



Conference Report

Name: Joel Swaan

Conference: Costing Out A Contract

Date: October 7, 2021

Location: Industrial Labor & Relations School,
Cornell University via Zoom

SUMMARY

Billed as a “practical, how-to-workshop to give union negotiators and bargaining committee members the skills they need to prepare for contract negotiations, including how to calculate the projected costs of an agreement,” this one day session dealt with costing a collective agreement, calculating percentage and dollar increase costs, with practice as a mock bargaining union costing out contract proposals.

The course is a part of a four-day Labor Leadership Skills Boot Camp, with Steward Training, Effective Communications, and Basic Negotiation Skills as the other courses that combine to earn a Labor Leadership Skills Certificate. This course had the greatest applicability towards creating an opening package and bargaining in general; all of the other registrants were completing the four-day certificate program.

It was interesting to work with leaders in other unions from around the states – my group had a New York City sheriff, a Californian ship captain with 30 days on/30 days off, an Alaskan electrical worker, a hospital dispatcher, and others who were building their negotiation skills but with significantly different considerations necessary for their collective agreements.

We went through the various parts of a collective agreement with cost implications including the hidden rollup costs to the employer that are attached to labour costs (such as pension), and the compounding of costs year over year. There was value in going over the exercise and analyzing the intricacies of costs within an agreement. Ultimately, there would likely be greater benefit to those newer to union leadership in working through all four days towards the Labour Leadership Skills Certificate.

I appreciate that I was able to attend, and I look forward to applying what I learned to the creation of an opening package, and through the bargaining process. Thanks to the provincial executive for allowing me to attend.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Swaan