

November 6, 2013

To the Executives of the BCARTW and R55:

The TWU-USW Merger Agreement accommodates all of our structures and constituencies (including retirees), ensures a strong focus on collective bargaining and defending our pensions from the attempts of employers and governments to erode them, ensures full access to the services and resources of the USW and helps us integrate as partners into the life of our new, larger union.

The Merger Agreement combines the best of the TWU's democratic process with the best of the USW's. The Merger Agreement was also designed to provide security for key foundations of the TWU, including preserving the role of Local R55 in pension trustee selection.

The Merger Agreement provides for a 16 month transition period. During this transition period all of our elections shall be conducted under our current TWU procedures, eligibility rules and protest procedures. Thus, during this period, all current provisions guaranteeing Local R55's voice in selection of TWPP trustees remain in place.

With the arrival of the one-member-one-vote election system for all executive positions in our new National Local Union in the spring of 2015, it remains an underlying principle of the Merger Agreement, confirmed in Article IX, that Local R55's voice in selection of TWPP trustees is fully maintained.

This was made part of the Merger Agreement to give certainty to the TWU on this point. Upon ratification of the Merger Agreement, it is the complete responsibility of our National Local Union to ensure that we meet the terms of the Merger Agreement and maintain Local R55's voice in selection of TWPP trustees.

My position as TWU President is that we will do so.

Therefore, upon successful ratification of the merger, I will obtain the approval of the National Executive Council to appoint a committee to consider options that will ensure that the voice and responsibilities of Local R55 in respect of pension trustees are maintained. The committee will be comprised of members of Local R55, the TWU Merger Negotiations Committee, the TWU Constitution Committee, trustees of the TWPP and any other appropriate groups.

The committee's task will be to consider ways to blend the exciting advent of more membership democracy (with our new one-member-one-vote elections for all executive positions) with the traditional role of Convention (with its delegated system of elections for both pension trustees and officers). While the delegates to our 2014 Convention will ultimately decide how to do this based on what makes the best sense for retirees and for continued success of the TWPP, my position as TWU President will be that the input of retirees will in no way be eroded. To be clear, it is my intent to ensure that Local R55 will end up with no less than what they had prior to the TWU-USW Merger.

The USW assures the TWU that it will not take a position on these matters. With the strong level of autonomy that is provided to us as a USW National Local Union, these will be our decisions to make as we develop a very vibrant, powerful and growing National Local Union. And, as is made clear in the Merger Agreement, the USW will have no involvement in the TWPP in any manner.

Beyond ensuring that we meet our merger's principles on this point, I also welcome your input on how we can enhance the involvement of retirees in the broader life of our new National Local Union, such as in building community support across Canada for our collective bargaining goals. Retirees can be a powerful force in helping the labour movement succeed.

I look forward to Local R55's participation in this work and to helping our entire membership build toward a better future. Please contact me if you have any questions.

In Solidarity,



Lee Riggs,  
President, Telecommunications Workers Union