

Additional Resources

Websites and Printed Material

- A. All YEU collective agreements are hosted online at www.yeu.ca/locals
- B. The YEU website contains information about all our upcoming events, including all the training sessions for Shop Stewards: www.yeu.ca
- C. The PSAC website is full of information on all topics relevant to Shop Stewards. Of particular relevance are their online training modules: www.psaunion.ca
- D. BCGEU publishes many useful articles in their publication *Steward Updates*: <http://bcgeu.ca/stewards>
- E. An excellent and comprehensive general guide to being a Shop Steward is David Prosten's *The Union Steward's Complete Guide* (Annapolis: Union Communication Services, Inc. ISBN: 978-0965948623). Copies are available to borrow from YEU.
- F. All relevant legislation in the Yukon (e.g. the Employment Standards Act, the Human Rights Act, the Public Service Act etc.) can be downloaded from <http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/>
- G. The Canada Labour Code can be viewed or downloaded at: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-2/>
- H. PSAC's Guide to the Duty to Accommodate: <http://psaunion.ca/what-duty-accommodate>
- I. PSAC's Guide to Violence and Bullying Prevention: <http://psaunion.ca/violence-and-bullying-prevention>
- J. PSAC's Guide to the Right to Refuse Unsafe Work: <http://psaunion.ca/right-refuse-dangerous-work>

Common Grievances and Who Leads Them

Shop Steward

- Leave request (vacation, special, sick, LWOP) denied
- Overtime allocated unevenly
- Overtime, Acting Pay, Shift Premium, or other payments are withheld
- Inappropriate or excessive discipline (when it does not involve suspension or dismissal)
- Increase or decrease in workload
- Change in shift without adequate notice
- Failure to provide a current statement of duties
- Failure to complete annual review, Personal Performance Plan
- Manager performing bargaining unit work
- Unfair scheduling, call-ins for casuals or auxiliaries

Union Advisor

- All 3rd level, and some 2nd level grievances (depending on how many levels there are)
- Inappropriate or excessive discipline involving suspension or dismissal
- Serious personal conflicts involving harassment or bullying
- Discrimination on the basis of a prohibited ground.
- Failure to accommodate a disability
- Assigning unsafe work or otherwise violating OH&S standards
- Appealing an unsuccessful job competition
- Policy grievances, and most grievances involving a group of members

PSAC Officers

- Classification appeals

Efficient Note Taking

Shop Stewards are often the sole representative of the union at meetings between members and management, but they always have a team behind them for support along the way. Good communication between team members is essential, especially when a case is not resolved at the initial stages and must be led by an advisor or lawyer at arbitration. You'll never know when a case is going to escalate that far, so you need to treat each one as though it will. The most important way to share information is through written notes from the meetings you attend. Some things to consider:

- Your notes are the union's written record of what took place at the meeting, and not simply a personal set of reminders to yourself. They will be used by your Union Advisor to review the progression of the case, and they may end up as important evidence presented by a union lawyer to an arbitrator if the grievance process doesn't resolve the issue.
- Be sure to include data about the time, location, and participants at the meeting. Number your pages if you use more than one, and keep them organized
- Use common abbreviations (such as initials for speakers instead of full names) but avoid abbreviations that won't be obvious to someone else. Include a key explaining what your abbreviations mean.
- You cannot write down every word said, so you need to give priority to what is most important. At a fact-finding meeting, make note of any evidence of misconduct the employer presents, or any questions they ask of the member. Record the main points of the member's responses. At a grievance meeting, record the employer's interpretation of the relevant parts of the CA, or their justification for the issue grieved. Record any decisions made.
- You cannot take an audio recording without the consent of everyone involved, and that is likely to be denied (and it is an awkward thing to ask for anyway). You can, however, bring a laptop or tablet to type notes if it is

easier. You can also type your handwritten notes after the meeting. If you do, however, don't include anything new and be sure to include your original handwritten notes with them (either by stapling them or by scanning and attaching them). The reason for this is that your immediate first-hand account of what took place at the meeting is stronger evidence than your recollection after the fact. You can also include some additional comments about the meeting on a separate document, but don't mix it up with the notes taken during the meeting.

- Your notes should be an objective account of the facts, and must not contain any subjective interpretations that might not be agreed to by everyone involved. Avoid personal opinions and commentary.
- Use quotation marks to record important statements verbatim. Do this for anything that strikes you as out of line, or crucial to a disagreement about interpretation.
- Within reason, ask for additional time to finish recording something in your notes before proceeding with the meeting. You can also ask that something be repeated if you recognize that it is important to record in writing.
- Keep your notes secure. Notes should never be shared with management, or even with the member you are representing. Don't store them on an employer's computer or in your locker at work. You will keep them until your work on the case is finished, and then you will turn them over to your Union Advisor to be included with all the other documents related to the case. Don't keep personal copies.

Case Management and Avoiding Burnout

Unions are far more effective when a lot of people contribute a little bit each, than when a few people contribute an awful lot each. Depending on how active the other members of your Local are, you may be asked to assist with more or fewer cases than you are able to at any given time. One of the most important skills you need to be an effective Shop Steward is good management of your time and resources. You are far more valuable to the union if you can assist with one case a month over the next two years, than if you help with a dozen cases in the first month and then hang up your hat because the job is too demanding. A few things to consider about managing your caseload:

- Between requests for assistance from the Union Hall, and requests from immediate co-workers who approach you directly, you may get more requests to help than you can reasonably accept. This means that you need to be able to say 'no'. You need not worry about getting a disappointing frown from union staff when you decline a request for help; we understand and respect your time and will find another Steward to assist. When you need to tell a co-worker that you are unable to assist, attempt to find another Steward or contact your Chief Shop Steward first.
- For the most part (and at least for newer Stewards), limit yourself to one or two active cases at a time. A case that you expect to be resolved easily at an informal meeting with the supervisor can surprise you by becoming more complicated. If you've agreed to work on another case in the meantime you may find that you've taken on too much. With experience you will become a better judge of what you can handle.
- Many members may view you as "the" union representative, and expect you to be available at any time. Help them to understand that you are only one member of a team and that there are other resources available when you are too busy to assist.
- For many of us, it is far too easy to become emotionally invested in a case. This is not a bad thing in itself, but it is important to understand that it can add layers of stress that affect you even when you are not working on the case. Strive to maintain an appropriate emotional distance; you assist your

co-workers with *their* problems, but they do not need to become *your* problems.

- Set boundaries and stick to them. Some co-workers will see you as a general help-line and will spend an inappropriate amount of time discussing all sorts of problems with you – if you let them. Without being rude or dismissive you can inform such members that you can help only with work-related problems, and insist that conversations stay on task.
- If you do find that your caseload is manageable and you have more time to give, that time might be better spent trying to build general union support or recruiting more folks to help out with a little of their time than it would be by taking on extra cases yourself. Remember that unions draw their strength from involving more of their membership, and not by having a few individuals doing the bulk of the work.