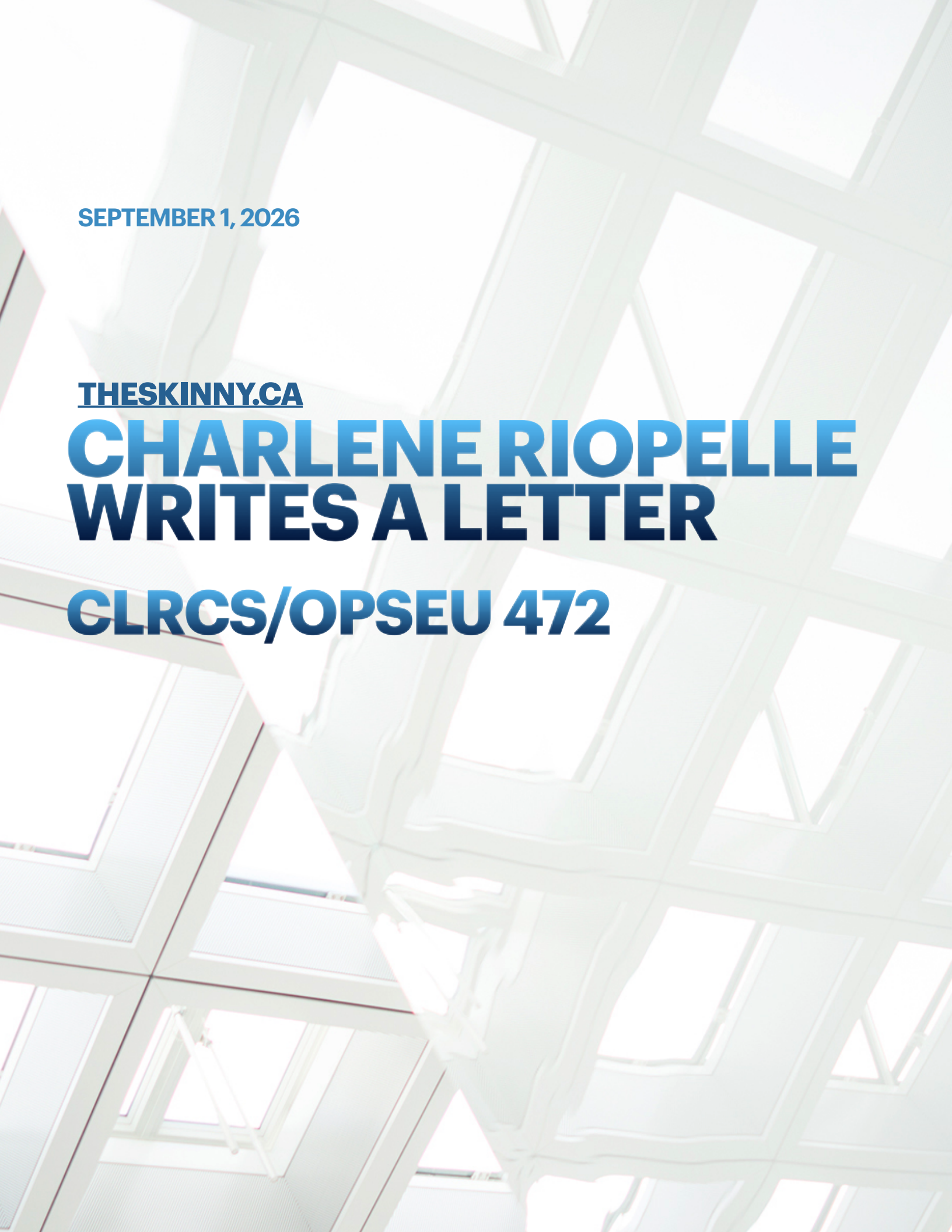




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CHARLENE RIOPELLE WRITES A LETTER

CLRCS/OPSEU 472

Charlene Riopelle is a mother and member of Community Living Renfrew County South. She can also be described as a tireless advocate for developmentally disabled adult children who make up the client roster at CLRCS.

The fourteen-week labour dispute between CLRCS and OPSEU Local 472 affected Riopelle mightily as her son Travis is a client of the agency and thus one of the primary unfortunates in this whole business. Travis' routines have been knocked ass-over-tea-kettle, and he's not necessarily thriving under the new and less satisfactory conditions. And Travis is just one of many who are suffering equally. The individual stories may differ from individual to individual, but the common occurrences of confusion, depression, acting-out, loneliness, and guilt seem to pop up among most, if not all, of the clients.



So Charlene is doing what Charlene does, and that is to be in constant motion, continually advocating for the kids — yes they're adults but they're people's children all the same — in any manner she may think or conceive of. She's a dynamo in pursuit of a good and noble cause, and there's not much on this planet that's going to get in her way.

This time it's a later addressed to the Board of Directors of *Community Living Renfrew County South*, a nebulous body that exists in the shadows, if it exists in any practical way at all.

Apparently that outfit, the Board, hasn't had a meeting since April of this year, some two months before the strike action was initiated by the union. Not only that, but an Annual General Meeting scheduled for May of this year was also cancelled or postponed or whatever the correct word might be to describe a situation where something

was supposed to happen but then didn't.

Riopelle would like to know why these meetings aren't happening, especially when the organization is in the middle of a shooting war with its own employees. One would think a Board with oversight responsibilities would want to establish and maintain a clear and active line of communication in-house, but there's nothing to indicate that anything of the sort is happening.

She asks a number of straightforward questions about when the Board meets, how it governs according to its mandate, and what kind of communication exists between itself and the Executive-Director whom they oversee.

She also want to know how Board members are communicated with. Have they been involved in any decision-making aside from any discussions? If there were no meetings, how were Board members kept in the loop? Were all Board members, if advised, equally advised? Are there some Board members who may not be on-side with management's approach? Are they beginning to understand that they, the Board, seem to be serving as a modern day Potemkin village where a facade is put in place to make a good show of things when in reality nothing much is going on.

In other words, the letter, among other things, wants to know how consequential the Board actually is. Or perhaps closer to the mark, how inconsequential.

The letter's main theme revolves mostly around communication, or more precisely, the dearth of it. Especially as it impacts the families and clients of CLRCS. Because if I'm reading Charlene Riopelle correctly, the level of communication, outside of the odd, closed insider email from the Executive-Director, contains no meaningful information related to families and stakeholders. What is shared comes across more as window dressing, and Charlene wants and expects an information stream that is factual and leaves nothing out. She does explain that she understands there to be information that should be held close to the agency's vest, but things like bargaining positions and questions around governance and operations are all things she feels parents and members should be read-in on.

Charlene writes a good letter, so I'll let her speak for herself. Her letter is attached at the end of the post.