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Yukon Employees' Union  
2285-2nd Ave.  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Y1A 1C9



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Yukon Employees' Union

# NEWS

November 2013

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE

- Busy collective bargaining calendar
- Locals updates
- Feds betraying Canadian veterans
- Fun, film and informative events
- CLiFF schedule
- President's message
- LARGE schedule of meetings & events

## Fun, film and informative events

# Active year end for YEU members and families

Now in its 5th year, the **Canadian Labour International Film Festival (CLiFF)** takes place in venues across



Canada in late November. YEU is excited to present the festival for the fourth time, showing films about working people, or created by union members.

A schedule and list of film selections are published on page 4, and on the YEU website. Yukon **CLiFF** will be held in three screen rooms at the YEU Hall on Wednesday, November 20 starting at 7:00 p.m.

Last year YEU's **FREE Family Fun Skate** was a huge success, attracting families, friends and neighbours for a fun time on the ice.



This year the event takes place at the Canada Games Centre on December 7, between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. Admission and skate rentals are free! Donations of food for the Whitehorse Food Bank are welcome, but not required.

## Budget "reforms" directly attack unions

The Harper government's budget bill contains provisions that will seriously weaken federal public service unions. The scope and breadth of these "reforms" to the Public Service Labour Relations Act completely change the rules for collective bargaining.

Among the most worrisome provisions are those that attack the right to refer contract disputes to arbitration, and how jobs can be designated as essential services. The government intends to allow arbitration only if both parties agree, and they reserve the "exclusive" right to decide which jobs



**Human Rights Day** is observed by the international community every year on December 10. For more than a decade YEU has participated in the commemoration by hosting a Human Rights Day Open House at YEU Hall.

This year YEU will celebrate human rights throughout the week prior to December 10 with a series of lunchtime presentations featuring speakers directly involved in the fight to gain and preserve human rights in the Yukon and in other parts of the world. A complete list of presenters will be published in the coming weeks on the YEU website, on Facebook, and in our next newsletter.

A **Seasonal Open House** will be held at YEU Hall on December 19. Members and friends of the Yukon Employees' Union are all welcome to attend to celebrate the season and coming new year.



will be designated "essential". The changes even seem to allow the government to designate more employees as essential during a strike. Minister Tony Clement refuses to explain the impact of the law, offering only this astonishing statement "we'll tell everyone what the law does when it's law".

As the assaults on federal public service unions continue unabated, provincial and territorial employees have reason to fear. How long will it be before these changes embolden other levels of government to adopt similar provisions?

# Betrayal—unforgivable cuts target veterans

After putting their lives on the line for Canadians, our veterans are being betrayed by their own government.

Nine regional Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) offices are slated to close by the end of February 2014, and 784 jobs are being cut. And many veterans don't even know that the VAC regional offices they rely on are closing. Nor do most Canadians.

Minister Julian Fantino hypocritically proclaimed that the federal government “remains fully committed to providing veterans with the support they need”, while cutting their essential services. Apparently he thinks this hollow commitment can be fulfilled by telling veterans to use mobile apps such as *PTSD Coach Canada* and *OSI Connect* to get “customized mental health support”.

This preposterous plan supposes that elderly veterans and those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or other disabling conditions no longer need one-on-one service.

Many Canadians become frustrated to tears by phone “support” that often means long wait times, endless “press 1 to 5” options, or “leave a message” instructions. On-line support isn't any better. To expect elderly veterans, or those of any age with PTSD, to navigate frustrating automated services is unforgivable.

The Canadian government promised to take care of veterans from the day they enlisted until the day they die. But the drastic cuts to VAC staff and services mean that veterans are not getting the care they need, deserve and were promised.

## The Facts

- Nine regional VAC offices are slated to be closed by the end of February 2014. More than 784 jobs from Veterans Affairs are being cut including case managers, client service agents, disability pension officers, nurses and administrative staff.
- The closures mean that veterans will be forced to travel to other cities for frontline services, or to navigate the system by phone and computer. Cuts to case managers also means fewer home visits. These visits are crucial for those who can't easily leave their homes.
- The government says veterans will be able to access services through Service Canada office, but staff there are not trained in veterans services. Veterans who go to Service Canada offices are told to use computers, kiosks, or the toll-free phone line for help.

## Union-Legion joint press conference

The Yukon Employees' Union and members of the Royal Canadian Legion will hold a joint press conference to address federal government cuts to veterans' services.

Time & Date: 12 noon, November 5  
Location: Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU

The event will feature a moving 3:30 minute video featuring veterans speaking about the urgency of this issue and why the federal government should not close Veterans Affairs offices.

YEU members who wish to view the video can visit the section of the PSAC website devoted to the issue. Go to *Help our veterans stop Veterans Affairs office closures* at <http://psacunion.ca/stop-veterans-affairs-office-closures>.

- The federal government is trying to justify cuts to services by saying that the numbers of veterans in Canada is decreasing due to age and death. But there are more than 680,000 veteran and current members of the Canadian Forces who never served in the Second World War, almost 10 per cent of whom are disabled. As a result of growth and recruitment, **the number of new veterans today surpasses the number of surviving Second World War vets.**
- The government has privatized the administration and follow-up of veteran's benefits to Medavie Blue Cross. VAC agents used to stay in touch with veterans to help them make sure they were accessing the benefits they need. Blue Cross sends a letter and cuts the veterans off if they can't reach them by phone. It can take 3 months or more for a veteran to have their benefits reinstated.
- The government privatized the VAC call centre run by Service Canada. When a veteran calls the phone number listed on the VAC website, they are actually directed to an employee of Quantum Management Services, not a trained government staff member. These employees are not well informed about veterans programs nor trained in filling out benefit applications.
- Veterans will be forced to travel if they need access to face-to-face services. Many elderly vets no longer drive, and some younger vets with PTSD or other mental health issues find driving difficult.

Many veterans risked their lives or sacrificed their health fighting face-to-face to protect Canadians. Don't we at least owe them the face-to-face support they now need?

# President's Message



YEU President  
Steve Geick

As you can see from this newsletter, the last quarter of 2013 could hardly be more active.

Within our component, collective bargaining, general meetings and Local development work fill the calendar. YEU is also organizing a series of informative events in November and December, while celebrating the

season with camaraderie and fun activities. I hope as many members as possible come out to take part.

On the national stage the Harper government continues to target organized labour and cut essential services. Even the men and women who have made profound sacrifices to

protect our freedom are in the crosshairs of their own government.

PSAC is a leader in the fight to maintain the hard won rights of organized labour, and to maintain the services upon which Canadians depend. These endangered services include those essential to our veterans.

I believe we have the obligation to protect those who protected us. That is why I met with the members of the Whitehorse branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.

The upcoming joint YEU-Legion press conference is intended to help Yukoners become aware of how the federal cuts are hurting our veterans—including those here in the Yukon. I urge our members to help in this work by demanding that the federal government maintain essential services.

## Locals active across the Yukon

# Elections, bargaining and Local development

YEU-PSAC negotiating teams representing several bargaining units have entered negotiations, or have just ratified new collective agreements.

### **Air North Flight Attendants Local Y036**

Air North Flight Attendants are at the negotiating table working toward their first collective agreement. The bargaining team, led by PSAC negotiator Erna Post is confident they will soon achieve a deal that meets both the needs of their members and the requirements of the employer.

### **City of Whitehorse Local Y023**

### **Whitehorse Transit Workers Local Y022**

Bargaining Teams representing employees of the City of Whitehorse and Whitehorse Transit are currently in negotiations with the employer. Both teams are led by PSAC negotiator Josh Paddon.

City of Whitehorse employee representatives met with the employer between October 1-4. They will return to the table

for a bargaining session from November 27-29. The Whitehorse Transit bargaining team met with the employer from September 24-27. They return to bargaining for sessions between November 13-15.

### **Yukon College Local Y011**

Congratulations are in order for the bargaining team representing employees of Yukon College. Members ratified a new collective agreement on October 21.

### **Yukon Utility Workers Local Y024**

Representatives of utility workers employed by the Yukon Energy Corporation, led by PSAC negotiator Erna Post, met with for negotiations the week of October 2.

### **Town of Watson Lake Local Y029**

PSAC has served the Town of Watson Lake with notice to bargain on behalf of Watson Lake Municipal Workers Local Y029. The PSAC officer who will lead the Union's Negotiating Team is John Wilson.

## **New Local in Watson Lake formed**

The Canada Industrial Labour Relations Board has granted the application recognizing the Help and Hope for Families Society as a bargaining unit within PSAC. The society has been designated as YEU Local Y038.

The society provides support for battered women and families in distress. Congratulations to the society and welcome to the YEU family.

## **Local elections and changes**

Town of Watson Lake Local Y029 held their Annual General Meeting and election of officers on September 24. Yukon College Local Y011 held their AGM on September 25. A list of new officers is available on the YEU website. Tyler Murray has resigned as President of Y016 and as Youth Director on the YEU Executive. Thank you Tyler for your service to your Union.



# film schedule

The 2013 Canadian Labour International Film Festival takes place at YEU Hall on November 20, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

## Screening Room #1: Lucy Jackson Training Room

- The Journey*—Explores a young Ethiopian house maid’s hopes, dreams and realities in a new country. 15 min.
- Ukrainian Labour Temple*—Founded in 1918, this Winnipeg temple remains an important centre for workers. 27 min.
- Money & Honey*—Asian documentary on migrant Filipino caregivers in Taipei and the nursing home residents. 96 min.

## Screening Room #2: Local Workshop

- On Vient our la Visite*—6000 undocumented workers in France go on strike to demand legalization. 54 min.
- Ann Kore Moun*—Haitian union leaders explain why unions and a civil society are essential for the country. 35 min.
- Il Tesoro Sotto I Piedi*—Development in Mozambique threatens life styles, traditions and health of villages. 28 min.

## Screening Room #3: Dave Hobbs Board Room

- Last Shift*—Story of the relationship between Dalhousie’s paper mill and the town from 1929-2008. 54 min.
- Condition of the Working Class*—UK working class people devise a theatrical performance of Engel’s classic. 82 min.

# Meetings & Events

**Y028 Annual General Meeting**—Tues., Nov. 5, 6:00 p.m., Wye Lake Cabin, Watson Lake

**Y032 Annual General Meeting**—Tues., Nov. 5, 8:00 p.m., Watson Lake Hospital, Watson Lake

**Y010 Annual General Meeting**—Wed., Nov. 6, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU Hall

**YEU-Canadian Legion Press Conference**—Tues., Nov. 5, 12 Noon, Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU Hall

**Grievance Procedure Training**—Tues., Nov. 12, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU Hall

**Y026 Annual General Meeting**—Wed., Nov. 13, 7:00-9:00 p.m., YOOP Hall, Dawson City

**Shop Steward Round Table**—Wed., Nov. 20, 9:00 a.m. - Noon, YEU Boardroom

**Canadian Labour International Film Festival (CLiFF)**—Nov. 20, 7:00 11:00 p.m., YEU Hall.

**YEU Human Rights Week presentations**—Dec. 3-6, 12 Noon, YEU

**YEU FREE Family Fun Skate**—Sat., Dec. 7, 1:00-4:00 p.m., Canada Games Centre, Whitehorse

**YG/YEU Grievance Procedure Training**—Thurs., Dec. 12, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Platinum Room, 2nd Floor Hougen Centre

**YEU Seasonal Open House**—Dec. 19., 11:00-5:00 p.m., YEU Hall

**YEU Monthly Executive Meeting**—2nd Thurs., 6:30-9:00 p.m., YEU Hall

**Y010 Monthly Meeting**—2nd Wed., 5:00-7:00 p.m., YEU Hall

**Y017 Monthly Meeting**—4th Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

**Y023 Monthly Meeting**—1st Thurs., Noon

**Y025 Monthly Meeting**—3rd Wed., 6:00 p.m., YEU Hall

**Y026 Monthly Meeting**—3rd Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Dawson City

**PSAC Regional Access Committee**—3rd Thurs., 5:15 p.m., YEU Hall

**PSAC Aboriginal Peoples Committee**—1st Tues., 5:15 p.m.

**PSAC Racially Visible Committee**—1st Wed., 5:00 p.m.

**PSAC Regional Women’s Committee**—2nd Tues., 5:15 p.m.

**PSAC Health & Safety Committee**—1st Thurs., 6:00 p.m.

**Dawson Regional Women’s Committee**—1st Wed., 5:15 p.m., Legion Hall

**PSAC Regional Youth Committee**—4th Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Lucy Jackson Training Room, YEU Hall

**Yukon Employees’ Union Office**—2285-2nd Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1C9. Telephone—867-667-2331, Fax—867-667-6521, Toll Free—1-888-YEU-2331, Email—contact@yeu.ca, Website—www.yeu.ca, or visit us on Facebook.

## Staff

**Frank Ursich**, Union Advisor—contact for members & Shop Stewards; fursich@yeu.ca

**Sharleen Patterson**, Union Advisor—contact for members & Shop Stewards; spatterson@yeu.ca

**Laura Hureau**, Senior Union Advisor—contact for members & Shop Stewards; lhureau@yeu.ca

**Beckie Huston**, Intake Advisor—contact for members; bhuston@yeu.ca

**Deborah Turner-Davis**, Executive Assistant; dturner-davis@yeu.ca

**Tammy Olsen**, Financial Officer; tolsen@yeu.ca

**Bob Nardi**, Communications Officer—contact for newsletter & website; bnardi@yeu.ca

**W. Cary Gryba**, Executive Director—contact for YEU Executive & Local Executive Members; execdir@yeu.ca

**Kat Traplin**, A/Membership Services Officer; ktraplin@yeu.ca

**Office Hours**—Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. YEU News © 2013 Yukon Employees’ Union