



Conference Report

Name: Joel Swaan

Conference: Preparation for
Collective Bargaining

Date: November 15-16, 2021

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

SUMMARY

The two-day online Preparation for Collective Bargaining course through Cornell University's Labor Relations School provided the opportunity to work through and discuss factors that go into preparing an opening package, and strategies for negotiations.

Instruction dealt with labour strategy including: the social and substantive contracts between labour and management, the strategies for changing these contracts, and the cooperation that may or may not be required to foster change. Participants were taken through a four-phase bargaining methodology: 1. Gathering Information (The Business Perspective, The Current Collective Bargaining Agreement, Profiling the Bargaining Unit, Information about the Union, External Factors); 2. Information Analysis (Review for Applicability and Relevance, Compile, Assessment & Costing); 3. Setting Management Objectives (Establish Management's Non-Economic Objectives, Establish Management's Economic Objectives, Anticipate Union Issues and Develop Management's Response, Identify Potential Strike Issues, and Management's Recommended Final Position); and 4. Negotiating Strategy.

Key to negotiating any clause is asking the question, "What is the Problem we are trying to Solve?". Digging deeper, what are the Goals we want to achieve/advance for: our contract, our members, our union, our community, our profession, and our labour movement? Some industry questions worth asking include "What's on the horizon?", "What are some national and international trends?", "What seems like 'it will never happen here...?'", and "What Should be happening here?". Other thoughtful takeaways include: "Don't bargain what can be managed" and "What's the behaviour change we're going to get [by bargaining a specific clause or wording]?"

As is usual for these courses, about 60% of the time was used for instruction, with the remaining 40% was for application of theory through a practical exercise. The group was divided into those bargaining economic factors for a fictitious company, and those bargaining working conditions. Presentations were made, evaluated, and dissected. For those who haven't been at the bargaining table before, this would be excellent practice.

This professional development provided me the opportunity to reinforce that which I know about bargaining, and to give insight into the process in some new thoughtful ways. Thanks to the provincial executive for allowing me to attend.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'J' followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to a point.

Joel Swaan