

**REPORT OF THE
TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE COMMITTEE
TO THE MGEU 66TH CONVENTION 2021**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Area 1	VACANT	Area 6	VACANT
Area 2	Brenda McKay	Area 7	Michael Haddad
Area 3	Paulette Sherb	Area 8	Stephen Allan
Area 4	Alexander Bollman	Chair	Kyle Ross
Area 5	David Pankratz	Staff	John Baert, Coordinator, Public Affairs Betty Harrison, Administrative Assistant Sandy Ironside, Administrative Assistant (retired)

MANDATE

Consisting of a Chairperson (elected by and from the Board of Directors) and one member elected by each Area Council, this Committee keeps track of legislative and workplace changes and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on how to protect MGEU members. The Committee also assists with developing contract language to protect against job loss due to technological changes.

The Technological Change Committee was conceived as a standing committee whose aim was to monitor how technology was impacting members' work. At the time the concerns focussed on things like cameras in the workplace, email and privacy concerns, and whether computers were going to replace humans in performing certain jobs or tasks. Those remain concerns for this Committee to this day, but in the past decades technology has leapt forward at a staggering pace and the workplaces we were talking about then look very different from the way they do now.

Recognizing the many technological changes we have seen in workplaces across Manitoba (and indeed the world), the current iteration of the Technological Change Committee spent considerable time during the recent term discussing how our mandate may have changed, and as a Committee identified a need to check in with MGEU members to determine what our role as a Committee can and should be. We wanted to determine whether we needed to recalibrate our priorities to ensure we were undertaking the kind of work and research that was relevant to our members.

The process for us began with considering what kind of tools were available to us to check in with MGEU members. Several ideas came forward: Google or Survey Monkey polls done internally through MGEU, telephone polls done through a third party, doing small focus group activities, or a mailed survey as part of other mail-outs the Union might do.

We knew the kinds of questions we wanted to ask that spoke to refreshing our Committee mandate: how big a role our members saw us playing in educating them about technological changes, or whether we should be advocating for workplace retraining, or lobbying government about protection for workers. We also asked about what concerns members had about current technology in their workplaces and the kinds of technology they were currently using, whether they were working primarily at home (because of the COVID pandemic that has occurred recently), about whether robotics, automation or software advancements were threats to their jobs, about concerns over technology and personal privacy, and also work hours and views on greater flexibility.

At the same time we were having these discussions about renewing our Committee mandate, other discussions were happening in the MGEU that dealt specifically with technology and how COVID-19 was affecting all MGEU members. The MGEU Board determined we needed to investigate how to ensure services were still there for our members in a meaningful way when the whole way many of us had been working was turned upside down. A great many of our MGEU membership were relying almost exclusively on technology to get work done.

MGEU senior management suggested to the Technological Change Committee Staff Liaison and Committee Chair that we elevate the project from being an online survey specific to technological change to a telephone survey through a third party company that would expand the scope of the information we were seeking. In so doing, we could ask other questions that have arisen about how the Union as a whole could use technology to better serve the membership. This expanded scope included questions about:

- Online voting.
- Increasing the use of meetings over video technology.
- Availability of and access to high-speed internet.
- Percentage of members who owned smart phones, laptops, or similar technology.
- Any recommended MGEU website changes.

The survey results showed:

- MGEU members were not overly concerned about technology negatively impacting them at work ($\frac{2}{3}$ were not very or not at all concerned).
- Majority of members (53%) were not concerned about changes in automation in the next five years.
- Software advancements were seen as a possible area of concern to impact their job.
- Over 70% were not concerned about workplace technology impacting their personal privacy.
- A majority of MGEU members wanted flexibility in work hours or arrangements, if that were possible in their jobs.
- Members wanted the Technological Change Committee to educate the members about their rights in relation to technology and advocate for retraining if jobs are impacted by technology.
- Members are very comfortable with online voting, video technology, and telephone meetings.
- Many members own smart phones or other technology, and feel comfortable using it for things like meetings or online voting.
- The main reasons people visit the MGEU website is to get information on the value-added discounts program or information about their collective agreement.

Since the survey results were completed, the Technological Change Committee has met with MGEU Director, Negotiations to discuss how the results could impact bargaining in the future and how we might consider recommending options for MGEU bargaining committees going forward. Our goal is to meet with other specialists or management to see what other uses we can garner from this information including education, legal, and communications. The information also informed the MGEU Board of Directors in making decisions about the appropriateness and ability to host virtual Local meetings as well as a virtual Convention this year.

This information will build on discussions earlier in the term about changes to the Technological Change Education course. As part of this Committees' deliberations we did a review of this course's contents. Much discussion earlier in the term was centred on the issue of how to assist the GOLICO component with the issue of violent thefts happening in Liquor Marts and how we

could consider technological changes to enhance security. Some of the ideas brought forward from the Committee ultimately were considered and implemented independently by the MBLL and secure entrances have been erected in stores.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the past two years, COVID-19 has forced dramatic changes in how we use technology and that has changed how we communicate with each other as part of our work. COVID-19 will continue to play a role in how public services are delivered to Manitobans, and how our workplaces are structured. The concept of “office space” has likely changed forever, and we need to find ways to ensure workers are protected and recognized as we make these changes. In the upcoming years we will need to push for employers to retrain, re-deploy, and minimize job loss for members affected. The Technological Change Committee looks forward to continuing to play a role in how the MGEU meets these future changes, and to make recommendations to the MGEU Board and members that put workers first.

In Solidarity,

MGEU Technological Change Standing Committee