

YEU NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union

Dec 2004



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In this Issue - HSS muzzles workers, YEU sets new year objectives, local elections, bursary announcements and more ...

Hospital workers vote to join YEU

Workers at the Whitehorse General Hospital have voted overwhelmingly to join the Yukon Employees' Union.

More than 85% of the votes cast supported the move. PSAC agreed to hold the referendum after union members petitioned for a review.

Workers at the Whitehorse General Hospital had been represented by the National Health & Welfare Union. However, union members believed a change in representation would result in improved communications and access to a wider range of support services available to YEU locals.

Commenting on the vote, Union President Ron Davis explained, "We firmly believe that by moving towards a more local representation, our collective voice and our concerns will be better heard at the workplace."

He further stated that the change would not have been possible without the strong support of the membership. Davis thanked the

executive and staff for the work that brought about the change.

The move of the Whitehorse General Hospital workers union, now known as Local Y025,

became effective December 1st. Approximately 160 employees are affected. The Yukon Employees Union now represents 3,700 workers across the territory.

Executive meets to set 2005 objectives

Members of YEU's executive met on November 8th and 9th to chart the union's course over the coming twelve months.

The upcoming convention-year holds both the promise and challenge of significant change. This fact led Executive members to establish four priorities to ensure the timely completion of a pair of shorter-term employer/worker initiatives, prepare for the convention itself, and enhance the long-term viability of the union. Three committees were struck with the mandate to draft implementation plans and hold information-gathering sessions.

Initiative One - New Member Orientation

Beginning in February 2005, a union information module will be added to the new employee orientation currently delivered by PSC to all Yukon government employees joining that workforce.

- The new module will become a permanent part of the PSC training calendar.
- Development and delivery of the module will be done by the Union.
- The module initially designed for YTG employees will then be used as a template for orientation design and delivery to all YEU Locals throughout the territory.

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Best Wishes for a Safe and Joyous Christmas!

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Local Y010 Announces Election Results

Local Y010 has announced the results of elections held October 27th. The new Executive members are:

President:

Mark Bowers

1st Vice President:

Laurie Butterworth

Secretary/Treasurer:

Sue Christianson

Chief Shop Steward:

Fernand Laforge

Assistant Chief Shop Steward:

Pat Westberg

Director District One:

Richard Grant

Director District One:

Max Fraser

Director District One:

Ghyslain Rozon

Director District One:

Ed Oulton

A call for nominations to fill vacant positions on the Y010 Executive is included with this newsletter.

2004 Bursary Awards

Each year the Yukon Employees' Union presents eight Educational Bursary Awards in the amount of \$1,000 each to deserving union members, or members of their immediate family.

This annual award is derived from Union membership dues, and presented to selected recipients enrolled full time at a recognized secondary university or college.

Adjudication of the award takes into account such criteria as how the course of study will contribute to the Yukon and how it relates to the goals and objectives of the labour movement.

No restrictions are placed on the expenditure of the award beyond the expectation that it will be used in support of the recipient's educational pursuit. The 2004 recipients are:

- **Amanda Wren** - *Don Galbraith Award*
- **Chris Polyck**
- **Alexandra Winton**
- **Ruchelle Zral**
- **Santana Laird**
- **Karen Wall**
- **Keenan Cooper**
- **Brandie Fuder**

Executive sets objectives *continued from page 1*

Initiative Two -

New Grievance Procedure Training

- Work has been under way for some time on the development of training modules to aid in the implementation of a new grievance procedure for Yukon government employees.
- Training components include written guides for Shop Stewards and employer participants for use at training sessions, process information handouts to be added to employee orientation packages, and a wallet card with a simple step-by-step guide.

- Joint training sessions in all communities for Shop Stewards and Union representatives and employee representatives will begin in the new year, and continue from that point forward on a regularly scheduled basis.

Initiative Three -

Long-term Union Viability

- An executive committee was struck, charged with responsibility for analyzing the long-term prospects of the Union in general, with the goal of ensuring YEU's viability and vibrancy in the coming years.

- Goals of the initiative include increasing the number of activists and Shop Stewards, reducing the number of Rands, attracting younger members to union activism, and increasing the one-on-one contact between active and non-active members.

Initiative Four -

Convention Preparation

- Executive members and YEU staff are already well into preparations for YEU's 2005 Triennial Convention, which will be held in October next year.

YEU from the President

For the most part, 2004 was a good year for the Yukon Employees' Union and our members. The challenges and strife that characterized much of previous two years was less in evidence, and some notable accomplishments can be celebrated.

Several YEU locals successfully negotiated and ratified collective agreements. The process of recruiting and training union activists continued as a number of members availed themselves of the opportunity to do intake-work at the union office.

YEU membership continued to increase as the new bargaining unit employees who came on board with devolution adjusted to the new representation. With the addition this month of approximately 160 employees at the Whitehorse General Hospital, our union representation grew to nearly 3,700 workers, the highest total ever.

This steady progress contrasted with the relentless sense of siege experienced by our members during the last few years.

The upheaval caused by the previous government's ill-considered changes during "renewal" has largely passed.

The sting left by the Yukon Party's assault disguised as a "computer use investigation" now merely lingers as a sore that will not heal until workers have an opportunity to find redress at the ballot box.

To be sure, new challenges emerge. The professionals at Emergency Medical Services (EMS) faced frustration and potential injury as a result of the government's purchase of inappropriate and dangerous ambulances. The threat of emergency medical service reduction and increased costs looms as the government moves toward the sale of EMS to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

These challenges notwithstanding, the past year's successes leave much room for optimism. In the coming year, YEU's Executive is committed to building union capacity and becoming more responsive to a changing membership increasingly characterized by younger members.

Personally, 2005 marks a year of transition, as my 20-year tenure as Union President draws to a close. It is doubtful, however, that the many demands of the coming year will leave time for quiet reflection. I look forward to the challenge.

Best wishes to all for a joyous holiday season.

IBEW repays strike-support loan in full

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which represents employees of Northwestel, has repaid a loan provided by the Yukon Employees' Union. The financial assistance was given during the strike that began in May 2002.

In support of IBEW 1574's job action during the strike, YEU provided a \$50,000 interest-free loan. The assistance was approved by the YEU Executive in June, 2002. IBEW 1574 gratefully accepted.

IBEW Business Manager-Financial Secretary Cary Gryba delivered the final \$20,000 payment to the YEU office last month.

"Our members sincerely appreciated the support and solidarity shown by our brothers and sisters across the north, and at YEU in particular", said Gryba. "The loan was a great help to our members during that trying time".

YEU President Dave Hobbis explained that the Yukon Employees' Union is committed to advancing the cause of labour activism in the Yukon. "Our executive was pleased the union was in a financial position to offer the assistance."



Thanks to all who helped celebrate Human Rights Day at the annual YEU Open House on December 10th!



YEU issues in the workplace

HSS muzzles workers

A disciplinary letter sent to an employee of the Emergency Medical Services Branch may be the harbinger of troubling policy changes at Health & Social Services.

The letter refers to a memorandum former Deputy Minister Rob McWilliam distributed nearly a year ago. In that memo, he reminded staff about sections of the General Administration Manual that address public statements about policies and decisions of the employer.

The 10 year-old policy, intended as a *guideline*, is peppered with words like 'judgement', 'discretion' and 'if possible'. However, in the vernacular of the Letter of Discipline sent to the employee, such reasonable words and phrases are replaced with blunt terms like 'unauthorized', 'correct process', 'disregard', 'explicit direction' and 'standard of behaviour'.

The employer's heavy-handed response to the worker's decision to express a concern about safety and public welfare represents a disturbing change in attitude under Deputy Minister John Greschner.

After the January policy memorandum was issued, until now no disc-

iplinary action was taken when employees raised concerns about departmental actions and decisions during media interviews or in public forums.

This attempt to muzzle and even punish workers who speak out about public safety is a disservice to the people of the Yukon. After all, we rely on the knowledge and advice of the professionals who deliver government health programs and services.

The Yukon Employees' Union is committed to supporting workers who take positive, proactive public action. We call upon the government to put the safety of Yukoners above its desire to stifle dissent.

YEU calendar

January 20th - 23rd, 2005

2004 PSAC National Access

Conference: Our Rights - Moving On Up
Queen Elizabeth Motel, Montreal, Quebec.

Feb 17-20th, 2005 2005

PSAC National Women's Conference
Hyatt Regency Vancouver Hotel.

March 19th-20th

Talking Union Basics (TUB) - formerly known as BUS

YEU Boardroom, Whitehorse.

May 6th-8th, 2005

3rd Annual Convention of PSAC North
Whitehorse, Yukon.

2nd Thursday

Monthly YEU Executive Meeting

6:30 p.m. YEU Hall. Members welcome.

2nd Wednesday

Y010 Monthly Meeting

5:00 p.m. YEU Hall, Whitehorse.

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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.