

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 391

NEWS RELEASE

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Library workers' union outraged Vancouver Public Library hires high-priced lawyer to negotiate contract instead of city managers when librarians' hours being slashed in budget restraint

VANCOUVER – The union representing librarians is outraged that the Vancouver Public Library has hired a high-priced labour lawyer to negotiate on behalf of its employer at a time when nearly 20 librarians and other library workers are losing hundreds of hours of work.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 391 says the Vancouver Public Library Board has misplaced its priorities by cutting \$500,000 in staff time that provides direct services to the public while hiring veteran lawyer Kim Thorne of Roper Greyell at hundreds of dollars an hour to assist in bargaining.

“The Vancouver Public Library management are about to impose a significant and damaging cut of \$500,000 in staff hours to librarians, library technicians and information assistants who all provide valuable direct service to the public,” said Local 391 President Alexandra Youngberg.

“So how on earth can the Library find the money to hire one of BC’s most senior management side lawyers to bargain on their behalf instead of doing what most cities do – have Library and city staff negotiate?” Youngberg asked.

Youngberg said Thorne has acted for employers in a series of high-profile labour disputes, including acting for resource company giant BHP Billiton in the Ekati Diamond Mine strike in the North West Territories.

“We are a small, local library union trying to protect our members and provide good service to Vancouver readers who depend on public libraries,” Youngberg said. “For the Library Board and management to go to a high-profile legal hired gun when our members are losing so much work is appalling.”

Youngberg said it is ironic that Thorne is also Vice-Chair of the Vancouver Writers Festival – an annual event that promotes authors and literature – while his fees will effectively result in fewer Library service hours.

Youngberg said Vancouver Public Library users will see frontline services dramatically reduced as of May 1 unless the budget cuts are reversed.

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