



Yukon Employees' Union  
Public Service Alliance of Canada  
2285-2nd Ave.  
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1C9



# YEU NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union August 2008



Posted on [www.yeu.ca](http://www.yeu.ca) Aug 15

## Union certificate issued on August 7 Watson Lake municipal workers organize

Workers who provide valuable services for the Municipality of Watson Lake have joined the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). The Canada Industrial Relations Board issued the certificate on August 7, 2008.

The 35 new members employed by the municipality provide a variety of services including infrastructure support, recreation facility administration, garbage collection and snow removal.

Steve Geick, YEU 2nd Vice-President and Director responsible for Community Representation said, "Union certification of municipal workers in Watson Lake is great news for both the community and the workers. It further advances the Union's rural outreach initiative, and strengthens the voice of the PSAC across the territory."

Jean François Des Lauriers,  
PSAC's Regional Executive Vice-

President extended congratulations to the Watson Lake workers after their union certification. "We look forward to working with our new members and forging a positive relationship with the employer".

The process of negotiating a Collective Agreement will begin in the very near future.

### New agreement for KVA

A new Collective Agreement between the PSAC and the Klondike Visitors Association was ratified by both the membership and the employer on July 17, 2008. Members ratified the agreement by a majority of more than 90%.

In addition to a 3.5% wage increase in year one, the new four year agreement features:

- **Inclusion of Gender Identity under the Discrimination article;**
- **Heritage Day as a statutory holiday for administration staff;**
- **2 additional Bereavement Days;**
- **2 additional Family Illness Days;**

- **2 Travel Days when a birth takes place outside Dawson City;**
- **A \$200 Community Event Casino Bonus; and**
- **Benefit Plans for full-time administrative staff.**

Congratulations to negotiating team members Serge Lamarche, Terrie Turai, Viki Paulins and PSAC negotiator Jim Brohman.

### Training opportunities

#### Talking Union Basics (T.U.B.)

Sep. 12 – 13, 2008

#### Advanced Health & Safety Training

Nov. 15 – 18, 2008

Email Nancy at [debrecn@psac.com](mailto:debrecn@psac.com), or Shawna at [dalleys@psac.com](mailto:dalleys@psac.com), or call PSAC at 667-2331.

### Members under 30

Are you interested in the **Yukon Regional Youth Committee**? Study and take action in areas of interest to youth: environment, social justice, workplace issues, succession planning. Contact Shawna at PSAC: 667-2331, [dalleys@psac.com](mailto:dalleys@psac.com).

**Don't forget! The YEU Bursary application deadline is September 30, 2008.**

## In 1980, a bitter union power struggle erupted during bargaining A negotiation in the midst of crisis

Throughout its rather colourful first years, our own union struggled with internal political disagreements.

Members are united in their desire for fair and equitable treatment, reasonable wages and a safer workplace. They are not, however, always united in how best to achieve these goals.

In 1980, the Yukon Territorial Public Service Alliance (YEU's predecessor), found itself mired in heated controversy as the President and Chief Shop Steward butted heads with the Directors who served with them.

The internal crack had been widening for some time. What began as a philosophical difference became personal, and eventually irreconcilable.

Directors Sheila Rea and Dave Dornian clashed with President Doug Solonick and Chief Shop Steward Bryant McKenzie. In April, the latter pair resigned, frustrated with what they saw as unfair criticism and a lack of cooperation.

It did not help that the resignations came in the midst of a particularly difficult round of collective agreement negotiations between the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the union.

Under union bylaws of the time, the President and Chief Shop Steward were two of the three

members of the union negotiating team. Their resignations left only Dave Hobbis, 2nd Vice President. Vice President Bill Grauweiler, who shared many of Rea and Dornian's philosophies, and Sheila Rea stepped into the vacant positions. Negotiations continued.

When collective bargaining produced a 10.2% wage increase, the government politicians refused to accept it. Having publicly stated they would hold the union to an 8% wage increase, they believed anything over 10% to be politically unacceptable.

The ratification teams presented two options to the membership – accept a 10% increase and gain an agreement, or hold firm to 10.2% and strike. Over 80% voted to strike. "Interestingly," commented Dave Hobbis, "that was our first strike vote."

Negotiating team members Rea and Grauweiler encouraged the strike vote in the best interest of the membership, and then resigned from their

Executive positions stating that personally, they could not support the idea of striking.

Consequently, when the union met with

the PSC to negotiate at the 11th hour to attempt to avoid a strike, the bargaining team consisted of yet another President, Dave Dornian, and new Chief Shop Steward John Scott. Dave Hobbis, the only original member of the YTPSA negotiating team, remained.

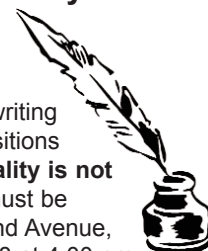
The membership accepted the 10% wage increase – allowing the Pearson government to save face. In return the union received increased rural benefits that cost the government much more than the .2% it had so adamantly opposed.

In six months the union had seen 3 Presidents, 3 Chief Shop Stewards and 3 Vice-Presidents. Yet, despite the upheaval, a new collective agreement had been achieved.

*contributed by Conal Slobodin  
YEU Resident Historian*

### Call for Submissions - Short Story Contest

In recognition of Anti-Homophobia Day the PSAC Whitehorse Regional Pride Committee is running a very short story writing contest. Stories are to be original compositions based on the subject "**Stop! Homosexuality is not an illness**", 500 words or less. Entries must be received at the PSAC office, 100-2285-2nd Avenue, Whitehorse, by Friday, September 5, 2008 at 4:00 pm.



Stories will be judged by an independent panel. Prizes will be awarded for 1st place (\$500.00), 2nd place (\$300.00) and 3rd place (\$150.00). The winning entry will be published on the PSAC North website.

Contact the PSAC office at 667-2331 for more information.

## Gossip can be considered harassment – with penalties attached

# Office gossip comes with a cost

Over the last year, the Harassment Prevention Office (HPO) has heard from a number of Yukon government employees struggling with the issue of gossip in their workplace. Most often, they ask if the gossip *is* harassment; and if so, what can they do about it.

The answer depends on the severity of the gossip, how often it happens, the circumstances, and of course, the nature of the comments. If it could be reasonably perceived as offensive, demeaning or belittling, it can fall within the definition of harassment.

The type of gossip which would likely be considered harassment would be defamatory gossip about an employee in the workplace, which is made and spread in the workplace and to some degree damages the work environment.

The HPO sees gossip as comments about colleagues that have no work-related purpose, and are malicious or made with ill intent. That being said, ‘ill intent’ does not have to be present for harm to be caused.

Gossip typically takes place “behind a person's back”. More often than not the comments find their way back to the employees in question. When those employees hear the comments, their anger, defensiveness and hurt can easily lead them into conflict with the source of the gossip and other peo-

ple they believe, fairly or unfairly, were involved.

In 2004, an arbitrator handed down a five-month suspension to an employee in the Maritimes for remarks made in the workplace about the sex lives, sexual orientation and personal lives of other employees. The arbitrator deemed that the employee's behaviour fell within the employer's personal harassment policy.

Arbitrators have tried to strike a balance between protecting employees from harassment and recognizing the freedom of other employees to speak and act within normal social bounds.

Nevertheless, gossip and other spoken words must be viewed from a standard of reasonableness as to whether it could be considered offensive.

During a recent workshop, a new Yukon government employee commented on the prevalence of gossip in the workplace. That led to a discussion on the merits of knowing how co-workers are performing on the job, and whether or not it is OK to comment on their shortcomings.

The employee who had mentioned the extent of workplace gossip ended the discussion by stating, “gossip ends with me.” I had instant admiration for this determination, which implies taking responsibility for our own actions

and our ability to positively affect our working environment.

Another employee said that upon hearing co-workers discuss a rumored affair of a fellow employee, the suggestion was “let's ask her”. That silenced the discussion and put an end to the gossip. Each of us can play in ending gossip by simply saying that we won't be a part of it, or leaving the room.

The Harassment Prevention Office is here to offer up advice and assistance to employees confronting disrespectful behaviour like gossip in their workplace. For confidential assistance, contact the HPO at 667-3536 or by email at [harassment.prevention@gov.yk.ca](mailto:harassment.prevention@gov.yk.ca).

*contributed by Jeff Ford, Manager  
Harassment Prevention Office*

### Using the Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a professional counselling service offered to Yukon government workers through the Public Service Commission. It provides confidential help with personal problems that could negatively affect an employee's work and personal life.

Up to 5 visits with an EAP counsellor are available to employees and their family members, and to retired employees residing in the Yukon for up to 6 months following retirement.

It's important for our members to know that **no leave is required**, and a leave form need only say that the leave is requested to meet with PSC. **No explanation is required.**

# Regional Access Committee focusing on workplace accommodation Duty to Accommodate – what is it?

The “duty to accommodate” means that employers *must* take action to eliminate discriminatory standards, requirements, practices and rules in the workplace.

The law requires employers to take proactive action to stop discrimination against individuals or groups of workers based on grounds specified in the Yukon *Human Rights Act*. These include among others – race, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation and disability. The employer must take all steps to stop discrimination short of those imposing undue hardship.

The majority of employees who seek accommodation do so because of disability – whether physical or mental, evident or non-evident, short-term or permanent.

The new PSAC Regional Access Committee has placed a priority on action intended to better serve employees who need accommodation because of disability.

They have reviewed the Human Rights Act, Employment Equity policies and guidelines, and employer policies on accommodating workers with disabilities.

Now they are anxious to hear from the workers themselves – *How is it working for you?*

The committee is looking for examples of what is working well, and, areas where more education and new approaches are needed.

YEU encourages our members who require accommodation to answer the following questions:

- What has been your experience?
- Was your accommodation jointly determined?
- Were all options considered?
- Was the best solution for everyone in the workplace considered, or do you and your co-workers feel left out of the process?
- Have you been isolated from your co-workers?
- Are you now doing less meaningful work?
- Do you feel you are being forced out the door?
- Do you know where to get more information on your rights and the process?

The PSAC Regional Access Committee meets the third Thursday of the month at 5:10 p.m. Call Nancy or Shawna at 667-2331.



**YEU News** is published by the Yukon Employees' Union.

201-2285 – 2nd Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Y1A 1C9

Tel: 867-667-2331 Fax: 867-667-6521

Toll Free: 1-888-YEU-2331

email: [contacts@yeu.ca](mailto:contacts@yeu.ca); Web: [www.yeu.ca](http://www.yeu.ca)

#### Office Hours:

**Mon-Thurs** 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

**Fridays** 8:30 am – 12:00 pm

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

**Please notify YEU about address and name changes. Call or fax Linda Bidrman – or email [lbidrman@yeu.ca](mailto:lbidrman@yeu.ca).**

## Contacts:

Staff (867) 667-2331

**Linda Bidrman**, Admin Assistant, Membership Services; [lbidrman@yeu.ca](mailto:lbidrman@yeu.ca)

**W. Cary Gryba**, Union Advisor - contact for members & Shop Stewards; [cgryba@yeu.ca](mailto:cgryba@yeu.ca)

**Kathy Hanifan**, Union Advisor - contact for members & Shop Stewards; [Khanifan@yeu.ca](mailto:Khanifan@yeu.ca)

**Dave Hobbis**, Union Advisor - contact for members & Shop Stewards; [dhobbis@yeu.ca](mailto:dhobbis@yeu.ca)

**Carolyn (Toody) Boland**, Admin Assistant, Financial; [tboland@yeu.ca](mailto:tboland@yeu.ca)

**Gwen Wain**, Admin Assistant, Secretarial; [gwain@yeu.ca](mailto:gwain@yeu.ca)

**Bob Nardi**, Communications Officer - contact for Newsletter and Website; [bnardi@yeu.ca](mailto:bnardi@yeu.ca)

**Denise L. Norman**, Executive Director - contact for YEU and Local Executive Members; [dnorman@yeu.ca](mailto:dnorman@yeu.ca)

## YEU calendar

### Talking Union Basics (TUB)

Sept. 12-13, Location TBA. Contact PSAC

### PSAC Aboriginal People's Conference

Sept. 19-21, Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg

### YEU Bursary Application Deadline

Sept. 30, 5:00 p.m.

### Advanced Health & Safety Training

Nov. 15-18, Location TBA. Contact PSAC

### YEU Monthly Executive Meeting

2nd Thurs., 6:30 p.m., YEU Hall

### Local Y010 Monthly Meeting

2nd Wed., 5:00 p.m., YEU Hall

### Local Y017 Monthly Meeting

4th Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

### Local Y025 Monthly Meeting

2nd Tues., 4:30 p.m., YEU Hall

### Local Y026 Monthly Meeting

3rd Thurs., 7:00 p.m. Dawson City

### PSAC Regional Access Committee

Monthly, every third Thursday. 5:10 p.m., YEU Hall