TAPROOT TOGETHER AGAINST POVERTY SOCIETY

Issue 118

December 2017/ January 2018

DON'T LET THE GRINCH STEAL YOUR CHRISTMAS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRECARIOUS SEASONAL WORK

By David Huxtable During the annual orgy of consumerism that occurs each December, many retail outlets increase the number of staff they employ on a temporary basis, resulting in more short-term employment opportunities for some. Here's what vou need to know if you are working a temporary job during the holiday season.

Working for cash

Some people are happy to work for cash because they believe it will save them money on their income taxes, CPP, EI, and other deductions.



This can be true, if you make enough money in the year to pay income tax. Many people making the minimum wage, or close to it, pay very little tax. Other folks might be concerned about having their earnings deducted from their PWD allowances or El. Fair enough. However, if you are not making

remittances to CPP and EI, you are not making contributions to those plans, and this may have negative repercussions for you in the future. Just something to think about.

Keeping track of your hours

Regardless of whether you are working for cash, or working through payroll, you need to keep track of every hour you work. Use a calendar at home, or use the calendar on your phone. Mark down the hours you work each and every day, and note the

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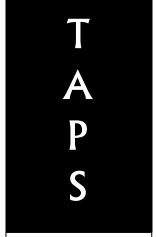
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TAKE ACTION! THE VICTORIA TENANT ACTION GROUP

By Yuka Kurokawa and Emily Rogers Are you a renter? Concerned about demovictions? Renovictions? Giant rent increases that force people out of their homes? Then why not join other tenants and their allies in the Victoria Tenant Action Group (VTAG)? Learn about tenant rights. Share your experience. Get peer support. Develop strategies for action. Fight for change. All of us together—one big collective voice—can make decision makers pay attention.

TAPS' tenant advocates have been working to get this tenants' rights group up and running, and VTAG's public launch, on October 11, was

TAPS HOLIDAY
CLOSING

TAPS closes for the holidays at noon on Friday, December 22. We re-open on Tuesday, January 2.

buzzing with energy, enthusiasm and ideas. Those who attended expressed concern about the lack of available and affordable



housing, the need to build more social housing, difficulty accessing help from the Residential Tenancy Branch, and the failure of the current *Residential Tenancy Act* to adequately protect tenants.

VTAG has set up different working groups that members can get involved in, like the Policy Working Group, which focuses on bringing in policy changes at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels, the Peer Support Working Group, which focuses on providing support to tenants dealing with challenging tenancy issues, and the Resource Working Group, which is creating educational materials and planning information workshops.

VTAG is building support and now has more than 50 members in the

SILENT WITNESS PROGRAM

Appointments with the Ministry of Social **Development and Poverty** Reduction (MSDPR) can be stressful. Some find that having another person at their appointment lessens their stress and helps the appointment proceed smoothly. At TAPS, we have volunteer silent witnesses who can accompany individuals to ministry appointments. If you would like to be connected with a silent witness, call TAPS at 250-361-3521.

Follow us on twitter
@tapsbc

Capital Regional District. We look forward to maintaining this momentum and welcome new members to the movement. Take action! Get involved. Contact us at tenants.victoria@gmail.com or find us on our Facebook page—Victoria Tenant Action Group.

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TAPS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

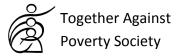
TAPS' Annual General Meeting was held on November 22, and with 35 people in attendance we reviewed the work of the past year. Our income assistance advocates helped 2565 people on low incomes, our tenant advocates helped 1912 tenants, and our employment standards advocates helped 145 workers. The Volunteer Disability Advocacy Project helped 911 people apply for provincial disability benefits, while our Federal Disability Advocacy Project helped 712 people navigate federal disability programs. TAPS' newest project, the Outreach Legal Advocacy Project, just got going in the summer and has already helped 103 people. These are not just numbers, but real people accessing income benefits they are entitled to, staying in their homes, getting back wages owed to them, and accessing disability supports.

We said a few goodbyes to board members who have reached their six year limit (three consecutive twoyear terms): Brenda McBain, TAPS President for the past two years, our Treasurer Tony Pullman, and Michel Janisse. We thank Brenda, Tony and Michel for all they have given to TAPS, and wish them well in the future. Of course, they will remain close to TAPS. Tony will continue as a tax volunteer, and Brenda has whispered that she plans to join our crew of front desk receptionists.

New to the board are Amy Baylis and Jeffrey McEown. We welcome them to TAPS and look forward to working with them in the coming year. We will have the names of the new board president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer in the next issue of the Taproot.

TAPS' Annual Report is available on our website at www.tapsbc.ca. Or drop into our office to read a hard copy.

On another note: TAPS' income assistance advocate Jen Matthews and board member Hilary Marks have been appointed to the Minister's Advisory Forum on Poverty Reduction. We will have more on this in the next issue of Taproot.



TAPS STAFF

Doug KingExecutive Director

Khalela Bell

Outreach Legal Advocate

Izzy Dehler-Hyde

Coordinator of the Volunteer Disability Advocacy Project

David Huxtable

Employment Standards Legal Advocate

Daniel Jackson

Income Assistance Legal Advocate, Federal Disability Legal Advocate, and Tenant Legal Advocate

Yuka Kurokawa

Tenant Legal Advocate

Jen Matthews

Income Assistance Legal Advocate

Emily Rogers

Tenant Legal Advocate

Caitlin Wright

Federal Disability Legal Advocate

On Leave

John Cooke Thea McDonagh Stephen Portman

Taproot is published bimonthly. Newsletter artists: Mitch Lindsay Joan Stiebel Page 4 Issue 118

INTRODUCING TAPS' NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Even though I've only been on the job as Executive Director at TAPS since early October, I can already tell that there is something very special about this organization and its devoted team of staff and volunteers. There can be no mistake that I have incredibly large shoes to fill, with the departure of Kelly Newhook, someone who in many ways became synonymous with the success of this organization. Luckily, I

FEDERAL DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROJECT

TAPS' Federal Disability
Advocacy Project can
provide information on
CPP-Disability, the Disability
Tax Credit and the
Registered Disability
Savings Plan. If you would
like to speak with an
advocate about any of
these benefits, or would
like help applying, contact
Caitlin or Daniel at TAPS at
250-361-3521.

find myself surrounded by a staff that couldn't be more dedicated and capable of independently advocating for our clients.

Before moving to Victoria in July of this year, I worked in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for a legal advocacy group called Pivot Legal Society. During my stay at Pivot, a non-profit society similar in size to TAPS, I saw periods when the organization expanded as new opportunities presented themselves, and difficult times when financial instability led to retraction. Throughout the years, though, my friends and coworkers at Pivot taught me a valuable lesson: instead of trying to dictate every aspect of the organization's work what should be done, how to do it—the role of the Executive Director, first and foremost, should be to create and maintain a wellresourced and healthy environment, where staff have the tools they need to confidently make decisions and flourish in their work.

And there is certainly a lot of work in front of us. TAPS is one of the largest providers of legal advocacy

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

TAPS has advocates who can help you apply for Person With Disabilities status (PWD) through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. TAPS can also help you with an appeal if you have been denied. Call us at 250-361-3521 for more information. If you are at the appeal stage, get in touch with us as soon as possible after receiving your letter of denial, and tell the receptionist you are calling about a disability appeal.

Check us out at www.tapsbc.ca

services in British Columbia, and is responsible for a truly awe-inspiring amount of service to more and more clients every year. Sadly, despite positive developments in many aspects of our work, and commitments by government to implement a poverty reduction strategy, the number of people

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needing our help is not likely
to go down any time soon.

When we look back at 2017 we will likely remember it for the multiple levels of crisis that have made life difficult and tragic for lowincome and marginalized residents: a housing crisis that continues to drive up rents and home prices, and drive out low-income people, who are increasingly unable to access the private rental market at all; an opioid overdose crisis that, from January up to September only, took the lives of 155 people on Vancouver Island, making 2017 already the

worst year on record. These are difficult and stressful times for low-income people in our province, people who need support and solidarity now more than ever.

There will be a lot of learning in my first few months on the job, and a lot of new relationships to form, but I am incredibly honoured to join the TAPS team, and am optimistic that 2018 will be another successful year for one of BC's oldest and most trusted legal advocacy organizations.

Douglas King
Executive Director



TAX CLINIC

At TAPS
Every Thursday
9 - 11 and 1 - 4
First come, first
served.

Note: There will be no tax clinic on December 28

BECOME A TAPS MEMBER!

Want to support TAPS? Why not become a member! We are happy to waive the fee, so it doesn't have to cost you anything. You will get the Taproot mailed or e-mailed to you.

Together Against Poverty Society Membership Registration 2017 - 2018				
Together Against Poverty Society, #3	02 - 895 Fort	Street, Victoria, BC,	V8W 1H7	
Annual Membership Fees: Unwa	□Unwaged \$5 (we are happy to waive this fee)			
□Wage	d \$20	☐Organization \$80		
Method of payment: □Cash □Check □N/A				
Date:				
Name:				
Address:		Postal Code	<u>:</u>	
Phone:	e-mail:			
I would like to join TAPS' mailing list to receive:		\square E-mails from TAPS about its work		
		☐Taproot—TAPS' n	ewsletter	
		>>> 🗖 by e-mail	☐by postal mail	

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VOLUNTEER AT TAPS!

Come and volunteer on our busy front desk—
a great way to participate in the fight against poverty!

Call Heidi at 250-361-3521

Check TAPS out on facebook

(Cont'd from Seasonal Work, page 1)
breaks that you took. Bosses
must keep track of the hours
you work, by law. However,
sometimes employers make
mistakes, and sometimes
they will try to rip you off.
Either way, you should keep
track of your own hours. If
there are hours missing from
your pay, it will be much,
much easier to have this
corrected if you have
evidence.

Daily overtime

During busy seasons, bosses will often ask or demand that their workers put in long hours. If you work over 8 hours in a day, every hour between 8 and 12 should be

paid at 1.5 times your regular wage, and every hour over 12 should be paid at double your regular wage. So, if you make \$12 per hour, and you work 13 hours one day, you should be paid \$12 per hour for the first 8 hours, and \$16 per hour for the second 4 hours. and \$24 per hour for the time after that: (\$12x8)+(\$16x10)+ (\$24x1). The only way your boss can get around this is if they ask you, ahead of time, if you would be willing to work under an averaging agreement. This must be voluntary, agreed to beforehand, and signed by you. This agreement cannot allow you to work over 40 hours per week. Any daily hours over 12 must be paid double time.

Weekly overtime

If you work over 40 hours in a week, you are also entitled to overtime, regardless of how many hours you work per day. Finally, you must be allowed to have 32 hours free from work every seven days, or overtime rates of 1.5 times your regular wage apply to the hours you worked during that 32 hours.

Get contact information for your boss

During holiday seasons, we see an increase in "pop-up" shops that disappear after the seasonal rush. Make sure

you know who you are working for. Get the owner's name. Ask for a cell phone number and address that is not the store address. If an owner doesn't want to give you this information, be very, very wary about working for them.

Commission sales

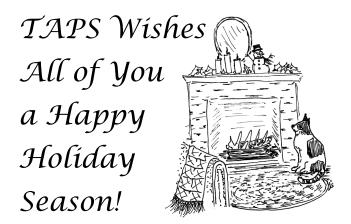
It is legal to pay people purely by commission, as long as they make at least the minimum wage in every pay period. If you do not make enough in commissions in a pay period, your boss must make up the difference. If you work on commission, you may or may not be entitled to overtime and holiday pay (it's complicated).

Vacation pay

You are entitled to vacation pay after working for five calendar days. This vacation pay should equal 4% of your total wages, or two weeks' wages after one year. Some employers will "bank" this pay, and pay you out when you take vacation. Others will pay out vacation pay on each paycheque – particularly if the employment relationship is going to be temporary. If you know the job is temporary, ask to be paid out on each cheque. Even if you are paid in cash, you are entitled to vacation pay.

(See Seasonal Work, page 7)

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(Cont'd from Seasonal Work, page 6)

Stat holidays

You only get stat holiday pay if you have been employed for 30 calendar days and worked for 15 of those 30 days. If you qualify for holiday pay, you should be paid an "average day's pay" for that holiday, regardless of whether you work it or not. If you do work it, you should receive an average day's pay and time-and-a-half for every hour you work, up to 12 hours. If you work over 12 hours, you should be paid double time for any hours over that. An average day's pay is calculated by adding up all your wages (including paid vacation) over a 30 day period and dividing it by the number of days that you worked.

Termination

Generally, if you work a day over three months, you are entitled to one week's notice of termination, or one week's

pay. However, if you are hired for a seasonal job, there is a strong possibility that the job will end within three months. In this case, your boss does not need to give you any notice that your job is ending, and you do not qualify for severance pay. A boss also does not need to give you notice if you are hired for a definite term. For example, if you are hired to work in a store from December 1 to January 8, your boss does not need to give you notice that your job is coming to an end. There are other limitations to getting notice of termination or severance pay, but this is the most common one that will affect seasonal workers.

If you have any questions about your rights as a worker, call David at TAPS at 250-361-3521.■



BECOME A MONTHLY TAPS DONOR!

With your support, individuals and families living in poverty in our region will have access to critical legal advocacy and educational services. TAPS' services are unique in their design and delivery, and offer knowledge, empowerment and, in many cases, a new sense of hope.

Select a monthly amount that's affordable to you, and TAPS will automatically deduct it from your checking account each month. You'll never have to write a check, buy a stamp or find an envelope again.

Monthly donors receive the following benefits:

- Updates on TAPS programs
- Annual tax receipt for all your donations during the year
- Taproot delivered to your e-mail.

See the monthly donor form on page 8 of this newsletter.

ABOUT TAPS

TAPS was established and registered as a society in 1989. We provide legal information and representation on issues relating to income assistance, provincial and federal disability benefits, residential tenancy, and employment standards to people in the Greater Victoria area. We also provide public legal education in these areas and on broader poverty issues.

You can reach us between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday, by phone at 250-361-3521 or in person at #302 - 895 Fort Street. The office is closed daily for lunch between noon and 1:00 pm and is closed to walk-in clients on Monday and Friday mornings.

TAPS IS FUNDED BY









And Other Generous Supporters

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Linda Doctoroff
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Hilary Marks
Jeffrey McEown

Felicity Smith

Thank You for Supporting TAPS' Legal Advocacy!

The best way to support TAPS is by becoming a mocheck to: Together Against Poverty Society, #302	onthly donor! Please submit this form and your voided - 895 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H7			
Date:				
Please debit my bank account (attach VOID cheque	e):			
□\$10 □\$25 □\$35 □\$50 □\$100 □Ot	her amount \$ (please specify)			
I would like this donation debit to be processed through my account on the 25th of each month.				
Signature:				
Donor Name:				
	Postal Code:			
Phone:e-mail:	<u> </u>			
This donation is made on behalf of: 🔲 an individ	dual 🗖 a business			
A tax receipt for your total monthly donations will	be sent to you at the end of the calendar year.			
I would like to join TAPS' mailing list to receive: ☐E-mails from TAPS about its work				
	☐Taproot—TAPS' newsletter			