

Benefits Bargaining, CLC Winter School
Harrison Hot Springs, February 10-13, 2015

COPE 491 is currently in bargaining with the Employer and as it is my first round of negotiations I wanted to make sure I obtained as much education and knowledge as possible.

I registered for ***Pensions: for Union Executives and Bargaining Committees*** but the course was cancelled due to low registration. I was offered the chance to switch into ***Benefits Bargaining*** which I accepted.

The course was 3 days, with 2 evening plenary sessions. We learnt about

- different types of pensions, and why we need to fight for Defined Benefit Plans;
- COLA pertaining to LTD;
- protecting the Union's benefits with wording in the Collective Agreement;
- what information to request from the Employer and our rights to that information;
- EAP: it's only good if it's being used, otherwise it's a waste of money;

70% of benefit renewals sent to Employers are incorrect, and then Employers bargain with the incorrect numbers in mind.

We had 5 guest speakers:

1. Pacific Blue Cross
Group Insurance Costing
2. Two Union lawyers from Victory Square Law Office
 - a) Benefits
 - b) Pensions
3. Canadian Labour Congress Labour Participant Developer
Union Counselling
4. Labour Relations Board Mediator (formerly CEP member)
Pensions
5. WE Consulting & Benefits Services Ltd.
Pensions

I'm so grateful I was given this opportunity. By no means am I now an expert, but I've learnt so much and feel a bit more prepared to sit across from CUPE at the table.

Respectfully submitted,

Karina Sheardown