College Academic Freedom policy is insufficient, is inadequately administered, and has not become part of the management culture. For these, and other reasons articulated in this document, including academic freedom language in the collective was ratified by our membership on November 26.



All public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia use a bicameral system of governance whose purpose is to support and protect academic independence and freedom. Section 24 of the College and Institute Act clearly articulates the independent “power and duty” of Educational Council to set academic standards and curriculum and to develop educational policies to exercise its mandate under this section. The legislated composition of Education Council reflects the vital importance of the principle of faculty governance. This principle is also well articulated in the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Statement of Government which includes the rationale that faculty governance deserves the greatest weight in relation to the governing board and its’ administration due to faculty’s subject matter expertise and direct role in teaching and research.

The AAUP’s statement on the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom notes the importance of transparency, “...of institutional matters the grounds for thinking an institutional policy desirable or undesirable must be heard and assessed if the community is to have confidence that its policies are appropriate.” From the same statement, “... the protection of the academic freedom of faculty members in addressing concerns of institutional governance is a prerequisite

for the practice of governance unhampered by fear of retribution.” On this point the Douglas College policy receives a failing grade. There is no protection for faculty who express their opinions on matters beyond their own teaching and curricular responsibilities.

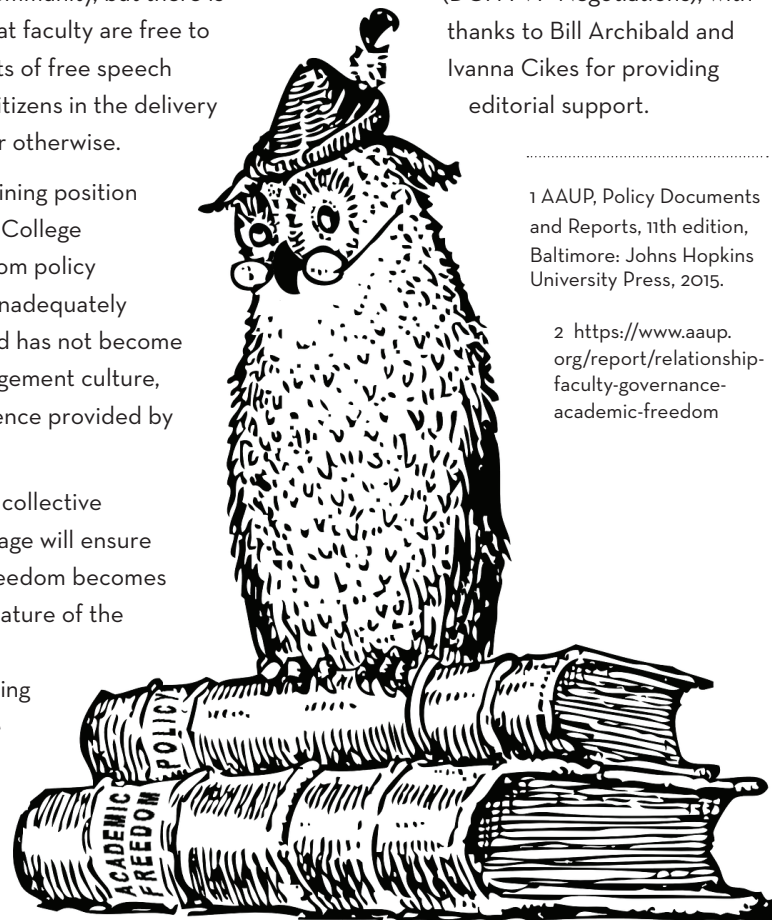
Under the Douglas College policy, faculty are free to engage in service to the institution and community, but there is no expression that faculty are free to exercise the rights of free speech accorded to all citizens in the delivery of that service, or otherwise.

The DCFA bargaining position that the Douglas College Academic Freedom policy is insufficient, is inadequately administered, and has not become part of the management culture, is based on evidence provided by DCFA members.

Fully considered collective agreement language will ensure that academic freedom becomes a recognizable feature of the Douglas College culture and in doing so, faculty will be enabled to fulfill their teaching, research,

and governance responsibilities. It will enhance the College’s ability to meet its’ obligations as a reputable and respected post-secondary academic institution. Now is the time to join the majority of colleges and teaching universities in British Columbia that have academic freedom language in their faculty collective agreement. [fm](#)

Submitted by Glen Stanger (DCFA VP Negotiations), with thanks to Bill Archibald and Ivanna Cikes for providing editorial support.



1 AAUP, Policy Documents and Reports, 11th edition, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015.

2 <https://www.aaup.org/report/relationship-faculty-governance-academic-freedom>

## Meet Jasmine Nicholsfigueiredo

BY IVANA CIKES

Meet Jasmine Nicholsfigueiredo, the current Douglas College representative and the new Chair of the FPSE Education Policy Committee. I asked her some questions about her new position and why she got involved.

### Why did you get involved?

Having served on the Douglas College Education Council Policy Committee for a number of years, I have come to realize that policy is one of the most important aspects

of how the College is run. The College is a large and complex institution, and so there are a myriad of rules to ensure its daily operations run smoothly. Frequently, those policies can seem irrelevant to the daily workings of students and faculty; however, as faculty, we are guided and directed by policies, and they both express our concerns and can help to effect or hinder our needs. Post-secondary education has an important and vital role in bettering the lives of students and making for a more

just and equitable society. Therefore, if we, as educators, wish to have a voice in education, it is up to us to ensure we are creating policy and lobbying the government for change. I knew I wanted to get involved with a committee that had a greater reach and thus broader impact on post-secondary education. When the call came out at Douglas for a representative to serve on the committee, I was eager to contribute and was very pleased when I was elected to the FPSE Education Policy Committee.

## Most interesting thing about this committee?

As elsewhere in higher education, and in keeping with larger trends in globalization, internationalization has been continuing at a rapid pace. While these trends allow for greater diversification within our classrooms, which is undeniably beneficial to both domestic and international students, we need to be careful to ensure a good balance for the optimal education of all our students. We also need to ensure that the increased workloads and particular needs associated with accommodating and teaching International Students does not overwhelm faculty and is supported by sufficient institutional backing. For the past year, the FPSE Policy committee has been

gathering information about the impact of internationalization on higher education in British Columbia. There seems to be a lack of publicly available information and little understanding of our own institutional practices. The committee has worked to address this gap by collecting information relating to internationalization within its membership and by creating a report that has a series of recommendations for both the government and our own institutions to help improve post-secondary institutional reporting on International education.

## How did you become the new Chair?

Although I am a newer member of the FPSE Education Policy Committee, I was encouraged to run by some of the other

institutions around the table. They felt my prior role as Education Council Chair, my knowledge of overall College/University procedures, and my service on the Douglas College Policy Committee, the Status of Women Committee, and the International Committee were all strengths that would serve the committee well. Thus, when they nominated me, I was happy to serve.

## Next Steps?

I will learn from the Committee membership and will continue the good work that has already been happening. I look forward to our next meeting and moving forward with our established strengths and working for greater ones. 

# Interview with Stephen Crozier

BY RACQUEL CHAPDELAINE, PSYCHOLOGY INSTRUCTOR

*In this article, Raquel Chapdelaine (Psychology instructor, HSS, Humanities and Social Sciences) interviews Stephen Crozier (LLPA instructor, English Language Learning & Acquisition Faculty) about The New Westminster & District Labour Council.*

For this issue of Faculty Matters, I interviewed our colleague Stephen Crozier about The New Westminster & District Labour Council (NWDLC). Recently, Stephen was acclaimed president of NWDLC. Below, he gives us information about what the Council does and describes its critical role in labour relations. More importantly, Stephen tells us why we should care about faculty and Union participation in a labour organization such as the NWDLC.

**Raquel Chapdelaine (RC):** First of all, Stephen, I'd like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as President of the New Westminster & District Labour Council!

**Stephen Crozier (SC):** Thank you. It's quite an honour. I was approached about running for president and so I made a few phone calls asking for support. In the end, there was no election as I was acclaimed by the NWDLC delegates in January this year.

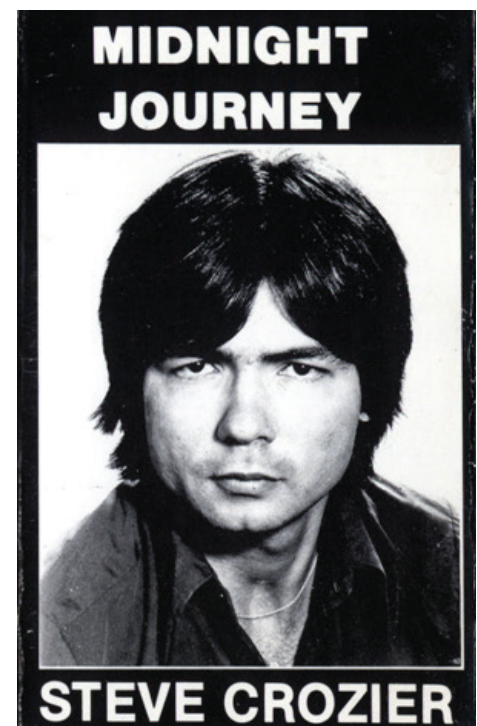
**RC:** I learned that prior to this position,

you were on the Executive Board of the Council as a Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE) Representative for two years. What is the length of your mandate as President of the Council?

**SC:** I'll have the position for two years, from March of this year till March 2021.

**RC:** Stephen, many of our colleagues may never have heard about the NWDLC. Could you please share with us what Council is and what it does?

**SC:** The NWDLC is comprised of a rich mix of unions including the BCTF, CUPE, MoveUp, BCGEU to name a few. We have about 60,000 members, from 14 municipalities, stretching from Burnaby to Langley, and Kwantlen Faculty Association (KFA) and Douglas College Faculty Association (DCFA) are each allowed seven delegates as the two FPSE locals in the area. The Council was founded in 1966. Interestingly, Tommy Douglas was the guest speaker when the Council was formed. Until '66, our area was served by the Vancouver and District Labour Council. We are now one of the most active councils in Canada. We're one of the 17 councils in BC that are



*The cover of a tape recorded in 1986.*

part of the BC Federation of Labour and, also, the Canadian Labour Congress.

**RC:** You say the NWDLC is one of the more active councils in Canada. What exactly does it do?

**SC:** Ah ... yes, well, we meet once a month and there are two important standing committees through which a lot of our activities are directed: the Political Action

Committee and the Community and Social Action Committee. The Political Action Committee plays a role in elections at municipal, provincial and federal levels, and the Community and Social Action Committee is involved in addressing issues in such areas as housing, income and public education. The latest BC budget reflects some of the changes we've been pushing for. For example, students will no longer be paying interest on their student loans. At the municipal level, both the New Westminster and Burnaby city councils have endorsed the #AllonBoard campaign for affordable transit and the ABCplan for poverty reduction. You can search for these initiatives. Also, the New Westminster School Board is now providing menstrual products to school, and that was something we campaigned for with United Way. Basically, we identify political, social and community needs and then we talk to people who can make the changes. We don't give up easily and eventually people listen ... well, at least often. In addition to this, we give political support to people who will make positive changes.

**RC:** Could you please give us three reasons, Stephen, why faculty and Union participation in the Council is important for us at Douglas College?

**SC:** Well, of course, if you see importance in the initiatives like those I've just mentioned, join the NWDLC. This is the number one reason. The NWDLC has a fair amount of influence on political and social issues, especially since we're important members of the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. We've lobbied for a number of other important causes through the years I've been involved: \$15 (an hour) minimum wage, childcare, affordable housing ... you know, things that can make a difference for our members and their families. Most recently, we've contacted all the MPs in our district and discussed the importance of having a universal and publicly administered pharmacare program. Douglas College can be a participant in such important initiatives. Of course, we have FPSE, but the NWDLC, joining with other unions, is another avenue to have our voices heard. Being heard brings up another important reason for involvement. The issues we face at Douglas and in the broader post-secondary sector become part of the discourse at Labour Council and in the community at large. This understanding is important especially if it comes to any kind of job action for which we need community support. Finally, the Council is outward looking. That is, it's about Union activity that goes beyond the boundaries of separate unions. It's inclusive not exclusive and there is mutual support among unions. This builds camaraderie and community and adds strength to political and social initiatives at the grassroots level. Without roots, initiatives die.

**RC:** What would be another example, Stephen, of the effectiveness of The New Westminster & District Labour Council in past, concerning community action and political change?

**SC:** The first thing that comes to mind is the last municipal election. The Political Action Committee interviewed and endorsed a number of candidates for mayors, councillors and school trustees. Sam Otim, an instructor in the Computer Science Department here at Douglas,

and I were both involved in these interviews. The NWDLC endorsed about 100 candidates and two-thirds of those got elected. That speaks to the strength of the Council and the importance of working together to achieve political and social change.

**RC:** In regards to Douglas College participation in the Council, could you please give us more details about our involvement? Also, could you please tell us why we should strive to have Douglas College representation in the Council? For interested folks, what kind of knowledge, time commitment and responsibilities would such representation entail?

**SC:** Presently, counting myself, we have six of seven delegate spots filled: Sam Otim, as mentioned, Andrea Ribalkin, Charles Odoom, Robin Wylie, and Erin Rozman, since as President she's on all committees. But some delegates have trouble participating either because of evening teaching duties or because of the location of the meetings. So we could use one more delegate, but we are also entitled to seven alternates, so eight more in all. Meetings are held at 4333 Ledger in Burnaby.

The process would be to put your name forward to the DCFA. Likely a call for general interest would go out and then the DCFA Executive Council would approve your appointment. Of course, there would be an election if there were more interested people than available positions.

No prior union experience is necessary and it wouldn't necessarily take up very much of your time. There are monthly meetings, the fourth Wednesday of each month except for July and December, but there are also lots of ways to get more involved if you so choose. Google the New Westminster and District Labour Council to find their homepage or talk to me if you want more information.

As for why we should fill these positions, there is much to be done politically and socially at the community level and the NWDLC is an avenue to effect change. Many of us see the breakdown of our social safety net, increased homelessness, unaffordable housing, stagnant wages, increased concentration of wealth ... so many things. We see it, but we don't know what to do about it. The Labour Council is one place you can put your efforts. Of course, there is also the lack of funding for post-secondary education, but much of the public is unaware of this.

**RC:** Thank you, Stephen, for taking the time to speak with me about the Council. Last, but not least, I have heard through the Grapevine that before your many academic and Union appointments, you were the lead singer of a rock band! Is that true? Do tell us more about it!

**SC:** Well, not exactly. I was more of a songwriter and solo performer who occasionally worked with other musicians especially in the recording studio. Where did you get that information anyway?

**RC:** Ah! As you know, a reporter never reveals her sources! Thanks again.

**SC:** Ha, ha! How could I forget? Thank you, Raquel. 