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# YEU

# NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union Sept. 2010



Posted on [www.yeu.ca](http://www.yeu.ca) Sept. 13

## PSAC 2010 National Access Conference session focused on mental health Bringing workplace mental health out of the shadows

Issues relating to mental health in the workplace were explored at a session of the 2010 PSAC National Access Conference held in June.

The session provided useful background information on why issues of mental health in the workplace matter. It outlined the financial cost to Canadians, how stress levels and mental health problems can cause other health conditions, and offered tools to help address this often hidden issue.

Accommodation issues related to workplace mental health, particularly those involving stress and depression, dominate the union's duty-to-accommodate representation requests.

While the resulting cost in terms of sick leave and productivity loss is high, in most cases accommodations are inexpensive and involve workplace flexibility rather than capital expenditures.

The largest barriers to successful intervention are the employee's fear of stigmatization and the misunderstanding of employers and co-workers. Raising awareness of the extent of the problem may help those suffering from

mental health disabilities find strength to come forward. Employers must be shown that accommodating such employees is worth the investment.

Depression will rank second only to heart disease as the leading cause of disability worldwide by the end of the year. Disability represents anywhere from 4% to 12% of payroll costs in Canada. Mental health claims (especially depression) have overtaken cardiovascular disease as the fastest growing category of disability costs.

Conservative estimates (by Health Canada) suggest that upwards of \$30 billion is lost to the Canadian economy annually due to mental health and addiction problems.

From the sufferer's perspective, fear or their experience with **stigma**—negative attitudes (prejudice) and negative behavior (discrimination)—remains the primary barrier preventing them from seeking help.

We all have attitudes and judgments that affect how we think about and how we behave toward others. But the reality is that mental health disabilities are

health issues just like cancer, arthritis and diabetes. There is no reason sufferers should be looked upon differently.

The first step toward a successful response to issues of mental health is to reduce prejudice and discrimination. Detailed information on how this can be achieved is available from sources such as the **Canadian Mental Health Association: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)**, or the **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)**.

In brief, eliminating the stigma can be achieved through seven steps:

- Learn the facts, not the myths;
- be aware of your attitudes and behaviour;
- choose your words carefully;
- educate others;
- focus on the positive;
- support people by treating those with mental health challenges with dignity and respect; and
- include everyone—denying people access to things we take for granted (jobs, housing, etc.) violates their human rights.

Page 2 provides information about workplace mental health, including some facts that help dispel the myths.

Visit Iqaluit next June! — PSAC North Triennial Convention

## Conference session helped dispel mental health myths

Several YEU members travelled to Ottawa to attend the 2010 PSAC National Access Conference in June. Those who attended the session devoted to workplace mental health returned with insights into an issue that merited focus in this newsletter.

While most people are sympathetic to coworkers struggling with mental health challenges, they often remain uncomfortable with the issue. Although many of us have experience with relatives or friends struggling with their mental health, the awkwardness remains.

In many cases coworker discomfort is based upon fear—fear generated by lack of knowledge and fear that it could happen to ‘me’.

Clearly there is a need for public education dedicated to demystifying mental health disabilities.

Presenters at the conference explained that the first step towards demystification of mental health issues is to know the truth about them. As a Yukon union

publication, this newsletter is a logical forum to present a summary of mental health facts and to open a dialogue.

Much more information is available on the websites mentioned on page one. We encourage our members and their employers to follow up by visiting those sites.

- Mental health issues are common. One in every five Canadians will have a mental health problem at some point in their lives.
- As a group, people with mental health disabilities are no more violent or dangerous than any other group.
- Mental health disability is NOT a character flaw. It is a disability that has nothing to do with weakness or lack of will-power.
- A mental health disability is not a single, rare disorder. While depression and anxiety are the most common issues, others can include eating disorders, substance abuse, bipolar and schizophrenic disor-

ders, organic brain disorders and issues related to traumatic events, among others.

- What we sometimes write-off as simply stress can be a significant factor leading to mental illness. Environmental and social pressures can also contribute.
- People with mental health issues cannot be cured with willpower. Most mental health disability/illness is associated with chemical imbalances in the brain.
- Many people with a mental health disability or illness recover. In other cases, where the disability or illness does not disappear, the symptoms associated with it can be controlled.

If we can demystify mental health issues by raising awareness and advocating for more supportive workplaces, we can significantly reduce fear and stigmatization. Our lives and workplaces will be much better for it.

## What accommodations can be helpful for people with mental health disabilities?

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* obligates employers to implement measures necessary to allow employees to work to the best of their ability.

Although there is no all-inclusive list of accommodations for people with mental health issues, here are a few common accommodations to consider:

### • Flexible Scheduling

- Allowing flexibility in the start/end of working hours to accommodate the effects of medication or medical appointments.
- Allowing part-time shifts.
- Allowing more frequent breaks.

### • Changes in supervision

- Modifying the way instructions and feedback are given.
- Holding weekly supervisor-employee meetings to help deal with problems early.

### • Changes in training

- Allowing extra time to learn.
- Allowing the employee to attend individualized training courses.

### • Modifying job duties

- Exchanging minor tasks with other employees.

### • Using technology

- Customizing their office lighting.
- Providing a tape recorder so the

employee can tape instructions from the supervisor, training programs and meetings.

- Allowing the employee to use headphones for noise protection.
- **Modifying work space or changing location**
  - Allowing employee to relocate to quieter area free from distractions.
  - Allowing work from home.
- **Providing job coach assistance**
  - A job coach can help reduce anxiety by providing feedback, observing the employee’s work and making accommodation suggestions.

# YEU from the President



**Thanks to Local Y010 for once again celebrating Labour Day by offering a tasty free meal to Yukoners.**

The Feed the People Barbecue has become a Yukon tradition, due entirely to the efforts of these YEU members.

## Shop Steward Conference

Detailed planning is under way for the 2010 YEU/PSAC Shop Steward Conference set to occur in mid-November.

The conference theme is *Building Strength from the Roots*. It will feature session presentations on Caring for the Roots, Learning and Growing, Looking After Our Members, and Reaping the Harvest.

The agenda is still in the draft stage. Some topics being considered include:

- Bullying - the Other Harassment
- Mental Illness in the Workplace
- Understanding the Power of Participation
- Grievance Writing
- Duty to Accommodate/Return to Work
- Confident Communication - collaboration vs. confrontation
- Protecting Collective Agreement Rights

- Connecting - Keeping Each Other Informed
- Problem Solving Meetings - making them work

## PSAC North Convention

Next June PSAC North will hold its Triennial Convention In Iqaluit. It's a great opportunity to visit Nunavut and experience that part of Canada's north.

If you want to be a delegate, keep in mind that delegates must be elected at your Local's Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting. Watch for postings from your Local to learn when and where to participate.

## Bargaining Update

The Collective Bargaining process is under way for several of our Locals. Current information will be posted on the YEU website.

- Y022 City of Whitehorse Transit Workers - currently in bargaining
- Y023 City of Whitehorse Municipal Workers - currently in bargaining
- Y024 Yukon Utility Workers - notice to bargain served; bargaining dates being discussed
- Y025 Whitehorse General Hospital - session dates set
- Y029 Watson Lake Municipal Workers - notice to bargain served
- Y033 Dawson City Municipal Workers - preparing for 3rd session

## Collective Agreement for Yukon government workers now online

The new collective agreement for employees of the Yukon government is now available on the YEU website.

It can be found along with agreements for other locals under the Contracts & Workplace Issues tab, subheader Collective Agreements. All documents are presented in PDF format.

The direct link is:

[www.yeu.ca/pages/agreements.html](http://www.yeu.ca/pages/agreements.html)

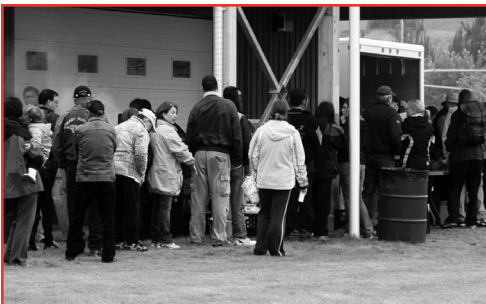
Printed versions of the agreement will be distributed to all union members employed by the Yukon government in the next few weeks.

## facebook

**Join us on Facebook!**

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

## Feed the People barbecue helps celebrate Labour Day



Cool, wet weather did not dampen spirits at this year's Labour Day Barbecue held in Shipyards Park. YEU and Local Y010 members served up 900 burgers and hot dogs to fill the stomachs and warm the spirits of Yukoners on a chilly Labour Day.

Local Y010 has been sponsoring the *Feed the People Barbecue* for many years. As always, all Yukoners were welcome to join union members for a hot lunch and friendly conversation. The event celebrates organized labour's contributions toward the betterment of working people's lives around the world.

# YEU training opportunities

## T.U.B.—TALKING UNION BASICS

This course is essential for stewards, but it will help any union member become better informed. Subject matter includes:

- knowing your rights
- protecting your rights
- exercising your rights
- improving your rights

It introduces you to your collective agreement, shows how to solve problems through the grievance process, and introduces you to the structure of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the collective bargaining process.

### Location, dates and times

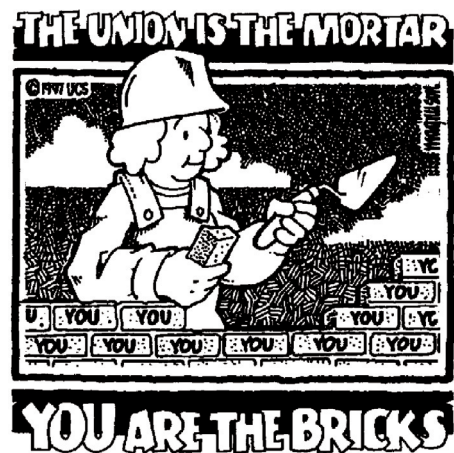
LUCY JACKSON TRAINING ROOM, YEU Hall  
2285-2nd Avenue, Suite 100  
9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Friday, Sept. 24 & Saturday, Sept. 25, 2010

A Union is only as strong as its members. Find out how you fit in!

*NOTE: The T.U.B. course is a prerequisite for all PSAC in-residence courses.*

The PSAC encourages members from all equity groups to apply. Please advise this office of any special needs in advance, so arrangements can be made.

**To register or for further information** regarding the course, reimbursement of loss of salary, travel expenses or family care, call Sue Christianson or Barb Fayant at 867-667-2331 (Toll free: 1-888-YEU-2331) or E-mail christis@psac.com or fayantb@psac.com



## YEU calendar

### Y023 Annual General Meeting

September 22, 5:30 p.m., Willow Room, Yukon Inn. Door prize-trip to Vancouver

### Y011 Annual General Meeting

September 24, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Lecture Hall, Yukon College

### Talking Union Basics Course

September 24-25, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 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. on Oct. 5, then alternating between noon and 5:15 thereafter

### PSAC Racially Visible Committee

1st Wed., 5:00 p.m.

### PSAC Regional Women's Committee

2nd Tues., 5:15 p.m.

### PSAC Health & Safety Committee

1st Thurs., 6:00 p.m.



**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 Miller – or email [lmiller@yeu.ca](mailto:lmiller@yeu.ca).**

## Contacts:

### Staff (867) 667-2331

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

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

**Frank Ursich**, Union Advisor - contact for members & Shop Stewards; [fursich@yeu.ca](mailto:fursich@yeu.ca)

**Sheila Branigan**, Union Advisor Trainee - contact for members & Shop Stewards; [sbranigan@yeu.ca](mailto:sbranigan@yeu.ca)

**Deborah Turner-Davis**, Admin Assistant, Secretarial; [dturner-davis@yeu.ca](mailto:dturner-davis@yeu.ca)

**Tammy Olsen**, Admin Assistant, Financial; [tolsen@yeu.ca](mailto:tolsen@yeu.ca)

**Bob Nardi**, Communications Officer - contact for Newsletter & 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)