

YOUR RIGHT TO UNION REPRESENTATION

Many members approach a Union representative (rep) only at the last minute, frequently when faced with potential discipline or other serious consequences. Often this is too late for the rep to provide meaningful assistance. By then, the only thing that the rep may be able to do is support the member as they are escorted from the building when they are suspended or terminated.

Any time that you are facing an issue with the employer, you should contact a Union rep.

If during a discussion with management at any level, you begin to feel uncomfortable, then you should:



- let management know how you feel
- ask that the meeting be stopped until you can speak to a Union rep
- if they refuse to stop the meeting, terminate the meeting yourself and contact a Union rep immediately.

You should also consult a Union rep as soon as discussions with your team leader/manager start to include topics like:

- rejection on probation
- early conclusion of a term contract
- not meeting expectations
- Performance Improvement Plan
- accommodations
- discipline.

You should request a rep to attend all subsequent meetings on any of the above topics.

NEVER attend a meeting without a rep if:

- the meeting includes a higher level of management than just your team leader ie. manager or Assistant Director
- the meeting is to discuss accommodations (the Union rep should be contacted well in advance of this meeting)
- the meeting is with an Internal Affairs Directorate (IAD) officer.

Your Union reps have received training and/or have experience in these areas and can guide you

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**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ RECEVOIR CETTE PUBLICATION EN FRANÇAIS,
VEUILLEZ VOUS ADRESSER À VOTRE PRÉSIDENT- E DE SECTION LOCALE**

through these meetings, while also ensuring that your rights are being respected.

Consult with a Union rep well before a situation gets to the point of discipline or termination. Preventing a situation before it happens is much easier and less stressful than trying to reverse decisions once they have been made. Many times, we can avert an issue by discussing it with management.

Your Union reps are ready and able to provide support and representation in any area. Call us when you need us!

Melanee Jessup
Communications Committee

EXTENSION OF PROBATIONARY PERIOD

It has come to our attention that some of our members who are on probation have received letters advising them that their probationary period is being extended past the standard one year. The seriousness of the matter warrants alerting our members that this is not something that should be occurring without good reason and only under limited circumstances.

Should you receive such a letter, please contact a member of your local executive. Through discussions with your local executive, it could be determined that, in their opinion, management may be abusing their authority and acting outside of their parameters.

The first exception to this would be if you have indicated that you require an accommodation, and the second would be if you are on Leave Without Pay. In these circumstances, when you request an accommodation or proceeds on LWOP, the clock stops (ie. "press pause") until such time as the your accommodation is finalized and implemented OR you return from leave. Then the clock commences again, to a total of one year.

For instance, if during your probationary period you request an accommodation and it isn't implemented for a period of time, for example for three months, the period of time that you are waiting for the implementation of your accommodation is excluded from your probationary period. Consequently, the end date for your probation is extended by the same amount of time.

Likewise, a period of Leave without Pay is excluded from the probationary period.

Examples:

- if you were hired on January 1st and five months later (June 1st) you request an accommodation, however the accommodation was not implemented for three months (September 1st), your probationary period would end three months later (April 1st).
- if you were hired on January 1st and proceeded on Leave Without Pay on November 1st and then returned on December 1st, the probationary period would end on February 1st.

Patricia Sleczkowski
Communications Committee

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Wishing you a great Spring, dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

In this peak tax filing season, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has shown a real contempt for our collective agreement and a great lack of respect for our members working in its contact centres. In fact, the employer has unilaterally decided to impose extended working hours and Saturday work, not only for new external employees or those who volunteer, but for all contact centre employees.



As mentioned in our communique issued on December 20, 2023, the PSAC has filed a policy grievance on our behalf in this matter. In addition, if you are one of the members who are being forced to work extended hours and/or if the employer is forcing you to work shifts and/or if you are not being compensated for late-hour premiums or overtime as provided for in Article 25 of the collective agreement when circumstances warrant, we strongly suggest that you file individual grievances to remedy these violations of the collective agreement. I invite you to contact one of your local union representatives, who will be able to assist you in filing your grievances.

As if that wasn't enough, the employer also decided to invoke the Sunset Funding provisions of its Staffing Program, thereby excluding the service of term employees working in Assessment, Benefit and Services Branch (ABSB) contact centres from the date of their contract renewal for the Sunset Funding period. This is the case even if the employees work simultaneously on the normal business lines that receive permanent and stable funding, as well as on projects or initiatives that receive temporary funding. The Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) strongly disagrees with the employer on this point and vehemently opposes this decision.

Additionally, the employer recently informed us of its decision to use the Sunset Funding provisions for contract renewals for term employees working for the Appeals Branch, effective April 1, 2024. The affected members work for the *Tax Relief Program* and the *Objections*. They not only work on programs subject to temporary funding, but also on duties subject to permanent and stable funding. Once again, we denounce the employer's decision to use this provision of the Staffing Program and are of the opinion that it is not the appropriate instrument to use in the current circumstances.

The Agency, which prides itself on putting **People First** and being one of **Canada's Top 100 Employers**, is not showing this to its contact centre and term employees, to say the least.

Meanwhile, the Joint (UTE-CRA) Consultation Committee on the Virtual Work Arrangements Directive continues its work, holding regular meetings. A joint communique will be issued shortly to update employees on this subject. In addition, both parties have now established the terms of reference for the Panel on Virtual Work Agreements. This committee will review decisions resulting from the application of the *Directive on Virtual Work Arrangements* and the *Requirement for on-site presence at the Agency*.

Eight (8) years ago, the federal government launched the Phoenix pay system. It was a monumental fiasco that affected, and continues to affect, many employees. In fact, the system has not yet stabilized, and several problems persist. These include thousands of pay file transfers from members who have changed jobs or departments, and who are still not receiving their correct pay. Pay file transfers often have a domino effect, leading to a multitude of problems, such as receiving the incorrect amount of pay, overtime or acting pay. These cases can take 18 to 24 months to resolve. We have intensified our discussions with Agency compensation officials and the PSAC to ensure that this unacceptable situation improves as quickly as possible.

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REFLECTING ON A MONTH OF CELEBRATION AND EDUCATION

As February marks Black History Month, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the immense and positive contributions that Black Canadians have made to the fabric of our nation's heritage.

One shining example is the legacy of the Honourable Lincoln Alexander – Canada's first Black Member of Parliament, the first Black Federal Cabinet Minister, and the longest-serving Chairman of the Worker's Compensation Board. His trailblazing career paved the way for more inclusive representation in Canadian politics and civil service.

Another notable contribution comes from the spirited sounds of the world-renowned Nova Scotian singer, Portia White. She broke color barriers through her voice, becoming the first Black Canadian concert singer to win international acclaim. White's passion for music and excellence brought Canadian artistry to the global stage, forever changing our cultural landscape.



Did you know that Viola Desmond took a courageous stand against racial segregation in the 1940s, nearly a decade before Rosa Parks' historic act? Desmond's bravery in a Nova Scotia movie theatre ignited a spark that fueled the struggle for equal rights in Canada and she is now commemorated on the Canadian ten-dollar bill.

And did you know that the prestigious Order of Canada was awarded to Mathieu Da Costa, the first recorded free Black person in Canada? His skills as a multilingual interpreter were invaluable during the early 1600s, fostering communication and trade between European traders and Indigenous peoples – a testament to the longstanding history of African presence in Canada.

Our celebration this February has been rich with these stories and many more, igniting conversations and expanding our understanding of the myriad ways Black Canadians have shaped our country.

It is my hope that you have found this information both enlightening and transformative. The lessons we carry forward from Black History Month are vital, reminding us to continue acknowledging and valuing the diversity that strengthens our union and our country.

Let us all carry the spirit of this important month throughout the year and reaffirm our commitment to equality and inclusivity.

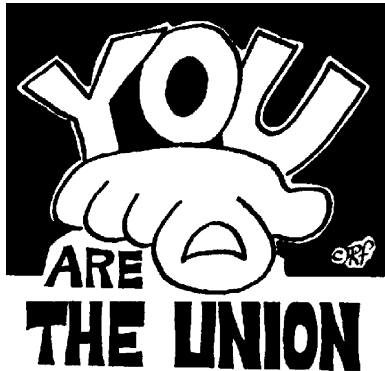
Your engagement is what makes these observances meaningful, and I urge you to continue exploring, learning, and participating in activities that promote our collective awareness and appreciation of the diverse tapestry that narrates our Canadian story.

Selby Hewitt
President, UTE Local 00051



YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT

All of us have probably heard at one point or another “The union should...” or “Why isn’t the union... ? ”.



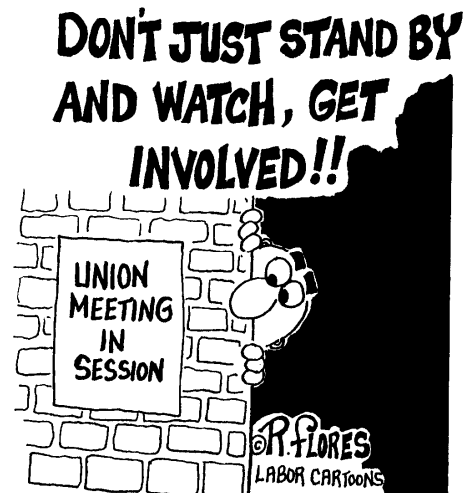
Friends, we are all the union. That is not cliché, that is fact. Certainly, there are elected union representatives at every level. Those representatives are there for you and because of you, but the real union is the membership. Your input is necessary to move forward. Without the membership the union is inconsequential.

You don’t have to agree with everything the union says or does, but it is founded by and is beholden to the democratic process. Every year your local holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM). This is precisely the time and place for you to be able to hold your representatives accountable and make decisions on matters that are directly related to you and your dues. This is the opportunity to voice your concerns and talk through them. Locals also hold membership appreciation events to engage with you. Local information should be readily available, posted online and on union bulletin boards within the workplace. Never hesitate to reach out and get to know your local representatives, as they are the conduit to the regional and national representatives.

Engagement is paramount in a member driven organization. You are not only allowed, but encouraged, to participate and ultimately unite for the greater good. There is nothing more satisfying to an unfriendly government or boss than a collective group that is divided. No boss in any organization is beholden to its employees. They may say so or even genuinely, and with good intent believe so, but at the end of the day they will do what their superiors say. Your power to improve working conditions and pay etc. is by being involved. There is nothing more powerful than showing the bosses that respect works both ways, and this is why your involvement matters.

Literally none of the benefits we have today came through the goodwill of the employer. They were either fought for at the bargaining table or achieved through legislation. In the past, if a worker wanted to take parental leave, they would have had to quit their job, like my mother did as a teacher. This is a foreign concept for us now, but again, this was fought for through strikes and legislation. No employer suggested it, no employer thought, “Hey, let’s give this to our employees”. This is the same with Workforce Adjustment provisions, bereavement leave, family leave, etc. The list goes on. The boss didn’t do that – the membership did.

All this to say, please get to know your local executive, attend AGMs to get info and provide your opinions, and most of all, please go out to your membership appreciation events – **you are the power.**



Adam Jackson
2nd Vice-president

UTE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) each year offers two (2) three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) National Scholarships, the Diana Gee National Scholarship and the Robert “Bob” Campbell National Scholarship, as well as ten (10) one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00) Regional Scholarships:



- Al Rollins Atlantic Regional Scholarship
- Quebec Regional Scholarship
- Jean Bergeron Montreal Regional Scholarship
- Shane O'Brien National Capital Regional Scholarship
- Linda Collins Greater Toronto Regional Scholarship
- Nick Stein Southwestern Ontario Regional Scholarship
- Kent McDonald Northern and Eastern Ontario Regional Scholarship
- Prairies Regional Scholarship
- Don Davoren Rocky Mountains Regional Scholarship
- Pacific Regional Scholarship



The UTE may defer the awarding of a scholarship of a successful applicant for a period of twelve (12) months, if after reviewing the circumstances, it is agreed to by the National President and the Chairperson of the Honours and Awards Committee. If the scholarship is not awarded after twelve (12) months, an additional scholarship may be awarded for the current year.

The Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) each year also provides ten (10) regional scholarships in the amount of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) sponsored by The Personal Insurance Company (ThePersonal). These will be chosen following the same criteria as the UTE scholarships.

All scholarships are available for **members in good standing** of the UTE (or who at the time of their departure from CRA in the same calendar year were members in good standing of the UTE), including their spouse, their common-law spouse (including same sex partners) and/or their children or grandchildren.

Your application must be postmarked no later than **June 15**.

For full details, please follow this link:

<https://www.ute-sei.org/en/for-members/ute-scholarships>

Gary Esslinger
Chair of the Honours and Awards Committee

UPDATE ABOUT THE TRANSFER OF YOUR HEALTH CARE PLAN TO CANADA LIFE

On February 23, 2024 the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) filed a Policy Grievance on behalf of the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) to contest the poor management of the transfer of the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP) to Canada Life, which has impacted tens of thousands of employees covered by the plan.

The policy grievance argues that the Agency's actions violated the collective agreement by implementing the transition without regard for the rights of all members to a functioning health care plan and did so in a manner that also violated their human rights.

Immediately following the transfer of the administration of the PSHCP from Sun Life to Canada Life, members began dealing with significant issues, including the interruption of their benefits, the inability to contact the insurer, long delays and arbitrary and wrongful denial of claims.

Some members were facing the difficult decision to stop their medical treatments because they could not afford to pay out of pocket and wait for the eventual reimbursement by Canada Life. Under these circumstances, an apology is not enough to redress the harm already caused, as well as the harm members continue to experience.

UTE is seeking remedies for the problems the transition caused including, but not limited to, the following:

- a declaration that the employer has violated the collective agreement;
- an order that the employer compensate members for all harms experienced since the transition to Canada Life, including:
 - general damages for all employees for the stress, aggravation, and pain and suffering they experienced;
 - damages for impacts to those who experienced financial losses;
 - damages under the Canadian Human Rights Act for adverse effects experienced on the basis of prohibited grounds.

PSHCP Appeal Process

If you have experienced issues with coverage or your claim has been denied by Canada Life, please follow the PSHCP appeal process. You can find more details about the process through the Plan's administration authority, <https://pshcp.ca/appeals/>.

Any issues related to the denial of a claim or coverage under the Plan, or if you received a lesser reimbursement than expected should be appealed, not grieved. If you grieve these issues, it will take substantially longer to resolve.

Please review the PSAC related link <https://psacunion.ca/faq-public-service-health-care-plan-canada-life> and/or contact a member of your union local executive, if you have questions about whether your situation should be appealed or grieved.



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In Limited Situations You May Be Able to File a Grievance

If you experienced delays or other hardship because of Canada Life's administration of your claim, you may be able to file a grievance against the employer. A grievance may be appropriate where Canada Life failed to process a claim or provide reimbursement within a reasonable time or where you were unable to contact them in a reasonable time, leading to financial hardship, delayed treatment, or some other adverse impact. **The grievance process takes substantially longer than the appeals process and a grievance on a denial of benefits will be rejected, and you will be directed to appeal.**

Wael Afifi
Senior Labour Relations Officer

URGENT REMINDER PHOENIX PAY DAMAGES

Hopefully all members are aware of the victory obtained by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) in respect to damages received because of Phoenix pay system. At issue was the taxability of such payments. On February 29, 2024 an announcement was made that PSAC had secured an agreement with the Canada Revenue Agency to treat up to \$1,500 of the Phoenix general damages compensation members received in 2021 as non-taxable.



All members who have not already filed a notice of objection **must** file an extension request and notice of objection by **April 30, 2024** to be eligible for their Phoenix general damages compensation to be deemed non-taxable. Failure to do so will exclude members from the settlement and the opportunity to receive back taxes paid on average of \$492. Details on how to file a notice of objection can be found on the UTE's website:

<https://www.ute-sei.org/en/node/500407>

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In closing, I would like to mention once again that our union is working on a lobbying campaign aimed at all federal political parties and their MPs, to demand that Section 58 of the Canada Revenue Agency Act be amended to put an end to Treasury Board interference in our collective bargaining with the Canada Revenue Agency. More information will be forthcoming in the coming months.

I sincerely thank you for your continued support of YOUR union and for your excellent work and dedication to the Canadian population.

Marc Brière
National President

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that all address changes should be done online at <https://www.ute-sei.org/en/for-members/change-address> or via email to membership@ute-sei.org. If you do not have access to e-mail, please pass it on (with your PSAC ID) to a local representative or mail it directly to the National Office at 275 Bank Street, Suite 400, Ottawa ON K2P 2L6.