

In this Issue - YTG Contract Ruling, President's Message, Union-made Shopping, Local News, Workplace Issues, and more ...

Ruling Establishes Collective Agreement YTG Arbitration Decision

On December 10th, Yukon government employees received notification of Arbitrator Vince Ready's decision on the terms of a new contract.

The ruling improves on the employer's "final offer", on the table at the time of the government's impasse declaration. The Arbitrator provided for a retroactive wage increase in year one, and accepted the negotiating team's argument that the effective date for subsequent increases should be January 1st. It also increases the employee's dental/orthodontic benefits.

President Dave Hobbis said, "The employer was clear in their intent to withhold retroactive wage increases, and to delay the implementation of increases in subsequent years. Mr. Ready chose to recognize precedents established in past collective agreements, and provide retroactivity to the first day of the new contract".

The ruling also accepted the Union's proposal for a lifetime maximum increase in the orthodontics portion of dental plan to \$3000, albeit in two stages occurring on April 1, 2005 and April 1, 2006.

In the view of union negotiators, the employer's request for a 4 year term was politically motivated. It was not an operational necessity, nor as we now know, was it

The new contract provides Yukon government employees with a first year wage increase of 2% retroactive to Jan. 1, 2003, increases of 2.5% on Jan. 1, 2004 and 2005, and a 3% increase on Jan. 1, 2006.

required by weakness in the government's financial position. Unfortunately, on this provision, the Arbitrator did not follow his practice of recognizing past history when reaching his conclusion. The new contract covers a four-year period.



Union members and friends celebrate Human Rights Day in the bistro-like atmosphere of the annual YEU open house.

The ruling supported our negotiator's position that the employer continue to pay 100% of the Union president's salary and benefits. The union provides a 25% reimbursement.

Union proposals to increase the hourly premium for those employees who have to work weekends, and to increase the benefit cap on the Yukon Bonus were rejected.

The ruling also rejected recognition of Aboriginal Day, a holiday now established in both the NWT and Nunavut.

See the President's Message for more information on the ruling.

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Y010 Donations

Local Y010 is donating \$500 each to seven organizations in recognition to their contribution to the community. The recipients were selected at the 2003 AGM held November 26th. They are:

Kinsmen Club - "Share the Spirit" (aka Adopt a Family)

Mary House - food program

Salvation Army - food program

Sacred Heart Cathedral - food program

Sport Yukon - Kids Recreation Fund

Kaushee's Place - ongoing needs

Whitehorse Curling Club - Junior Curling Programs

Congratulations to these worthwhile groups and to the Y010 for its ongoing work in the community.

Call for Nominations

A call for nominations has been issued by Local Y010 to fill several positions designated for the rural Yukon. The positions are:

2nd Vice-President

Director District 2 - Alaska Highway South of Whitehorse

Director District 3 - Campbell Highway

Director District 4 - Klondike Highway North including the Dempster Highway

Director District 5 - Alaska

Highway North including Haines Road

The deadline for nominations is February 6, 2004. Nomination forms are available on the YEU website: www.yeu.ca, or from the Union Hall.



Union members and friends in Pelly Crossing enjoyed holiday snacks and beverages at a Human Rights Day open house sponsored by YEU. Thanks to Jessy Trudeau for organizing the event.



YEU you asked

"Here are some answers to questions that might affect you or your co-workers."

Q. I worked for YTG until October, 2003. I was disappointed to learn that I may not receive a cheque for the retroactive pay increase provided for in the Arbitrator's ruling that established a new contract. Is this true, and if so, why not? Former federal employees are paid for retroactive increases, are they not?

A. The Yukon Public Service Staff Relations Act does not automatically provide for payment of retroactive wage increases to former Yukon government employees, if their employment terminated prior to the

establishment of a new collective agreement. Federal legislation does provide for such payments.

The Yukon Employees' Union believes that such workers *should* receive retroactive payment for negotiated wage increases. This issue was brought forward by the Union during negotiations, but was not resolved at the time the employer declared an impasse. Unfortunately, the Arbitrator did not directly address this issue in his ruling, thereby leaving the issue to the parties.

The Yukon Employees' Union is free to refer the government's

decision to refuse retroactive payments back to arbitration, though the arbitrator has advised that his decision would be based on historical precedent. Only once in the past three negotiations has a territorial government agreed to such payments.

The government could, of course, move to amend the Yukon's legislation to correct this inequity, though it seems unlikely the Yukon Party would take such action.

YEU is reviewing the matter to determine if referral back to arbitration is the appropriate course of action.

YEU from the President



It is my pleasure to offer all YEU/PSAC members best wishes for the holiday season, and my sincere hope

that the new year will bring health, happiness and well-being in your personal and employment lives.

In spite of the tumultuous events of the past year, and to some degree because of them, we have reason for optimism born of a renewed sense of camaraderie and shared values. Our members are united in their commitment to the goal of establishing a workplace atmosphere of fairness and respect; one free of the harassment and dissatisfaction experienced for much of the year by our sisters and brothers employed by the Yukon government.

This month those members at last secured a new contract. I'm pleased that the decision was rendered prior to the new year, so that they can begin 2004 informed of the new wage rates, and aware that payment for the retroactive increase would be forthcoming.

We are pleased to have achieved full wage increase retroactivity and contract implementation dates of January 1st in each year, and with the dental plan cap. Surprisingly, the arbitrator chose against precedent to award a 4 year contract. The negotiating team was not

opposed in principle to such a term, and had prepared a proposal to address this option. Regrettably, their proposal was never discussed due to the government's decision to terminate talks.

The arbitrator's unwillingness to award increases in the weekend premium and Yukon Bonus, and his rejection of an Aboriginal Day holiday is regrettable. But all-in-all the results of the arbitration referral improved on the employer's "final" offer, and avoided a difficult and disruptive labour action.

This year has seen its share of negotiation successes as well. In contrast to the frustrations experienced by our members employed by YTG and Yukon College, other locals succeeded in securing negotiated collective agreements. I congratulate the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, the Yukon Arts Centre, and members employed by the City of Whitehorse. I also extend congratulations to our sisters and brothers employed by the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and to Yukon teachers on the successful negotiation of new collective agreements.

This year also saw the ranks of the Yukon Employees' Union joined by former federal employees whose positions were devolved to the Yukon government. We welcome you aboard. It's a pity that your introduction to YTG employment was framed in the nasty and abusive atmosphere of the computer use investigation imposed by the Public Service Commission. Nonetheless, we thank you for

your active participation in this year's Union activities, and look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Again, best wishes to all our members this holiday season.

Union-Made shopping on-line no sweat

You may have worked up a sweat over this year's shopping, but the founders of No Sweat Apparel are determined to lessen the workout in the future. The company, the world's first and most extensive brand of *union-made* casual and athletic apparel now achieves more than 50% of its sales on-line.

Nine months after establishing the on-line storefront, the company is making sales in 22 countries and six continents. "Word of mouse" advertising and email referrals by customers to friends and family have made it possible to pay a living wage and still offer price-competitive, quality clothing.

The No Sweat line of 100 per cent union-made casual clothing is produced in UNITE shops in the U.S. and Canada. All ordering and payment information is on the No Sweat Apparel website.



www.nosweatapparel.com

YEU issues in the workplace

Government of Yukon Employees

The Joint Management Committee on Benefits for YTG employees has determined that effective immediately re-entry into the Extended Health Plan is available to those whose coverage ceased due to lapsed premium payments while on leave from employment. Coverage is available upon receipt of payment in full of back premiums.

The Plan will be reviewed again by the committee in February, 2004. It is possible that enrollment will

become mandatory for all employees, including those on leave without pay. Mandatory premium deductions/payments would then be initiated. In this case, payment of back premiums may not be required for enrollment.

If you have, at any time, been denied re-entry into the Extended Health Plan, please contact the Public Service Commission. For more information, contact Diane Anderson at amazed@yknet.yk.ca, or the Union office.

YEU member of the month

During the past year, your YEU Newsletter recognized the contributions and accomplishments of several YEU/PSAC members and staff. We're please to again thank these activists for their dedication and perseverance as we embark on a new year's challenges.

Renee-Claude Carrier



Sue Christianson



Norm Easton



Loralee Kesler



Carolyn (Toody) Boland



Florence Roberts & the late Don Galbraith

Conferences:

PSAC National Health & Safety Conference March 25th - 28th, 2004

The objectives of the 2004 Conference:

- establishing the link between globalization and its direct relationship to decreased health and safety protection in our workplaces;
- ensuring that health and safety issue are mainstream issues for the Union and for the membership;
- building the activism of the members and activists in respect to the issue of health and safety in the workplace;
- developing and implementing Union-based strategies to ensure that workplace health and safety issue are being addressed by employers and by government;
- establishing collective bargaining strategies.

Deadline for Application for participants:

January 7, 2004, at 16:00 EST.

Deadline for observers:

January 16, 2004, at 16:00 EST.

Deadline for the submission of resolutions:

January 7, 2004, at 16:00 EST.

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Members are reminded to notify the YEU office of any change of address or name changes. Call Linda Bidrman - Membership Services, email lbidrman@yeu.ca or fax the number above.