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YEU NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union

July 2010



Posted on www.yeu.ca July 30

Special leave provision generating interest

The printed version of the new collective agreement negotiated for YEU members employed by the Yukon government will be produced by late August. In the interim, many members have contacted the union office seeking clarification of various provisions.

No provision within the new agreement has generated more interest or raised more questions than *Letter of Understanding "A"*, which established a pilot program for granting and using special leave.

In short, this provision suspends all previous special leave rules (Articles 24.02, 24.03 and 24.04), and allows the *employees themselves* to determine when to use their accrued special leave.

The purpose of special leave has not changed. The provision was originally negotiated to allow employees to take leave when personal needs or circumstances prevent them from performing their regular duties. What *has* changed is *who* makes the decision when special leave can be used.

Questions of interpretation remain. For example, PSC's Staff Relations Branch published application guidelines stating that to use special leave, employ-

ees "should be prevented from reporting for work", and that they could not have "reasonably averted the absence by making other arrangements."

This interpretation is not supported by the wording in the agreement. Furthermore, collective agreement language does not require employees to explain or justify why they are requesting special leave beyond advising their supervisor that a personal need or circumstance requires their absence.

Nonetheless, some supervisors continue to ask why special leave has been requested prior to granting approval. Employees who encounter such requests should contact the union office.

The new agreement also expands the purposes for which special leave can be taken to include reasons beyond those listed in the suspended articles.

Employees still need to request special leave in advance, although the new provision does allow for the granting of leave "after the fact" where it was not possible to provide advance notice.

Letter of Understanding "A" points out that special leave is not intended to supplement the use of sick, vacation or long

service leave, or to be used to facilitate an absence where another more appropriate leave provision is available.

The new provision is in reality an honour system, which allows employees to manage their own use of special leave

As with any new provision, especially one that radically departs from past practice, it will take time for both management and employees to adjust. The union is confident that in time all supervisory staff will cooperate with the new provision. This change was, after all, made at the employer's request.

This is a pilot project. As such, the union and management will monitor its use during the term of the current agreement. If management sees an abuse of the provision, or if the union finds that it generates too many issues, it will not be enshrined in future agreements.

The onus is on the employees to respect this freedom, and on the supervisors to cooperate in its use.

A copy of *Letter of Understanding "A"* and the entire Ratification Kit containing all provisions added to the old collective agreement is available for viewing on the YEU website.

Visit Iqquit next June! — PSAC North Triennial Convention

Relationships, revelations, returning home and reaching out to her community South American Odyssey—Part 2

by Aislinn Cornett, STEP Student Historical Journalist

Last issue we detailed Amanda Brown's Social Justice Fund (SJF) trip to Bolivia.

PSAC/SJF's project partner, Cepromin (Centro de Promoción Minera or Mining Promotion Centre), invited the Social Justice Fund to visit their national office and tour three mining communities in Potosi where literacy programs are being delivered.

A Town of Watson Lake Local Y029 member, Amanda was chosen by PSAC after her name was put forward as a young activist in the territory.

Brown's excitement and enthusiasm about the trip were evident from the beginning.

"I was on a high as soon as I got there," she says. "I didn't want to sleep. I just wanted to do everything!"

She describes her experiences with the people as remarkable. She didn't speak any Spanish prior to the trip, but this didn't stop her from developing relationships, especially with the youth.

"They have these huge smiles and they're so happy and grateful for all they have," says Brown. "It was a reality check for me. I really looked at my life and said wow, these people are doing so many things and look at what they have to face."

"Working with the youth, I was finding myself," she says. "I truly knew who I wanted to be. I was given this role for a reason."



In Potosi, Amanda Brown had little difficulty developing warm relationships with the people there, particularly the youthful Bolivians.

"I want to change things in my life after meeting these youth; they're very loving and outgoing people and that made me think about situations in my life."

Amanda drew comparisons to her experience at the Olympics where she, along with 300 other aboriginal youth, represented Canada as youth ambassadors.

"At the Olympics we were making history by being the first aboriginals to open Olympic sports and welcome athletes and the world," Brown says. "And in Bolivia, we were participating in world climate change."

She speaks highly of her Olympic experience and expresses how thankful she is, but while in Bolivia, Brown says she learnt of the people's struggles and how to be truly grateful.

Settling in back home after a whirlwind winter and spring, Brown is now looking to how she can be more active at home.

"I was in tears seeing the passion in the women working in the women's literacy programs," she says. "They have passion to teach the young ones to learn so they can provide for their families and make Bolivia a better environment."

Although she had a difficult time leaving, she knows once she's done helping youth in her own community, she will be returning to Bolivia and South America to help others and volunteer.

"You should help yourself before you help others," Brown says thoughtfully. "But I know I'll be going back. It's because of those darned connections!"

This summer Brown will continue working at the recreational centre, where she looks forward to relaying stories to the Watson Lake youth and spreading word of the YEU/PSAC. Also on the horizon is a community tour where she will get the opportunity to showcase her 800 plus photographs from her SJF adventure. "I'm excited to tell others what we, the union funds," she says. "Becoming part of a union not only helps us, but it helps others and the Social Justice Fund."

YEU activist profile



Jessica Young

It has been a whirlwind year for Jessica Young—from her introduction to union activism, to a temporary assignment at YEU and election this past June as a Chief Shop Steward for Local Y017.

Jessica has worked as a Therapy Assistant at Copper Ridge Place for the last three years. But her interest in the union wasn't piqued until a conversation with her mom, who had participated in the *Your Union and You* course.

She attended her local's Annual General Meeting in 2009, curious to learn about union courses. Much to her surprise, she was nominated for and elected to a position of Director. Jessica accepted the position because she was eager to try something new, and to learn how she could advance her career and build upon her psychology degree.

Young took part in the *Talking Union Basics (TUB)* course, and participated in pre-bargaining and bargaining input committee meetings, where she experienced the negotiation process for the first time,

and met other community members who are active in the labour movement.

In late January of this year, Jessica attended the week-long Winter School retreat at Harrison Hot Springs, where she took the *Duty to Accommodate* course. The full days,

evening forums and activities provided, in her words, “a great place to network and hear what was happening in provincial locals.”

After noticing a job posting for temporary Union Advisor Trainees on the YEU website, Jessica applied for one of the positions. She was offered the first of three 3-month training stints, which she filled while on leave of absence from Copper Ridge.

“The temporary position gives people a chance to see if the job suits them,” says Young. “How wonderful is that? You go into a job and try it out for a few months; the employer tries you out and you try them out.”

The temporary position at YEU also has provided a solid foundation for her duties as Chief Shop Steward. Jessica says she is looking forward to facilitating productive conversations with her fellow Shop Stewards, and working with them to address workplace issues.

“I wanted to gain a better understanding of the collective agreement and help interpret its provisions, identify problems and find solutions

in the workplace,” she says. “A lot of people don't know what to do when they encounter workplace issues. I wanted to learn more about our rights as employees and see if I could help,” Jessica explains.

Young says she had a positive view of YEU prior to working at the office, and that the temporary position “affirmed that the union does indeed have our backs and looks out for its members.”

Regarding her newfound activism, Jessica says that, “It has awakened something in me that has been dormant since university days. As a full-time employee, union representative, mother and wife, my plate is certainly full. But with a supportive husband and the tools provided by YEU, I feel I am well prepared to make a positive contribution to our community.”

Jessica recommends that anybody who is interested in getting involved take an introductory course, or call or stop by the YEU office and ask questions. “I showed a little interest, and they helped me along quickly,” she says. “YEU gives you a sense of belonging and empowerment.”

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Join us on Facebook!

It's a great way for YEU members to discuss issues, learn about coming events, or just stay in touch.

PSAC North issues Convention Call

The 5th Triennial Convention of PSAC North, the body that represents all members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada working or residing in the north, will be held in Iqaluit, Nunavut on the weekend of June 17-19, 2011.

The PSAC North Regional Health & Safety Conference will be held in conjunction with the PSAC North Convention on June 16, 2011. Locals need to take advantage of the opportunity to have their representatives participate in both events.

Each Local with members working or residing in the North is entitled to two delegates up to the first 300 members, and one additional delegate for each 300 members or major portion thereof.

The net result is that a large contingent of delegates will travel to Iqaluit from Whitehorse.

A convention agenda and Rules of Order, along with copies of PSAC North Bylaws will be made available on the PSAC North website : www.psanorth.com/convention2011.



Northern Union Component Presidents and representatives gathered in Whitehorse in July for their annual meeting. Left to right: Doug Workman, Tom Harrington, Jean-François Des Lauriers, Todd Parsons and Laurie Butterworth.

Labour Day Feed the People BBQ

Local Y010 and YEU will host the annual *Feed the People Barbecue* on Monday, September 6, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Shipyards Park. Come out and join us for good food and camaraderie.

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YEU calendar

Feed the People Barbecue

September 6, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Bursary Application Deadline

September 30

YEU Monthly Executive Meeting

2nd Thurs., 6:30-9:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y010 Monthly Meeting

2nd Wed., 5:00-7:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y017 Monthly Meeting

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

Local Y023 Monthly Meeting

1st Thurs., Noon

Local Y025 Monthly Meeting

3rd Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

Local 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 Pride Committee

TBA

PSAC Health & Safety Committee

1st Thurs., 5:30 p.m.

PSAC Youth Committee

TBA

PSAC Dawson City Regional Women's Committee

TBA



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