

THE | PROFESSIONAL

Professional Employees Association | Volume 48 Issue 2

BC's Union for Professionals

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The fall of 2022 has been a busy time here at the PEA, with collective bargaining in progress across many of our chapters. BC public sector unions continue to be at different stages of bargaining and are collectively subject to public sector bargaining mandates. As of early October, the current offer on the table for the Government Licensed Professionals (GLP) chapter is in line with the BCGEU and HEU's tentative agreements, and GLP bargaining remains ongoing.

Tabled GLP General Wage Offer

April 1, 2022: \$0.25 per hour increase and a 3.24% GWI to be applied across all rates of pay. For the GLP, this would increase rates of pay by an average of 3.79%. The value of the flat \$0.25 per hour equals an approximate increase of 0.55% for the average GLP member.

April 1, 2023: Increase rates of pay for the first pay period after April 1, 2023 by the annualized average of BC CPI over 12 months starting on March 1, 2022 to a minimum of 5.5% and a maximum of 6.75%.

April 1, 2024: Increase rates of pay for the first pay period after April 1, 2024 by the annualized average of BC CPI over 12 months starting on March 1, 2023 to a minimum of 2.0% and a maximum of 3.0%.

The GLP bargaining committee has been at the table since last April and have been working hard to solidify a tentative agreement for the members. As a member of the GLP chapter, I extend my thanks to the committee for their efforts. These members are

making significant sacrifices on our behalf to bargain the best possible deal.

Bargaining is also ramping up for the University of Victoria chapter, and the Family Maintenance Agency chapter, which recently reported a strong strike vote with 92 per cent of the membership in favour. Other chapters who fall under the mandate and are in varying stages of bargaining include the Oil and Gas Commission, Health Science Professionals, and Legal Aid BC.

The PEA has been working closely with other unions to strategize and coordinate strike activities. In June, GLP members voted 91 per cent in favour of a strike, and on August 17 gave 72-hour strike notice. Around this time, the PEA also delivered a letter of solidarity to the BCGEU in support of their picket lines. Many of our members in the GLP work closely with BCGEU members; they are our friends and family. A GLP walkout was being planned for the week of August 22, as part of an escalating action to pressure the government for an improved offer at the bargaining table. As plans were being confirmed for the walkout, the BCGEU announced they were returning to the bargaining table and requested that the GLP and all other unions support them by pausing their planned job actions.

Reports came back that significant progress was being made at the bargaining table, and on August 30, the BCGEU removed their picket lines and overtime ban as a gesture of good faith. On September 7, they announced that a tentative agreement had been reached. We will know whether their deal is ratified on October 17, 2022.



Throughout this process, our GLP leaders were very aware of the September 21 deadline for activating their strike vote. If they didn't take job action by this date, they would have to go back to their members for another vote. They asked the employer for an extension to the deadline, and the employer initially refused. It was decided that the entire GLP chapter would begin job action on September 14. After learning of this plan, the employer agreed to extend the strike deadline to October 28, and job action was called off.

The next month promises to be an unpredictable time for the many PEA chapters who remain in bargaining. My thanks again to all of you who make time to sit on bargaining committees and advocate for the priorities of your chapters.

The best results in any round of bargaining are achieved when members show strong support for their bargaining committee. Please take every chance you can to engage with your chapter and participate in meetings, town halls and votes. And send a thank you to your bargaining team if your chapter is currently at the table.

In solidarity,

Shawna

ABOVE: GLP Labour Relations Officer Melissa Moroz gives a rousing speech about GLP members issuing 72-hour strike notice in support of BCGEU public sector workers. From left to right: BCGEU President Stephanie Smith, BCGEU Press Secretary Danielle Marchand, PEA Labour Relations Officer Melissa Moroz, and Victoria Labour Council President Darlene Rotchford. Look closely for BCFED President Laird Cronk, on the far left.

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BOTTLETOP BRIDGE REBUILD. Photo: Kelly Funk Photography



PEA PERSPECTIVE

The PEA has been focused on collective bargaining in 2021 and 2022, with all chapters at the table at one time or another. Thank you to PEA members for supporting their bargaining committees, and of course to our bargaining committee members for making such a significant commitment.

While bargaining is important for addressing key member issues, so are awareness building and continuous lobbying of key stakeholders. Our members and staff have been busy in this regard as well. For example, in the lead up to bargaining, the PEA worked with chapters on a variety of campaigns to build public awareness and lobby government on important issues. These included the following actions:

- o Multiple meetings with government to raise awareness of the inequities faced by GLP members when it comes to pay for responding to emergencies like wildfires and floods. Members met with BC's parliamentary secretary Jennifer Rice and with a large number of MLAs. Our meeting with Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth included a tour with PEA engineers of a bridge on the Coquihalla highway.
- o A campaign to raise public awareness around recruitment and retention issues for professionals within the public service, which reached 320,000 people on social media.
- o Meetings with the Ministry of Health leadership to discuss the significant recruitment and retention issues faced by health science professionals.
- o A video produced by the Family Maintenance Agency chapter promoting the value of the work our lawyer members do. The video reached 62,000 people through social media.

o Multiple submissions and a presentation to the province’s Standing Committee on Finance focused on various chapter priorities and the need for government action. This committee makes recommendations on the 2023 BC budget.

Public Sector Bargaining and Wage Offer

The Public Sector Employers’ Council (PSEC) has been tightly controlling public sector bargaining on the employer side since the mid-’90s. This trend continues in 2022. With such a consolidated approach on the employer side, it is imperative that BC’s public sector unions maintain a coordinated approach. The BC Federation of Labour helped us to achieve this by organizing regular meetings of the affiliate unions under PSEC wage mandates. These meetings were an opportunity to articulate priorities and share strategy and information.

Under the PSEC regime, it is the large unions like BCGEU and HEU that set the wage pattern for the public sector. Full cost of living protection was not achieved, but these increases are much higher than any reached since PSEC was put in place. For example, the average annual increase over the period from 2011 to 2021 was 1.68 per cent.

The GEU tentative agreement was reached after job action. Thanks to our Victoria members who supported GEU members on the picket line. Given the importance of a fair wage settlement, GLP members voted 91 per cent in favour of their strike vote, and FMA members voted 92 per cent in support of theirs. The PEA does not strike often, but these are certainly interesting times.

Members in the BCGEU and HEU will finish voting on the settlements in mid-October.

Inflation is a major concern for our members and for workers generally. The Bank of Canada continues to aim for a CPI (consumer price index) of 2 per cent, in a range of 1 to 3 per cent.

The following table from the Conference Board of Canada and TD Bank sets out CPI projections for British Columbia:

YEAR	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
	2.8%	7.3%	4%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%

So definitely interesting times on the bargaining front and more broadly with global uncertainty, rising interest rates and the fact that so far in 2022, inflation has hardly budged.

Scott McCannell
Executive Director

RIGHT: GLP members Vikram Verma, Dan Cossette and Kent Hodgson with Minister Farnworth (second from right) at Bottletop Bridge on the Coquihalla Highway. The group met to discuss the work of engineers during provincial emergencies. Photo: Kelly Funk Photography







EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

RESEARCHING THE LANDSCAPE CHANGES CAUSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

WORDS JESSICA NATALE WOOLLARD

PHOTOS AARON LUTSCH

Bad science circulating on social media compelled Alina Fisher to return to academia to help set the record straight.

The UVic Research Manager had completed a bachelor's degree with a focus on zoology at the University of Alberta in 1997. Soon after, she began a master's program in environmental biology but paused her studies as she and her husband welcomed two daughters one year apart.

Fifteen years later, the rise of fake news and misinformation in the social media age instigated her return to graduate school, this time with a new focus: science communication.

"My Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram feeds were constantly flooded by pseudo-science—wrong claims that sound scientific," Fisher explains. "I thought, why don't I try to do some work that figures out why this is going on? Why this is so prevalent?"

In 2017, Fisher completed the master's program in professional communication at Royal Roads University, where she was a finalist for the Governor General's Gold Medal for her work exploring how social media messaging affects the public's understanding of conservation issues.

Two years later, she began her PhD in environmental studies at UVic. Her doctoral research straddles two worlds—natural science and the social sciences.

The science communications focus is for scientists, she notes.

"Those of us in the sciences, we're excited about things we do, but nobody ever taught us how to communicate with people who aren't already in our field," she says.

It's territory Fisher is amply qualified to chart.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Alina holding one of the first does being fitted for a collar on the Oak Bay deer project in 2018. Doing summer field work in the Willmore Wilderness area of Alberta. Doing repeat photography at Waterton Lakes National Park as part of the Mountain Legacy Project (mountainlegacy.ca). Photos: Alina Fisher

Not only does her PhD fuse science and science communications, it also incorporates her role at UVic as a manager of environmental research projects.

In 2004, Alina and her partner moved from Alberta to Victoria, where Fisher's husband, Jason, was a PhD student (he is now an adjunct professor in the department of environmental studies). That same year, she joined the staff at UVic, beginning in Research Services then moving into her first PEA position as a project manager at the Laboratory for Automation Communications and Information Systems Research.

In 2008, she made a key professional move: she accepted a new PEA position, this time as a part-time research manager in the environmental studies department—the same department she is now a PhD candidate in.

In this role, Fisher has her fingers in many different pots. She works with the faculty on grant administration, starting from the preparation of grant applications and the hiring of researchers (students and non-students alike) to the purchasing of specialty equipment needed to do the work. She also helps collect, manage and analyze scientific data resulting from the research, and prepares it to be shared with the granting institution and the scholarly community.

The very first project she worked on—and one she continues to be involved with—has informed part of her doctoral research. The Mountain Legacy Project is an online archive of historic survey and contemporary repeat photos of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, designed with the objective of demonstrating changes to the landscapes over time. The project team is in the process of retaking some 120,000 original surveyor photographs—many dating as far back as the 19th century—of the Alberta and BC Rockies as well as coastal BC.



Examined side-by-side, the historic photo and the repeat photo give researchers a better understanding of climate change and other ecological processes over time, and can inform what kind of restoration work may be effective.

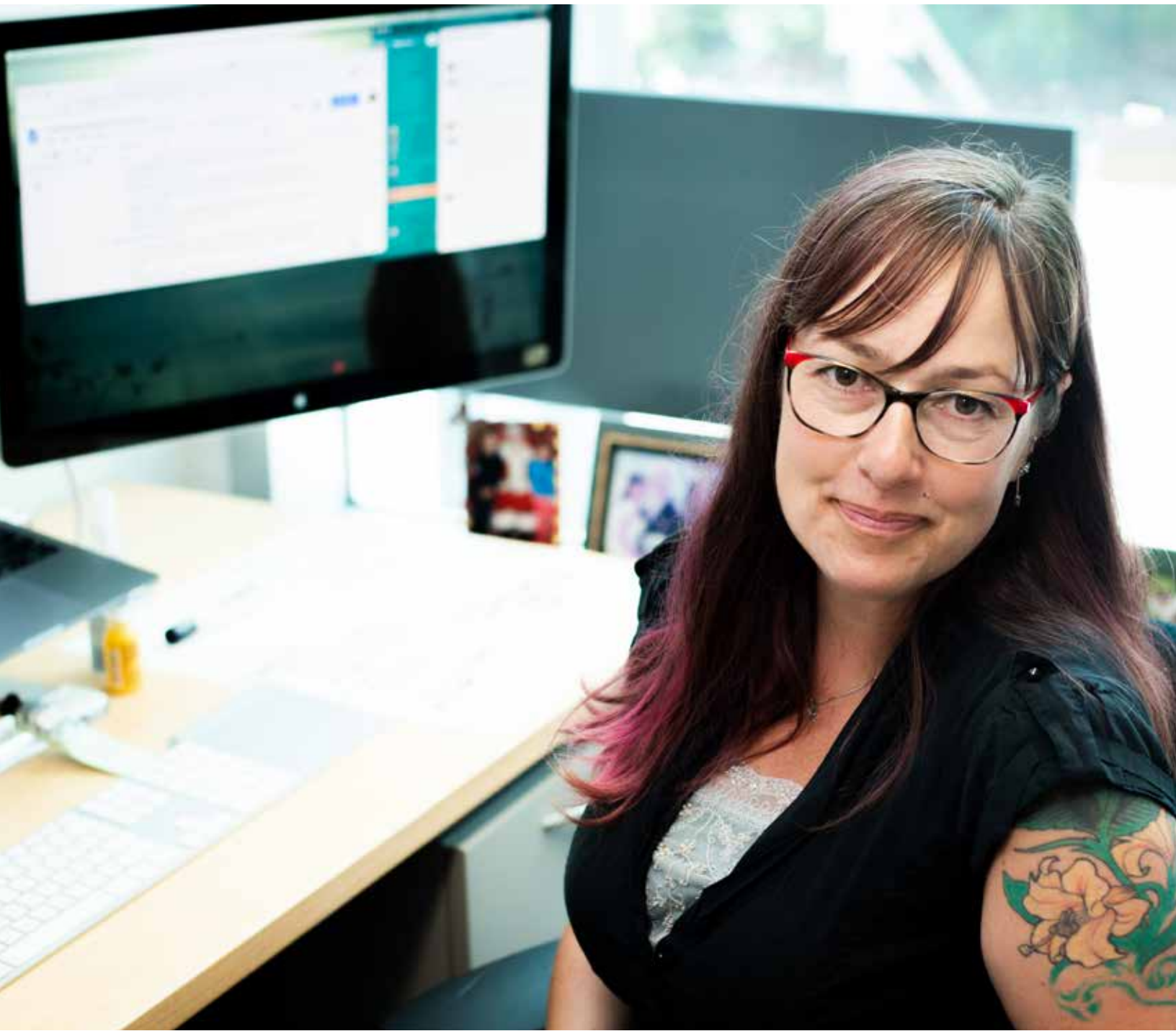
Fisher notes that the changes visible in the contemporary photos compared with the historic ones are stunning. “You can see the effects of climate change on the treeline and glaciers, and the effects of having eliminated cultural burning by First Nations. A lot of the forests have infilled. They used to be much more open, but now, without the cultural burning that used to take place, they are just jam-packed. Jasper, for example, is shocking.”

Fisher’s thesis has two parts. One focuses on wildlife that inhabit the eastern slope of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, investigating where they live and in what numbers, and how they are responding to landscape changes caused by factors such as climate change and development.

The second part focuses on the social science and communications aspects of this subject. How do the people who reside in these areas perceive current efforts toward species conservation and the restoration of species? Are there differences in attitude between people who live in the region compared with those who don’t?

“I’m hoping my research is going to help inform more effective conservation and restoration where wildlife are concerned,” Fisher says.

In addition to studying photographs, she will conduct focus groups to speak with people about their perceptions of the effectiveness of conservation and how it has impacted those who live near and around wildlife.



This is the one area of her research that was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the most part, her work and studies continued as usual during the lockdown, only from home instead of in the office or classroom. But the restrictions prevented her from traveling to the Rockies to meet with her focus-group participants in person, an inconvenience that delayed her work by about a year, she estimates.

If anyone can make up for lost time, it's Fisher. She is the type of person who gets things done. She sets her schedule and sticks to it, delivering on time and never asking for accommodation. Without hesitation, she will restrict her own free time in order to be there, in full, for her teen daughters, her family, her work and her education.

"Apparently I thrive on being ridiculously busy," she laughs, adding that her time-management skills were honed in part while completing the project management professional (PMP) designation during the early years of her career at UVic.

Throughout her PhD studies, she has not asked for extra days off from work and uses vacation days when her research requires time away. She knows her department would support her if she needed an accommodation, but thus far she hasn't.

"I work with amazing people," she says. "My department is really collegial, and they support my work and the fact that I have this dual role—both as an employee and a student."

Significantly, her family has also supported her continuing education. When she was preparing for her doctoral comprehensive exams and needed to study all day every day for an extended period, her husband took over primary care of their daughters. The girls understood that their mom had important work to get done. Fisher passed her exams, thanks to their support.

Fisher has only one time-management trick to share, and it's about intentionality: be mindful and present, no mat-

ter what you're working on. "It's making sure I'm not being piecemeal, because then it feels piecemeal all the time," she explains.

As another school year kicks off, and another round of collective bargaining begins for the UVic PEA chapter, Fisher expresses gratitude for the support of her employer and union.

"I have been so impressed with what has been done by those involved with collective bargaining," she says. "I've gone through it a number of times; I've never been unhappy with the outcomes."

This fall, she'll also be teaching a class on science communication. The enrolment numbers show how quickly this emerging field is growing: the course was full within a week of opening.

With the vast amounts of science news—real and fake—flooding social media, Fisher and her colleagues in the scientific community have their work cut out for them.

"I believe that misinformation spreads because it touches us deeply; it creates an emotional connection. Whereas science is stated matter-of-factly, and hence only exciting to us scientists," Fisher explains.

"In part, scientists need to learn how to communicate clearly (without jargon) and connect with our target audiences (to allow that emotional connection). But also, science communication scholars can help people understand how misinformation may be targeting them to manipulate them to spread it."

Adds Fisher, "I don't think we'll ever be free of misinformation on social media, but I'm hopeful that we'll learn how to inoculate people against it."

2022 SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY WINNERS

For 29 years, the PEA has been giving scholarships and bursaries to PEA members and their families. This year, the Awards Committee was pleased to double the amount of \$1,000 scholarships and award 20 PEA members and their relatives who are profiled here.

A total of 108 scholarship applications were received and those that met the eligibility criteria were entered into a random draw.

In addition, the number of bursaries was also doubled this year and 20 awards of \$500 each were given to the following members: Laurel Albina, Nick Hamilton-Balyi, Clayton Botkin, Eleanor Good, Miranda Harvey, Daniel Hogg, Loretta Laurin, Wilson Li, Subodha Senanayake Liyanage, Megan Nicholls, Lauren Odobas, Colin Park, Jeremy Pearce, Jennifer Pennock, Mark Rankin, Nour Sahib, Anna Stemberger, Anna Tobiasz, Joanne Tran, and Catherine Wiersma.

Applications for the 2023 scholarship and bursary awards will reopen in the spring. For more details visit pea.org/bursaries



"As a grade 12 student I've received early acceptance to UNBC, where I plan to pursue an undergraduate degree in psychology and then potentially apply for a teaching degree."

Madison Tait



"My goal for my education is to get a degree as an environmental engineer and hopefully, eventually educate others on the importance of combatting climate change."

Quinn Tobin



"Once finished my education I will have a bachelor of science in nursing from the University of the Fraser Valley and I plan to work in a hospital and gain further experience once graduated."

Paige Owens



"I am taking Russian and Ukrainian now in Slavic studies and although I don't know what my future job will be, maybe I will be able to work for the Canadian government since I also am fluent in Japanese."

Mily Yasue



"I hope to focus on a career in the social sciences and am particularly drawn toward understanding how social cultures change over time due to worldwide events."

Janneke Beckers



"I am in my second year of marine biology with minors in ocean science and business, and after graduating I hope to get a job in marine research and restoration."

Victoria Kalyniuk



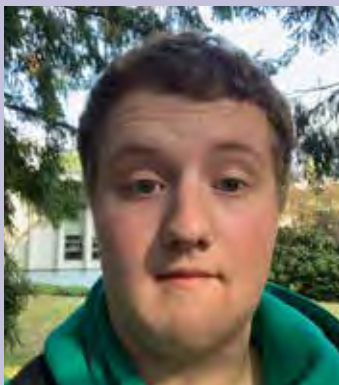
"As a nursing student at UNBCO, my future goal is to become a nurse and then pursue further education to become either and NP, physiotherapist or nurse manager."

Luke Hanson



"After my mental health and addictions program is finished, I plan to continue my studies by getting either a teaching degree or a degree in criminal justice."

Jessica Derow



"My plan is to obtain a bachelor of engineering and then work in the field for a number of years before going back to school for a master of architecture."

Timothy Mellings



"I am working to complete a masters of science in natural resource management at UNBC and hope to work as a research silvicultural ecologist or in a position that bridges forest stewardship and ecosystem and habitat management."

Erin Hall



"I am currently finishing my first year of elementary education at the University of Victoria and my goal is to become a French immersion primary teacher in the public school system."

Nova Long



"I have been accepted to University of Guelph and to the veterinary technology program, which will allow me to take the Veterinary Technician National Examination to become a registered vet tech".

Raven Van Netten



"I want to pursue a career as a professional, so after getting a first degree I will be applying to grad school or law school. I am interested in social and environmental issues."

Declan Cook



"I have chosen to follow in the footsteps of my parents by entering public service. I am pursuing a bachelor's degree of education at the University of Alberta, with the hopes of returning to Northern BC to begin my licensed career."

Emma Moore



"After earning a bachelor's degree of applied sciences at UBC, my goal is to work as a chemical engineer in a research capacity."

Silas Leske



"My goal is to finish my studies in sociology, political science and geography in my undergraduate degree and hopefully pursue a masters degree in political sociology or evidence-based social policy in the future."

Zofia Svec



"After completing my bachelor of arts in psychology, I plan to work in the areas of marketing, communications and design and also pursue a masters of business administration."

Mary Falade

"My goals are to become a future engineer so that I can create more sustainable and efficient technologies that positively impact society."

Himmat Dhadli



"In the fall I will be attending the University of Victoria to study languages and global development, with the hope of one day becoming an international development worker."

Paige Deedman

"My education will directly impact my current work in providing pedagogy consultations that work towards creating equity-based education and creating anti-racist policies and practices within higher education."

Randeep Nota

PEA UPDATES

PEA EXECUTIVE

The PEA executive and staff will meet virtually on October 24 and 25 for strategic planning.

BARGAINING UPDATE

The following PEA chapter's collective agreements expired in 2022:

Government Licensed Professionals – March

Health Science Professionals – March

Family Maintenance Agency – March

University of Victoria – June

Oil and Gas Commission – June

Legal Aid BC – September

PEA EDUCATION CONFERENCE

We are currently planning the PEA Education Conference for April 21 and 22, 2023, in Victoria. Members will be invited to submit expressions of interest in November 2022. Visit pea.org/conference.

ORL AGM AND ELECTIONS

We are pleased to announce the new ORL Executive Committee members and officers who will begin their terms in January 2023:

- Chair: Ashley Machum
- Vice-Chair: Kristy Hennings
- Secretary-Treasurer: Naomi Van Caillie
- Health and Safety: Richard Kicksee
- Local Rep North: Michelle Wellingham
- Members at Large: Sandra Bernier and Tara Thompson
- Joint Standing Committee: James Stuart

BC FEDERATION OF LABOUR CONFERENCE

Ten PEA members and three PEA staff will attend the BC Federation of Labour's 60th convention from November 21 to 25, 2022. The PEA hopes to put forward a

resolution in favour of the continuing solidarity and collaboration among public sector unions in future rounds of bargaining.

GLP GRANTS AND DONATIONS

GLP members can submit requests for funding of up to \$200 for an activity or event to the GLP Grants and Donations Committee. Grants and donations are administered by the GLP executive based on their consistency with the chapter's strategic plan or promotion of the Association and GLP chapter.

For the full eligibility considerations and policy visit our chapter webpage. All grant and donation requests must be submitted using the online form at pea.org/chapters/glp/grant-form

Remember to submit your online request early and before December 2022 for year-end events!

CONGRATULATIONS

We wish long-serving GLP members and local reps Curt Nixon, Mark Scott, and Rene Garcia-Daguer all the best in their retirement.

Congratulations as well to UVic member, Susan Dempsey on her retirement.

If you would like to acknowledge a retiring PEA member, please email editor, Jordana Whetter (jwhetter@pea.org).



ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Pride is back! PEA Labour Relations Officers, Melissa Moroz, Rhiannon Bray, and Sam Montgomery show their PEA spirit at the Victoria Pride Parade



ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Jordana Whetter and Toshie Arakawa (and Bert) represented the PEA at the Victoria Labour Day at Gyro Park.

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P|E|A
EDUCATION
CONFERENCE

APRIL
21 & 22
2023

Call for expressions
of interest will open
in November 2022
pea.org/conference

SAVE
THE
DATE