

The membership has exercised its democratic right to elect officers to represent their best interests and it's with great pleasure that I congratulate the re-elected members of the Local 516 Executive Board. It's gratifying that the team who has already contributed so much to this local will be able to continue to represent us through upcoming challenges. There is one concern, however, regarding the election and that is apathy. This needs to be addressed because member participation in the election process this year was much lower than in previous elections and voter turnout is crucial to democracy. It's disappointing to learn that we had only 191 ballots returned of a possible 757 during our recent election. Every union member, including those who chose not to participate in the election, are affected by the decisions made at the ballot box. Election results determine the future of all of our careers, not just those who are the elected officials of this local union. Wages, benefits and working conditions are all affected by the decisions made by those eligible to vote in our elections. Members who qualify to vote at the time of our next and all future elections are strongly encouraged to do so. The greater the turnout at the polls, the better representation each individual member receives.

With elections behind us the team you have once again entrusted to take us forward is doing just that. Their experience goes a long way in making the right decisions on your behalf. I, too, am confident in this team. In the near future I will be sharing with you the results of our ongoing efforts in continuing to advance our market share through education, industry specific lobbying of our new provincial government and a concerted effort from our organizing department.

We will soon be nearing the conclusion of the final term of the current collective agreement and are ramping up internal talks about our 2018 negotiations. I have begun assembling a panel of rank and file members from every part of our trade to participate in discussions about the state of our industry from their perspective. This will help prepare our Negotiating Committee for talks in the new year. These meetings in conjunction with our regular Negotiating Committee meetings, as well as discussions with contractors and industry leaders from other trades, will ensure we are well prepared and have the foresight needed to put our best proposal forward at the negotiating table. Your participation in the form of attendance at local union meetings is vital. Specifically, union meetings in January, March and April will be open for all to discuss the upcoming contract and we look forward to some constructive, responsible and respectable conversation. These contracts affect us all so please come and join in the dialogue.

We have recently been involved with a collective bargaining situation in the Interior with Inland Comfort Air Conditioning Ltd. which has resulted in their decertification. Effective December 5 2017 Inland Comfort Air Conditioning Ltd. is no longer signatory with UA Local 516. A letter has been sent out to our contractors explaining how this affects any dealings they may have with Inland Comfort regarding subcontracting obligations laid out in the collective agreement. Members with information about any and all work being carried out by Inland Comfort in unionized work places should contact me, our organizer at Local 516, Kevin Barbisan, or the organizing representative for UA Canada, Bryan Harris, so that we may put these end users and customers in contact with our signatory contractors. A full update will be given at our mainland area meeting in January. The actions taken by certain employees and certainly management at Inland Comfort were concerning but this is a voluntary organization and we will fight for the members who choose to be a part of this brotherhood. It is always upsetting when we lose members but this minor setback has only doubled our resolve and our goal for continued growth in the Okanagan and our ultimate goal of increasing our membership province-wide.

Our hours this year are once again the highest we have ever experienced in the Local's history and our total membership is also at an all-time high. We are very happy to welcome three new signatory contractors to our organization: Fred Welsh Ltd., C&W Facility Services and One Degree HVAC Service Group. We are excited at the prospect of assisting these contractors to grow in our marketplace. In all we are trending upwards! Where we are is not where we're going to stay and only the future can tell how much more growth we will achieve. From me and my family and all the staff at UA Local 516, we extend our wish for a Merry Christmas and a safe holiday season to all our members and contractors and your families.

