

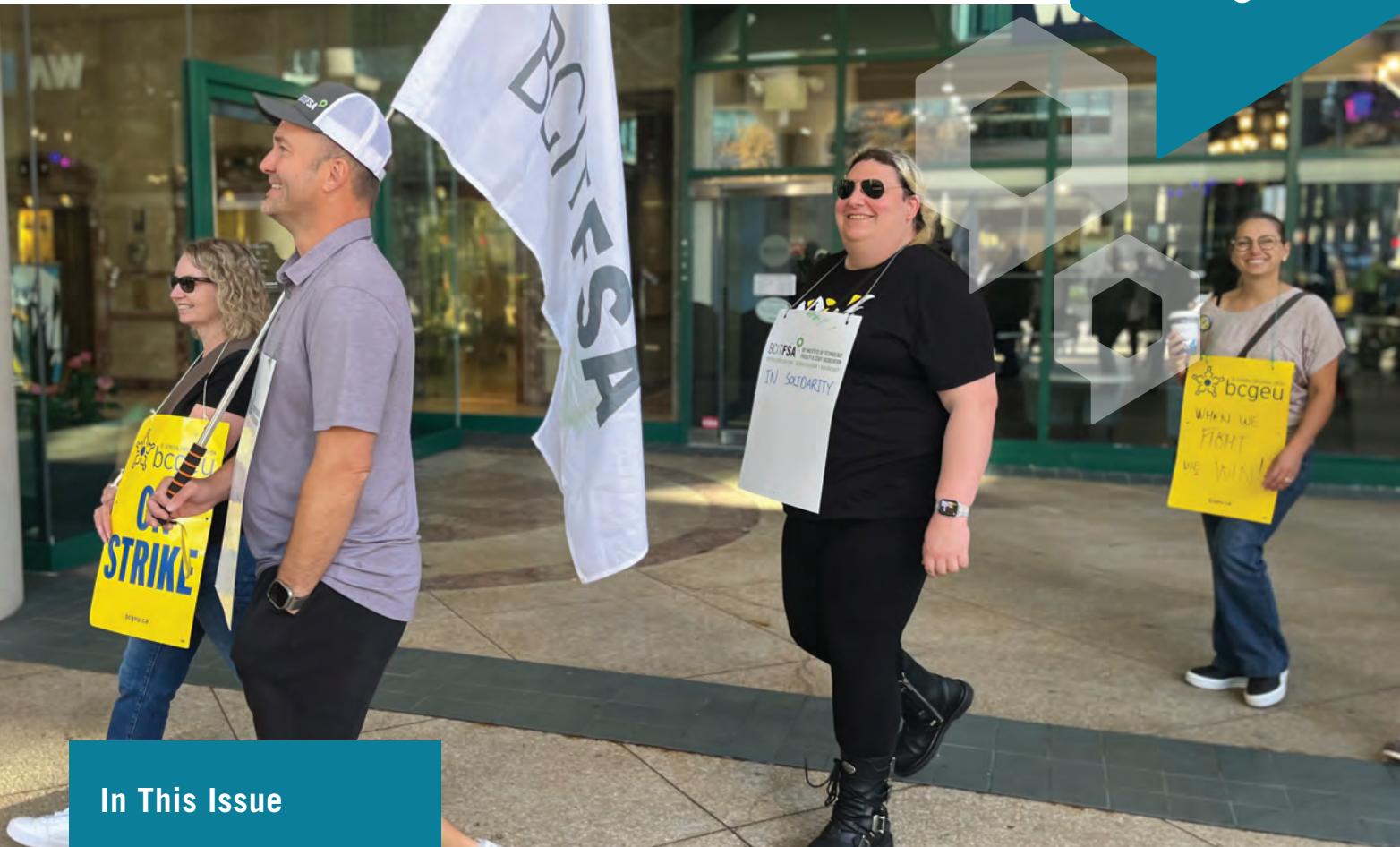


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# BCIT FSA VOICE



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The BCITFSA and its members' workplaces are located on unceded Indigenous land belonging to the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



## UNPAID WORK WON'T FLY

When CUPE coined the slogan “Unpaid work won’t fly” last summer, it drew attention to a longstanding injustice in Canadian aviation. Many flight attendants are expected to perform vital duties while the plane sits on the ground—boarding, deplaning, safety checks, assisting passengers with mobility or medical needs, responding to emergencies and delays. Yet these hours often go unpaid.

In 2025, the issue reached a tipping point. The Air Canada flight-attendant strike unfolded rapidly: after negotiations collapsed, workers walked off the job in a nationwide stoppage that immediately disrupted Air Canada’s operations. The federal government responded with an extraordinary back-to-work order by invoking Section 107 of the Labour Code, aimed at forcing flight attendants to return to duty. But CUPE publicly defied the directive, arguing it violated workers’ rights and ignored the core issue of unpaid ground time. Faced with mounting cancellations, public pressure, and the union’s unified stand, Air Canada capitulated within hours, agreeing to return to the bargaining table and effectively ending the labour disruption.

But while this fight was underway at 30,000 feet, a similar battle remains largely invisible on the campuses of Canada’s colleges, institutes and universities. According to the BCITFSA’s national affiliate the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), many—including what they call “contract academic staff” and we call PTS faculty—regularly work extra hours for *no pay*.

Here at BCIT, PTS faculty (sometimes labeled Flexible Learning instructors) often find themselves doing similar kinds of unpaid labour that flight attendants are now demanding pay for: drafting course outlines, setting up the LMS (Brightspace by D2L), uploading materials, preparing assignments, marking exams, reporting grades, attending marks-meetings, participating in accessibility or academic-conduct processes, and mentoring or advising students. Some of this work is conducted after the course—and therefore their compensation—formally ends.

This invisible labour is essential for courses to “take off.” Without it, students would get no outline, no resources, no grading—and no instruction. Yet, because such tasks are omitted from the employment contract and uncompensated, PTS faculty are effectively donating their time. CAUT puts it bluntly: expecting workers “to get courses off the ground before their pay starts and again after it ends ... is so obviously wrong.”

The parallels are striking. Just as airlines externalize costs and risks by requiring unpaid “groundwork,” post-secondary institutions externalize core pedagogical labour onto precariously employed instructors—without providing proper pay, job security, or structural support (like offices, laptops, or recognition of work beyond “contact hours”). This undermines not only fair employment, but also academic freedom, institutional stability, and ultimately, the quality of education and institutional research capacity.

If we accept that no worker should be expected to “donate hours of their lives” simply so a corporate or institutional operation can function, then the fight of flight attendants matters to all of us. And it’s high time we broaden that fight to include PTS faculty whose labour keeps post-secondary education aloft.

Fairness in the skies should mean fairness on the ground—and in the classroom.

*Colin*



**Doug Thorpe-Dorward**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

You will likely have heard that the BC government has announced a Post-Secondary Review, the stated purpose of which is to “strengthen the public post-secondary education system and ensure it is sustainable and well-positioned to support people in British Columbia and BC’s economic growth.”

Sounds great, right? Well, we (and many others) have a few questions:

### **1. What's the rush?**

The review is to be completed and a report delivered to government by March 15, 2026. In a sector not known for its quick turn around times for anything, this seems rather unrealistic. The FSA was asked to attend meetings with the reviewer prior to the holiday break. This is a very busy time for faculty, staff, and students, and so we were left wondering whether thoughtful, genuine input is being sought or whether these are *pro-forma* consultations. Others have expressed similar sentiments. Most participants are of a view that, while we will participate in good faith, we are skeptical that meaningful consultation can be completed by January 15, 2026.

## ON THE UPCOMING POSTSECONDARY REVIEW

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While we will participate in good faith, we are skeptical that meaningful consultation can be completed by January 15, 2026.

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### **2. Wasn't there a funding review started a few years ago? Will this review pick up where that left off, given the information collected then and the short timelines?**

The Minister has been explicit that this review is not a continuation of the post-secondary funding review initiated several years ago under Don Wright. That process was shelved soon after it began, probably because the government did not want a report filled with demands for new funding.

### **3. This is a good opportunity to press the government for more funding to replace the lost revenue from the disastrous cuts to international student admissions then, right?**

Not exactly. The government has already been clear that this review is not going to result in new funding. That door appears to be closed.

### **4. What kinds of things is the review going to look at if new government funding is not in the cards?**

*Governance and operational structures:*

- opportunities for consolidation of institutions or functions to reduce duplication across the system
- streamline service delivery outcomes

Consolidation is a concern for smaller institutions, which may fear that the government could seek to amalgamate them with larger ones to reduce costs. It remains to be seen what the report will recommend on this issue.

#### *Program delivery improvements:*

- reducing program duplication across institutions
- programming that aligns with provincial priorities
- incentivizing collaboration.
- considering ways to strengthen programs “within existing budgets”
- exploring expansion of co-op, apprenticeship, and work-integrated learning opportunities.

This is concerning to faculty in colleges in smaller communities who want to ensure that access to programs is maintained in those communities so that students do not have to travel to larger centres for their education.

#### *Reviewing tuition policies with a focus on correcting anomalies:*

This aspect in particular has made student organizations very uneasy. However the government has tried to reassure students that affordability for students remains a priority.

The FSA has been participating in the review, and we will ensure that our input is heard at every opportunity as this process proceeds. If you have any feedback, please contact your Member Engagement Officer. We will update you as the review moves along.

# POOLING SICK LEAVE: HOW IT WORKS AND WHY IT MATTERS

## Preamble

The Collective Agreement enables FSA members to pool sick leave to assist colleagues whose personal sick leave banks have been depleted or are nearing exhaustion, as detailed in Article 9.3.9 (pp. 46–47). Through this provision, members within a Department may allocate a portion of their unused sick leave to support another member—either within the same Department or another—who requires additional time away from work due to illness or injury.

This mechanism serves both a practical and collegial purpose: it prevents the unnecessary loss of accrued sick days for members who have already reached the maximum 250-day cap, while offering tangible support to coworkers during periods of extended illness. Some Departments make regular use of this provision; others do so only occasionally.

The FSA generally recommends pursuing pooled sick leave before borrowing against future sick days, as pooling provides a more equitable and sustainable solution for both the affected member and the broader community of FSA members.

## Authority and Approval

- Members of a Department determine whether and how to implement a pooling system.
- Final approval must be obtained from the Dean (or equivalent administrator).

## Eligibility, Timing, and Restrictions

Pooling may only be initiated when an employee's personal sick leave:

- Has been fully exhausted, or
- Is expected to be exhausted in the near future.

## Additional considerations:

- Pooled sick leave becomes active only once the member's personal sick leave balance reaches zero.
- Pooled sick leave may be used only for illness or injury.
  - It cannot be applied toward pre-retirement leave, financial payout, or any other purpose.
  - It cannot be used to repay borrowed sick leave.



- The total duration of sick leave available to a member—including regular, borrowed, and pooled leave—may not exceed six months.

## Further Considerations

- Participation in pooling arrangements is entirely voluntary and requires Departmental approval.
- Once approved, pooled sick leave functions as an extension of regular sick leave and is subject to the same reporting and eligibility requirements.

## Pooling in Practice

How the pooling of sick leave is accomplished is left to the discretion of the Department. Larger Departments with longer-serving members may pool as many as four or more times in an academic year, should the need arise.

We recommend an inclusive process in which all FSA members in the Department are invited to participate and contribute. Members in Departments looking to establish their own best practices around pooling may contact FSA Member Engagement Officer, Matt Greaves.

## Conclusion

Article 9.3.9 is a useful tool for member solidarity and support. Practically, the pooling of leave allows members experiencing illness or injury to continue along the road to recovery without being prematurely forced back to work. As a right of members, it embeds solidarity and support within the Department. Unlike other rights granted to FSA members, pooling leave—both the process and its effects—embodies the best of trade-union values.

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Pooling sick leave allows members to demonstrate solidarity by supporting colleagues who have exhausted—or are about to exhaust—their own sick leave entitlements.

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# WHAT DO WE TAKE AWAY FROM THE BCGEU STRIKE?

## Introduction

On October 26, 2025, the BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) announced that it had reached a tentative collective agreement with the provincial government, bringing to a close eight weeks of job action involving approximately 25,000 public-sector workers represented by the BCGEU and BC's Union of Professionals (PEA)—although the latter has yet to reach an agreement with the province at time of writing.

The FSA has already discussed the wage and policy implications of this agreement for our own members. See the Bargaining Updates section of our website for more. Yet the significance of the strike extends well beyond the specific terms of the yet-to-be-ratified collective agreement. There are broader lessons to be taken from the strike than what can be found in the pages of a collective agreement. It demonstrates the power working people hold—Independent of any political party—to achieve gains at the bargaining table that are by no means freely given.

## Legislative and Bureaucratic Context

In this province, the government of the day intervenes in public-sector negotiations. The erosion of independent and equitable collective bargaining for public-sector workers in British Columbia can be traced to at least 1993, with the creation of the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) under the Public Sector Employers Act. In practice, PSEC coordinates the provincial government's compensation mandate, ensuring that all unionized public-sector workers receive essentially equivalent wage settlements.



Since the establishment of this centralized framework under the Mike Harcourt NDP government, public-sector bargaining in British Columbia has been tightly constrained. Negotiations between unions and employers have been effectively subordinated to fiscal and policy parameters defined by central agencies—specifically PSEC, directed by the province, and, within the post-secondary sector, the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA)—though modified when unions push back. These agencies attempt to define the financial boundaries within which negotiations must occur, severely limiting the potential for genuine, independent collective bargaining. More so than in most other Canadian jurisdictions, British Columbia's government has, for over three decades, determined the content of its public-sector workers' collective agreements.

## Analysis: Recent Mandates and their Outcomes

Over the past fifteen years, British Columbia has seen five provincial public-sector wage mandates—preceding the tentative 2025 framework. Three were implemented by the BC Liberal government (2001 – 2017) and two by the current NDP government (2017 – 2025+).

The 2010 Net Zero Mandate, introduced after the fallout of the 2008 – 2009 global recession had mainly cleared, prohibited any net wage increases. Any improvements to compensation were required to be offset by equivalent savings elsewhere. The subsequent Cooperative Gains Mandate (2012) linked wage increases to productivity improvements, resulting in only modest gains. The final Liberal-era framework, which spanned 2014 to 2018, delivered average annual increases of roughly 1.5 percent. When compared with national inflation trends over that same period, public-sector workers in British Columbia effectively experienced a real wage loss of approximately 1 percent over the life of the agreement.

Under the NDP, the first mandate provided workers with a small real gain—about two-thirds of a percent above inflation over three years. The 2022 – 2024 framework produced an additional increase of roughly half a percent against inflation. Taken together, these two agreements slightly improved the economic position of public-sector workers, offsetting earlier losses but only partially repairing the very significant erosion of real income incurred during the previous government.



Assuming inflation concludes at roughly 2 percent for 2025, with the Bank of Canada projecting similar rates through 2027, the new tentative agreement's annual wage increases of 3 percent annually represent the most favourable settlement relative to inflation in some time and by a significant margin.

Importantly, this achievement cannot be credited to government largesse. Even under an ostensibly labour-friendly administration, substantial gains were not simply offered—they were fought for. Notably, in August 2025, the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU), which did not engage in strike action, reportedly accepted a framework agreement that fell below inflation. The persistence of the BCGEU and PEA, through one of the longest and most consequential public-sector strikes in recent provincial history, prevented a sub-inflation framework from becoming the provincial template, if reports are correct. Their determination yielded the first meaningful real wage improvements in decades.

### Conclusion

One lesson of the GEU strike, then, is that working people, and the unions that represent them, make their own destiny, not political parties. While we may be able to count on certain parties for more labour-friendly legislation than others, we cannot treat political parties—with their own independent demands and imperatives beyond those of working people—as our salvation. Rather than falling in behind any one party, working people and unions are better served by banding together to push to win our needs—and pushing for our organizations to fall under no illusion that we will be saved by this or that government.



**Matt Greaves**  
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



Saniya has been working at the FSA since February 2025. With a legal background and experience practicing law in India and the UAE, she brings a strong foundation in research, analysis, and interpretation of statutes—including the collective agreement—to her role as Labour Relations Assistant. Before joining the FSA, she worked as a Licensing Analyst at the Law Society of BC, and prior to that, she worked as a lawyer in law firms based in India and the UAE. While working at the FSA, Saniya is motivated by the meaningful impact that unions can have on people's lives.

Outside of work, Saniya enjoys reading, travelling, exploring different cuisines, and engaging in creative pursuits such as designing. A lifelong learner with a deep appreciation for post-secondary environments, she values empathy, integrity, and collaboration—qualities she strives to bring into every interaction. She finds joy in connecting with people, learning their stories, and contributing to a positive and inclusive workplace community.

**Hello, Saniya Thomas, FSA Labour Relations Assistant. Thank you so much for agreeing to sit down and be interviewed today.**

## I'M HERE TO SUPPORT THE MEMBERS: INTERVIEW WITH FSA LABOUR RELATIONS ASSISTANT SANIYA THOMAS

**ST:** Thank you. The pleasure is all mine.

**So, how long have you been working here at the FSA?**

**ST:** Seven months and 19 days, to be exact (at the time of interview).

**That's very precise. You have a legal background—did you learn to be that exact in your law training?**

**ST:** I can't say that for sure, but that may be a contributing factor.

**Where did you go to school?**

**ST:** I did my Bachelor's in Law at the University of Kerala in India, and then a Master's in Law specializing in Intellectual Property and International Trade Law from Christ University, Karnataka, also in India.

**What brought you into labour law when you began in Intellectual Property?**

**ST:** I had never worked for a union before, and I was curious to see what it's like to work for one. My previous jobs were more corporate, not in public institutions. I also love being in post-secondary settings because I enjoy learning and love the overall vibe—which probably explains why I chose to spend six years in universities. Plus, labour law was one of the subjects I studied during my undergrad in law, and I've always found it interesting.

**Beyond your interest in labour law, what motivates you to work for a union?**

**ST:** Beyond my interest in labour law, what really motivates me to work for a union is seeing the difference we can make in

people's lives. It's inspiring to watch our members stand up and tell the employer: "These are my rights, and I need them respected." I find that very bold, and it drives me to do my part in making sure members' voices are heard and their rights are protected.

**Speaking of rewarding, who inspires you and why?**

**ST:** My mother inspires me the most. She's a psychologist who left her full-time practice to serve the needs of deafblind children at an NGO, even though she was excellent at her job and had a large client base. She truly has a cause, and her commitment deeply inspires me. She's made me more empathetic and taught me the joy of giving to those in need.

**Earlier you spoke about helping members stand up for themselves. Do you think that comes from your mother's influence?**

**ST:** I think so. I grew up watching her help people. Even after her retirement she wants to start a home for deafblind children. So yes, I think I got that drive to help people from her.

**That's wonderful. Do you have any hobbies or passions outside of work?**

**ST:** Yes, I enjoy creative pursuits like designing. I often use Canva to create things, and I used to love designing clothes, exploring different patterns and styles. Since coming here, I've also started cooking. I love exploring different cuisines, and sometimes I even go on mini self-guided food tours—I'm a big-time

foodie. I also enjoy reading, traveling, and watching movies and series.

**You mentioned Thanksgiving before our meeting began. What did you make?**

**ST:** I made roasted chicken, vegetables, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie. My partner helped as well, but this was the first time I made a whole Thanksgiving meal. I was very proud of myself!

**That sounds great. We had roasted chicken too, though no pumpkin pie.**

**ST:** I made pumpkin pie, following a recipe from a YouTuber—it turned out well.

**Is there anywhere in the Lower Mainland you're looking forward to visiting, maybe a restaurant?**

**ST:** Yes, I'm planning to try Kinton Ramen, which a colleague recommended. So far, the best ramen I've had is from Danbo, and I'm curious to compare. I'd also like to go for high tea sometime—as the idea of a relaxing afternoon with tea and treats sounds delightful.

**Is there a particular dish you enjoy cooking regularly?**

**ST:** On a regular basis, I enjoy cooking anything that's easy and delicious. I'm a big fan of pasta, so I love experimenting with different pasta recipes. I also enjoy making chicken, beef, and tuna burgers and



rolls. Biryani is another favourite of mine — it's an Indian dish made with rice, chicken, and spices. I also like experimenting with desserts.

**Very international! Have you done much travelling?**

**ST:** Not too much internationally. I've been to Dubai a couple of times, to Thailand, and I've traveled extensively within India — I've covered most of the states. I have explored almost all the islands in BC, and I've also been to Montreal. I love travelling.

The world is so fascinating. People, places, cultures, food—everything is so different around the world. That makes it worth exploring. I'm curious by nature, so I love exploring things.

**Turning back to BCIT, what's one way you think that labour relations could be improved?**

**ST:** I'm glad we have monthly LMCs (Labour Management Committee meetings) where issues are raised and followed up on — that's very

positive. I believe members coming from non-unionized workplaces, who may not fully realize how much they can advocate for their rights or may not be aware of their rights under the collective agreement, can greatly benefit from participating in the member engagement activities and educational pieces we offer. So, I'm encouraging more member participation in union activities.

**When you first read our collective agreement, was there anything that stood out to you from your legal perspective?**

**ST:** Definitely the provisions around sick days. Many of my friends don't have pre-retirement leave or the option to receive a payout or time off for unused sick days in their collective agreement, but our agreement allows that. It's a significant benefit, and the overall agreement has many strong provisions.

**Is there anything else you'd like FSA members to know about you?**

**ST:** I'm committed to supporting FSA members and helping them work through any workplace challenges so they can feel informed, supported, and empowered.





**Autumn Friesen, thank you so much for sitting down with me today to talk a little bit more about yourself.**

**AF:** Yeah, absolutely. More than happy to yap about myself!

**How long have you been at BCIT? And how long have you been an FSA member?**

**AF:** I started at BCIT as a student in 2015 and graduated with my diploma in 2017. I've been working at BCIT since August 2021—so just under four years. And I've been an FSA member the same amount of time.

**And you've been in the same program the whole time?**

**AF:** I graduated from the Mechatronics and Robotics Technology program, and that's primarily what I teach in now.

**Have you always had an interest in robotics? Did that start before you came to BCIT?**

**AF:** Yeah! I did the VEX Robotics competitions in high school. I always knew I wanted to be an engineer, but when I saw the name of the program, it jumped out at me. I took it, loved it—and now I've come back to teach.

**What's the VEX Robotics competition?**

**AF:** It's organized by a company

## MEMBER PROFILE: SERIAL VOLUNTEER, AUTUMN FRIESEN, IS BUSY

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Being involved in the union means I can get involved and learn how things work behind the scenes—how things are crafted

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called VEX. They make robotics systems—including controllers and hardware—and every year they set up a new game that teams from around the world can compete in.

Back in high school, I had a teacher who took an interest in me because I was fixing the stuff in his assignments. He basically said, “OK, I can't teach you anything more here, but this looks like something you'd like.” So, I dove into it.

I ended up starting my high school's robotics club, and they've gone on to compete at Worlds a few times now, which is a neat little legacy.

BCIT actually hosts the provincial VEX competition every year—usually the first weekend in March. I've been helping host it for the past couple of years.

**You've somewhat recently joined the FSA's Collective Agreement Committee—what led you to do that? Is this your first time being involved with the union?**

**AF:** Yes, yes, it is my first time being involved in a union. I don't know—I'm kind of a serial volunteer. If you present me with an opportunity to do something, I'll usually say, “Yes, I'll do the thing.” That's how I've ended up with so much extra work outside of work. It just seemed like a neat opportunity.

Being involved in the union means I can get involved and learn how things work behind the scenes—how things are crafted. I might not be able to contribute a ton right away because

I'm new to it, but at least I can learn how it works so I can be more useful in the future.

**We have a few members I think would call themselves serial volunteers—or some variation of that—and it's great. You all do so much of the heavy lifting.**

**What do you like to do outside BCIT and FSA offices?**

**AF:** Outside of work and union stuff, I run conventions. I am on the Board for the British Columbia Anthropomorphic Events Association. We run a few conventions in and around the lower mainland. They're furry conventions. It's been a great community to be part of. When I moved back from the island after finishing my engineering degree and started working here again, I didn't have a large circle of friends anymore—just work friends. Most of my other Vancouver friends had dispersed. But through conventions, I've gained a whole new, wonderful friend group.

My first convention was like a week after my mom passed. A friend of mine was like, oh, let's go to this convention, just like a “Get me out of the house” kind of deal. I went there, liked it. There was another convention in the fall, and they put out a call for volunteers. Now I have dozens of people who might invite me to random things. Conventions, actually, are how I met my partner—we met through volunteering at conventions, which is a lot of fun.

I'm enjoying life a lot more since I got into that community. That support network was a huge part of what helped me to transition and come out.

Everyone at work has been wonderful too. But that community—just a group of wonderful, hard-working people—has meant a lot.

**Would you say you have a particular interest, being on the Collective Agreement Committee, in any language that might help support our trans members and comrades?**

**AF:** In my experience at BCIT—and at least within my department—I haven't had any situations where I felt like, "Oh no, I need language in the contract to help me." Everyone here has been wonderful.

That said, the things I'd like to see for trans-specific support would be things like surgery coverage. And one of the reasons I was interested in joining the Collective Agreement Committee was to work on mental health benefits. That's something I personally struggle with, and those benefits get used up pretty quickly.

**Are there other kinds of gains you're particularly hoping to see in this round of bargaining?**

**AF:** Not that I'm particularly focused on. For me, this whole round—and my participation in the committee—is really about learning how everything works. I want to understand how it all comes together.

**I think you previously mentioned an interest in data visualization—correct me if I'm wrong.**

**AF:** A little bit, yeah. I enjoy it because it's nice to see how things cluster—like, who's concerned about what, how many people are affected. It's helpful to see that laid out visually.



I don't know... data is interesting—which is an enormously nerdy answer. I just like data. But it's true! It's really fascinating to look at big datasets and see how things kind of clump together. Like, what are people concerned with?

**I always think—this is maybe a bit different from what you're saying—but the presentation of data is so important. Not just in terms of pulling together a narrative, but also being able to quickly show people, say: "here's where the membership stands on this issue." Just something visual and immediate.**

**I've seen other unions do that really effectively, and I pay attention to that stuff. They've had a lot of success communicating their point when they can do it succinctly and visually.**

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**Is there anything else you'd like FSA members to know? About you, or your work with the FSA?**

**AF:** I'm a serial volunteer, always busy, always doing a bunch of different things.

**That's a good title: "Serial Volunteer: Is Busy."**

**Autumn, it was an absolute pleasure talking with you today. Good luck with the rest of your day, and I'm sure I'll see you again before the summer's out. Bye for now.**

**AF:** Bye!



## UNDERSTANDING SUBSTANCES AND THEIR USE: **INTERVIEW WITH FSA MEMBER AMANDA UNRUH**

more fentanyl in the unregulated drug supply. At UBC, a large part of my role was substance use health, overdose prevention and response education, and I've continued that work here at BCIT.

### **What do we know about how widespread drug use is on campus, or even provincially in BC?**

**AU:** A lot of people use substances. Anyone who has a cup of coffee or tea in the morning is using a substance—caffeine is the most commonly used. Alcohol is widely used, though consumption is going down among younger generations. Cannabis is also much more widely available now than it was seven years ago when it was legalized.

Usually, when people talk about drug use, they mean illegal or diverted drugs. Use of diverted drugs means someone is prescribed something and somebody else uses it—for example, when someone gives away or sells something they have been prescribed.

With unregulated substances, we don't really know what's in them. That's the big issue in the province right now: unregulated drugs may be mixed with anything. Anyone using an unregulated drug doesn't know what they're taking, since it's not regulated like alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, cannabis, or prescriptions.

### **The drug crisis, as I understand it, is largely about synthetic opioids. Who uses opioids?**

**AU:** The government of BC estimates that 100,000 people have an opioid use disorder, and currently only about 20,000 people are being

treated for it. A substance use disorder has very specific diagnostic criteria—a healthcare provider would need to assess someone—but you can see there's a large gap between those who may need treatment and support and those who are receiving it.

Opioids are safe to use when prescribed and monitored by a healthcare professional. They're commonly used in healthcare settings, especially for surgeries or emergency settings. They're powerful painkillers. Humans have used some form of opioids for thousands of years because they work to reduce pain.

What happens with unregulated opioids—the supply not controlled in hospitals or by providers—is that anything can be mixed into them or they can be mixed into another drug. Someone might be using a powder or a pressed pill, and they're told it's one substance, but it could contain other substances that the person using the drug isn't expecting.

There are many kinds of opioids, but the one we're most concerned about in the toxic drug supply is fentanyl. It can be 100 times stronger than morphine or heroin. Because it's so strong, even a small amount mixed into a pill or powder can cause opioid poisoning.

### **What do we know about student use of unregulated opioids?**

**AU:** Student opioid use specifically is relatively low. Hallucinogens are most common among unregulated drugs, and the most used regulated drug is caffeine.

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Knowing how to respond to an overdose is an important way to contribute to a safer, more compassionate community.

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**Amanda Unruh, thank you for agreeing to speak with me today.**

**AU:** Thank you for having me.

**Can you talk a little bit about your background?**

**AU:** I've worked in post-secondaries for quite a long time. I worked at McGill University and UBC in health promotion roles, and I came to BCIT in January 2025 as a Health Promotion Strategist in the Student Life Office. It's been wonderful to work in so many different environments.

**Does your work focus on substance use, or is that just where we've crossed paths?**

**AU:** I've done different things. Health promotion typically covers lots of areas. I've specialized in sexual health, sexualized violence prevention, and also substance use and harm reduction education. There are so many overlaps between those fields. I've been focusing on overdose prevention and harm reduction work since I moved to BC 10 years ago, around when the current overdose crisis began and we were seeing

As I said, opioids can be mixed into unregulated substances students might use—maybe less so with mushrooms or other organics, but it's still a concern.

### **Is there anything that makes BCIT unique regarding drug use?**

**AU:** Something I've been focusing on is working with trades and transportation programs as much as possible. People working in these areas have higher rates of opioid poisoning. Depending on the year, 20 to 55 percent of people who were employed at the time of their death from opioid poisoning were employed in trades or transportation.

Working with students before they enter those fields helps prepare them and makes them aware of what's happening in the industry. It's important that they learn about this issue in a safe environment like the school where they're being trained and supported.

### **What should someone do if they see someone they think has overdosed or been poisoned by toxic drugs?**

**AU:** There are a few steps for people to follow.

1. Make sure you feel safe and comfortable, just like with any first aid situation. I provide training sessions on using naloxone (an overdose reversal drug) kits and responding to opioid poisoning for staff, faculty, and students. I'm happy to go into classrooms, staff meetings, program head meetings—whatever is needed. I've done a number already and am happy to do more. People can contact me by email to set up a time. I also table regularly in the library and elsewhere, so anyone can drop by and learn how to respond one-on-one.

2. If you provide any first aid care, you're protected by the Good Samaritan Act, which prevents people from being liable for damages

they may cause in providing first aid, and the Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Act, which protects people legally who have small amounts of drugs on them or who are helping someone who does.

For FSA members, unless it is in your job description, you are responding as a community member, not as a designated first aid attendant. It's not part of your job description, and you don't have to respond if you're uncomfortable. You can still call 911 and Campus Security for help.

3. Signs of opioid poisoning include: unresponsiveness or unconsciousness. If conscious, someone might have very shallow breathing or have stopped breathing. Their skin might be cold, clammy, or slightly blue or grey because their body isn't getting oxygen from breathing.

4. Once you see those signs, call 911 first. If you're on campus, also call Campus Security (604-451-6856). Campus Security carries nasal naloxone, which can reverse an opioid poisoning. First aid staff also carry it.

5. If you have access to naloxone, you would use it at that point. At BCIT, there's nasal naloxone available in most buildings and it's easy to use. Intramuscular naloxone kits are also available. I provide training sessions on using both types of naloxone, and you can pick up a kit from Campus Security at their front desk on every campus.

Keep giving naloxone every two to five minutes until the person starts breathing regularly or they wake up. If they aren't breathing, give the person 1 breath every 5 seconds in between doses of naloxone until more help comes.

6. When Campus Security and the ambulance arrive, explain what you've done and how much naloxone you've administered. If the person starts breathing again talk to them,



make sure they feel comfortable, and encourage them to stay for the paramedics. Naloxone only works for a limited time, so the person will need monitoring.

Something important about naloxone: even if you don't know what substance someone took, you can give naloxone to them. It won't hurt them if it isn't an opioid poisoning—but it might save their life if it is. There are many reasons someone could be unresponsive, but naloxone is a safe intervention since it doesn't do any harm.

### **Is there anything else you'd like members to know about you or about what you do here?**

**AU:** Responding to someone in crisis can seem scary and overwhelming if you've never done it before but knowing how to respond to an overdose is an important way to contribute to a safer, more compassionate community. Everyone deserves care, and we all can play a part in supporting our fellow community members.

I will be offering one-hour workshops on how to respond to overdose on the following dates this year. Sign up through the BCIT Weekly newsletter: Wednesday January 21, February 11, or March 25 on Burnaby campus at 2:30 pm.

I'm really proud to be working at BCIT. I appreciate the work the school does to get students ready for the workplace. I think substance use education and harm reduction knowledge are really practical skills for people going into the workforce.

**Thank you so much for speaking with me today.**

**AU:** Thanks for having me.

# CREATING AN ARTICLE 14.5 DEPARTMENTAL APPEAL COMMITTEE

In October 1997, the FSA's Association News bulletin published a detailed sample of a Departmental Appeals Process. The right of members to engage an appeals process for Departmental decision-making is established in Article 14.5 of the Collective Agreement. That language proceeds: Departments "shall have a procedure, approved by a majority of the members of the Department, through which appeals of Departmental decisions may be processed." Given the wide range of decisions made by Departments or their proxies—including, but not limited to, vacation period selection, Department employment and appointment selection procedures, assignment of workload, allocation of month free of teaching, and the scheduling of certain types of leave—it is wise that the Collective Agreement determines that a formal mechanism should be in place for appeals.

At the November 2025 meeting of Tech Reps, staff provided guidance on developing an appeals process, drawing largely on the nearly 30-year-old Association News article. The FSA does not intend to be prescriptive in its advice to Departments regarding Article 14.5. Rather, the sample process, developed below, is offered as a starting point from which Departments wishing to develop their own procedures may draw.

## Forming the Committee and Preliminary Work

- Departments should elect an odd number of members (perhaps three or five, depending on factors like Department size or anticipated appeals) to the Departmental Appeal Committee (DAC) for a limited term.
  - The DAC derives its authority from the Department.
  - The DAC should meet promptly to elect a Chair to receive appeals.
  - DAC members must adhere to principles of fairness and due process, including accommodating participation and unbiased conduct.

## The DAC Chair

- Should distribute copies of the appeal to other DAC members and the individual(s) responding for the Department.
- Should schedule a meeting accessible to the parties.
- May Chair the appeal hearing itself or delegate Chair responsibilities.

- Prepare and deliver recommendations to the Appellant and other parties no longer than five days following the hearing.
- Ensure that the evidence is included in the decision.
- Ensure the Collective Agreement is not violated.

## The Decision

- May find the appeal outside the jurisdiction of the DAC.
- May uphold the appeal and the remedy sought.
- May uphold the original Departmental judgement.
- May recommend an alternate course of action to be taken by the originating decision-making body.
- Should include a strict and truncated timeline if action is to be taken.

## The Appellant

- Should be heard by the DAC at the hearing.
- Should speak on their appeal.
- Should be allowed to introduce and cross-examine evidence.
- May be accompanied by another Department member.

Departmental Appeals Processes enhance the democratic functioning of Departments at BCIT. This article should be viewed as a loose guideline from which Departments may construct their own procedures best suited to the particularities of their situation.



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\*Positions at time of publication

## Vision

A dynamic and supportive educational community.

## Mission

Excellent working conditions for all members through representation, negotiation, and advocacy.

## Values

- **Integrity:** We are transparent and accountable in our decisions and actions.
- **Solidarity:** We stand together to protect our rights and achieve collective change.
- **Empowerment:** We equip our members to understand and advocate for their rights.
- **Equity:** We recognize diversity and pursue inclusion and justice for all members.



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