

The Life of an Auxiliary Worker...why you should care?

Who are our Auxiliary Employees?

Our Auxiliary Employees work tirelessly alongside our Regular Full-Time and Regular Part-Time staff to ensure smooth operation of all Township of Langley programs. Although described in the Collective Agreement as "any other employee", these auxiliary employees are a vital part of everyday life in the Township.

Typically, auxiliary employees fill the gaps left by regular employees. These gaps could be due to illness, training, a 'Leave of Absence', vacation, special projects, etc, etc...

Our auxiliary employees receive training to meet the needs of a variety of different positions. Often they are called on to work at one or more classifications in any given week, on short notice, and at various work sites and offices. This work can include night shifts and statutory holidays. Auxiliary employees need to be flexible, adaptable, and used to not having a desk or an office to call 'home'!

Technically our Auxiliary Employees do not receive many of the benefits that regular employees are privileged to enjoy. They are not entitled to paid sick days; they are not entitled to paid vacations; there are limited provisions for overtime; they do not qualify for extended health or dental benefits; often their training options are limited; they do not receive extra pay for working on statutory holidays; there are no guarantees for hours of work but they must remain available according to their 'contract' with the employer.

In lieu of the above, they receive a percentage on top of their wages to compensate. It can be argued by some that this percentage does not adequately cover the loss of benefits and/or protections that come with their auxiliary status.

Why should we care about the Auxiliary Employee work force?

Those that enjoy the full protections and benefits of the Collective Agreement are often unaware of the cares and concerns of their fellow Auxiliary employees. Being a regular full or part-time employee at the Township of Langley keeps them too busy to give thought to what these employees face. So why should they care?

The wave of the future at the Township of Langley and at many other employers in the province is to use auxiliary or casual staff. Why?

One reason is that these employees are less costly to the employer. Without the added benefits and privileges, costs are reduced. Because they are not on a 'set

schedule' for work times and locations, they are more available to the employer for assignments on short notice.

The result to the employees is often a disrupted family life and a lack of financial stability. While regular staff may not notice this, they must be mindful of the fact that this method of employment is the wave of the future and their own children or spouses may feel the effects in their current or future search for employment.

It may not affect directly, but it may affect someone you love in the near future.

What can we do?

We can be aware. We can be mindful. We can be personally supportive to our brothers and sisters who are Auxiliary Employees.

Although this support is not measureable financially, it is still of tremendous benefit in the fight to ensure fairness for all. We can support the Executive in their continued fight to re-establish rights for Auxiliary employees through the Collective Bargaining process.

Do we have suggestions? Can we volunteer time or information? Can we get to know someone who works as an Auxiliary? Can we figuratively put ourselves in their shoes for one day, think about how it would be to live not knowing how many hours of work you would have in any given week?

Think about not knowing whether to buy that new car or new house because of financial instability. Think about being away from your family to work on statutory holidays for straight pay. And think about not having medical or dental benefits to cover expensive prescriptions...these considerations won't cost us a thing but it may shape our decisions when it's time to shape a contract proposal and/or vote on a contract.

Let's make sure these employees are protected and offered the freedom to enjoy the benefits that we as regular employees sometimes take for granted.

So let's make 2011 the year that we gain some victories for Auxiliary workers. Let's step up and give them a voice...and even better, let's make it a loud one.

In solidarity,

The Executive of CUPE 403