

# YEU NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union Jan-Feb 2005



Posted on [www.yeu.ca](http://www.yeu.ca) February 4th, 2005

*In this Issue - Union donations, P3 propaganda, Kenyon attacks, workers' rights project, disability pensions, local news*

## Our Union donations helped many in 2004

**For many years the Yukon Employees' Union has fulfilled a commitment to support worthwhile community projects and initiatives through financial contributions and donations.**

In the last twelve months, YEU contributed to a wide range of community organizations and member initiatives. These contributions are not always known to the general public, nor for that matter to the membership itself.

The following breakdown summarizes how our members contribute to the community to foster union education, support worthy endeavours and advance the cause of human rights and fair treatment of workers.

**\$8,000**

- Student bursaries

**\$5,000**

- Skills Canada Yukon

- YFL's "Union Yes" campaign **\$2,000**
- Human Right Commission's Duty to Accommodate Seminar **\$1,500**
- YFL *Better Choices Campaign* **\$1,000**
- Yukon Learn (*PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy*)



**Blast from the Past: delegates meet at YEU's founding convention in 1990. Recognize anyone?**

- Whitehorse General Hospital (NHL Oldtimers hockey game) **\$500-\$1,000**
- Whitehorse Combat Challenge Team (firefighters)
- Dawson community barbecue
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society
- Young Women Exploring Trades

Conference

- Blue Feather Music Society
- *Feed the People* barbecue
- International Sourdough Reunion
- B.Y.T.E.
- White Ribbon Campaign **\$100-\$500**
- Sponsorship of a student to attend Social Issues conference
- Disability Awareness Expo
- CCPA National Research Fund
- Amnesty International
- Takhini Heart Beaters
- Whitehorse Curling Club

### P3 propaganda push begins

The Yukon government has initiated a glossy campaign to push the idea of Public-Private Partnerships. YTG workers were recently invited to attend "information" sessions facilitated by Partnerships BC.

This campaign is a harbinger of this government's intentions. But there is a dark side to the rosy-cheeked descriptions of P3s. See page 3 for more information.

**Congratulations to Y017 for raising \$2000 for Red Cross tsunami relief!**

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## Reduced hours due to disability can affect pensions

The Yukon government has accommodated some of its employees receiving Disability Insurance (DI) or Long-Term Disability (LTD) benefits by reducing the number of hours in their regularly scheduled work-week. As a result of a recent case, however, employees in such situations would be well advised to contact the Public Service Commission to see if this reduction negatively affects their pension, benefits and severance pay.

The Union became aware of this concern in late 2004, after an

employee spoke with a financial planner and discovered that the reduced hours were unfairly limiting other benefit eligibility.

The employee's hours in the case in question were reduced from 75 to 37.5 bi-weekly. However, instead of requesting Leave Without Pay forms for the missing time, the employer reduced the regularly scheduled work hours to reflect a part-time position. The result had a significant negative impact on the employee's pension, DI benefit and severance pay at retirement.

After investigating the complaint, the Employer realized that the employee should have been submitting Leave Without Pay forms

for the hours not worked during the entire period in question. The employee was allowed to retroactively submit the necessary forms, and is now eligible for double the amount of benefits for the period during which the reduction was in place. One cautionary note for other workers in similar situations - the employee was required to pay the arrears in Superannuation and Death Benefit premiums.

Also keep in mind that if you are receiving Disability Insurance benefits, you are not required to make DI payments at the same time. As one employee observed, "That would be like paying for life insurance when you're dead."

## Yukon Area Council and Y010 donate food and cash



Yukon Area Council members prepare food donations for the Salvation Army Christmas dinner.

### Yukon Area Council

For the past several years the Yukon Area Council has assisted the Salvation Army through donations of food and dollars. This year, YAC again donated \$800.00 toward the Christmas dinner and soup kitchen.

Congratulations to the Salvation Army for their ongoing efforts to assist those in need in our community.

### Local Y010

This year members of the Yukon government Local Y010 donated \$400 each to Mary House, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon and Sacred Heart Cathedral.



Laurie Butterworth presents a cheque on behalf of Y010 to Christine Herlihy of Mary House.

## **P3 Snake Oil**

In January, the Yukon's Department of Economic Development began a propaganda campaign to sell the idea of Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) to Yukon government employees. An information session facilitated by Partnerships BC focused on the territory's labour sector, painting a rosy picture of a future P3 world.

At first blush Public-Private Partnerships may seem like a laudable concept. At least that's the picture painted in the glossy sales brochures produced by the department. But philosophically they are built upon faulty assumptions. In practice they have been a disaster for the general public, though a boon to business; corporations achieve substantial profits from infrastructure development and long-term service delivery - costs to the public rise, service declines.

The P3 propaganda claims that corporations, not government, can best develop and deliver public infrastructure such as highways and health care facilities, using taxpayers' dollars of course. The catch? The corporations get paid to build it and then get to own it.

Our current level of service will only be maintained if the corporate owner-operators achieve ongoing profits. If quality and service happen to decline due to insufficient return, well ... that's just business.

In the coming months we will explore P3s in detail, choosing past Yukon and Canadian examples

that test pro-P3 assumptions and propaganda against empirical results. Case studies will include the unsuccessful City of Whitehorse experiment.

This issue is particularly relevant here in the Yukon, where the Yukon Party government is pushing ahead with highway infrastructure development under a P3 model - a bridge across the Yukon River in Dawson City. The move to sell delivery of emergency medical services to the Yukon Hospital Corporation threatens to impose P3s on Yukon health care. Other "initiatives" are on the horizon.

The fight against P3s may become a defining challenge for organized workers in Canada. We should not be fooled by the government's glossy sales-pitch. It's little more than snake oil.

## **Fentie treats ministers for foot-in-mouth disease**

In the past few weeks Yukoners have watched in wide-eyed wonder as Yukon government ministers Kenyon and Edzerza launched unprecedented attacks on the employees of the Department of Education. Then, pressured by the Premier, they each performed a public penance of retraction and apology followed by affirmations of affection for the recently maligned employees.

Unfortunately, this sorry affair is symptomatic of this government's view of its workforce. The apologies and praise ring hollow.

## **PSAC donates to Tsunami relief**

The Public Service Alliance of Canada Social Justice Fund has committed a minimum of \$175,000 to disaster relief to victims of the devastating tsunami in South Asia and Africa. The money will also be used for rebuilding efforts in the wake of the earthquake and resulting tidal waves.

"The members of our union, like all Canadians, have been greatly affected by the immense suffering and devastation experienced by the people of South Asia and Africa," said PSAC President Nycole Turmel. "There have been so many lives lost and millions left homeless without food, clean water and vulnerable to disease. We hope that our contribution, made on behalf of all 150,000 PSAC members to the international relief effort will help bring much needed immediate support as well as help in the reconstruction of devastated communities and economies."

This initial \$175,000 contribution was raised from a \$50,000 commitment by the union's Social Justice Fund, another \$50,000 through a unanimous decision of the PSAC National Board of Directors, and the remainder from contributions by PSAC components, regions and locals.

# YEU across the North

## Dene Nation Workers' Rights Joint Research Project Launched

On January 7, 2005, the PSAC and its component, the Union of Northern Workers signed an historic letter of agreement with the Dene National Chief.

The agreement created a joint workers' rights research project, which will be supported financially by the two unions and administered by the Dene Nation. It is designed to determine the best means by which Dene workers can protect their rights as workers.

It will also determine how to best incorporate Dene traditional values, beliefs, practices, culture and

languages into a Dene workers' rights agreement.



PSAC North Regional Vice-President Jean-François Des Lauriers, Dene National Chief Noeline Villebrun, and Todd Parson of the Union of Northern Workers sign the Joint Research Project agreement.

## YEU calendar

**February 17-20th**

**PSAC National Women's Conference**  
Hyatt Regency Vancouver Hotel.

**February 24th**

**Your Union Working for You**  
YTG Staff Development Branch, Second Floor Hougén Centre, Whitehorse.

**March 12th-13th, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**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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**YEU News** is published 12 times a year by  
the Yukon Employees' Union of the Public Service  
Alliance of Canada.

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**Office Hours:**

**Mon-Thurs** 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

**Fridays** 8:30 am - 12:00 pm

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

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](mailto:lbidrman@yeu.ca) or fax the number above.