

## *UTE Achievements At YOUR Service*

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### **A word from UTE's National President**

**Time.** We all seem to have less and less of it. The world grows more hectic; our lives more complicated. We rarely have the opportunity to stop, step back and reflect on just what we've accomplished.

The same is true for your union - the Union of Taxation Employees. Working in the federal public service, whether for a department or an agency has never been more stressful and demanding. Daily challenges and crises never seem to leave enough time to consider the very real progress the UTE has made for its members.

Realizing this fact of life, UTE convention delegates mandated our union to produce a concise booklet highlighting its achievements. These include the obvious advances made in our dealings with the employer through consultations, negotiations and adjudications. However, they also extend to the

UTE's advocacy of its members' rights at tribunals, before the courts and in the political arena.

As one of the largest component unions of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, UTE officers and members have consistently been in the forefront of the common struggle to advance the interests of all federal public service workers. We have proudly participated in many battles and shared many victories with our PSAC "sisters and brothers".

In perusing this booklet, we hope you'll agree that the UTE has laid a solid base for future gains. United in resolve and purpose, there is much more we can - and will - accomplish together.

## **The UTE Then and now**

Associations representing "civil servants" have existed since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The UTE can trace its direct roots back to 1943, when employees of the then-Taxation Department organized themselves into the Dominion Income Tax Staff Association.

However, true federal public service unions were formed barely a generation ago, with the legislating in the mid-1960s of limited free collective bargaining. Until that time, federal workers were



government workers - the employer was both opponent and referee.

On paper, federal government unions historically negotiated with Treasury Board. In reality, our employer was the President of the Treasury Board - a Cabinet Minister. The bureaucrats may sit at the bargaining table, but the politicians set the rules and call the shots. They have no hesitation in changing the rules of the game any time they see the unions gaining the advantage. As we became an agency, the bargaining process changed in that UTE and CEUDA, through the PSAC, now bargain directly with the Agency.

Despite this uneven playing field, the UTE and its members have made remarkable progress over the years. The following pages highlight these gains in a number of major areas.

Please note that more detailed information as to our union's structure and services are available in the publication *UTE Owner's Manual: A Guide to the Union of Taxation Employees*. This booklet is available from your Local UTE contact.

Should you require additional information; please feel free to contact our National Office:

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## **We're here for you!**

The UTE is committed to providing our members with the best service and representation. Your UTE Local Contact is the first place to turn for assistance.

Our Web site is an important and comprehensive source of information about the UTE and its activities. Visit it often at:

**[www.ute-sei.org](http://www.ute-sei.org)**

## **Union-Management Consultation**

The purpose of union-management consultation is to facilitate communication on issues relevant to the workplace. The aim is to build a spirit of co-operation and mutual trust between management and employee representatives through the exchange of information. If management is open and sincere, many issues can be resolved long before they reach the negotiations table and become sources of conflict.

At the same time, they do not limit management authority, nor do they interfere with a union's rights as established by legislation or collective agreements.

While consultation does not involve mutual decision-making or formal agreement, it does imply that management should take into account the views and suggestions advanced by union representatives.

As normal practice, draft version of policies affecting employees should be shared with senior union leadership and their input actively sought and encouraged. Once a policy is approved, its dissemination should include the elected representatives of the union.

A Joint National Union-Management Consultation Committee was formed inside the Canada Revenue

Agency. The guidelines for this committee were established at their creation in 1985 and were updated in 2005 to provide for consultation at the national, regional and local levels.

The Consultation Committee provides a forum for senior management and UTE National Officers to meet and exchange information about policies, programs and working conditions.

The Joint National Union-Management Consultation Committee has established the following sub-committee:

- National Consultation Committee on Technological Change

As well Canada Labour Code, Part II makes it mandatory to have a National Joint Health and Safety Policy Committee.

Meaningful consultation at the regional and local levels is essential as most decisions affecting working conditions are implemented in all workplaces.

The UTE's Executive Council represents the membership on the Joint National Union-Management Consultation Committee. They meet each year in June and December with the Assistant Commissioners and other senior managers. Main agenda items deal with matters and problems that affect the Agency and UTE members on a national

- ❖ International Children's Awareness Canada sponsorship. UTE subsidizes a student and a member in good standing, to accompany the ICA team to Africa in order to assist in the job of bringing fresh water to the villages of Africa.

Not only do we give out awards, the Honours and Awards Committee has the dubious job of awarding Scholarship awards to members of UTE or their dependents. There are 10 Regional awards at \$1000 each and 2 National awards of \$2500 each. Council passed a resolution to name one of the National awards, the *Diana Gee Scholarship Fund*.

While not directly under the responsibility of the committee, UTE Locals are empowered to award union service pins of three, five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years to members who have served the interests of the membership over these periods of time. These pins are presented annually, on the recommendation of either national or local union officers.

## Honours and Awards

We have established an Honours and Awards Committee to review nominees for awards in accordance with UTE Regulations.

This committee oversees the awarding of the:

- ❖ Godfrey Cote Award: Formerly known as the Award of Merit, this award is now presented to nominees who have: (i) demonstrated their commitment to achieving the aims and objectives of the Union; (ii) exhibited exemplary service at any level of the union; and, (iii) accumulated service at any level of the union for a minimum of five years.
- ❖ Certificate of Achievement: This certificate is awarded to nominees who have: (i) demonstrated their commitment to achieving the aims and objectives of the union; and, (ii) exhibited exemplary service at any level of the union.
- ❖ Humanitarian Award: This award is presented to nominees who : (i) are a member of UTE in good standing; (ii) have demonstrated their commitment to a humanitarian cause; (iii) have exhibited exemplary service to others within their community, their country or throughout the world.

basis. Unresolved problems from the regional and local levels can also be brought forward to this national committee.

Our aim is to build a spirit of co-operation and mutual trust between management and employee representatives through the exchange of information.

## Bargaining

Since the Agency was established, the UTE has adapted and developed new bargaining regulations. It has been innovative in conducting and establishing bargaining processes. To ensure that members are represented as well as possible at bargaining sessions, the UTE established the Standing Bargaining Committee, the National Bargaining Committee and selected members for its bargaining team. In addition, the establishment of the border agency will positively impact the bargaining table because the bargaining team that meets with the employer will consist solely of UTE members.

The roles and responsibilities of each representative on the committees and bargaining team are defined in the UTE regulations. The UTE participates in and oversees the implementation of the strategies and resources supporting the bargaining team. Moreover, presidents and 2<sup>nd</sup>

vice-presidents are on the national PSAC/UTE coordination/strategy committee and the national strategy committee, which brings all PSAC bargaining tables together. The following are the major changes that have occurred over the years since the Agency was established.

- ❖ The UTE was involved in amending PSAC Regulation 15 governing bargaining and bargaining processes.
- ❖ The UTE established UTE/PSAC strategy coordinating committees for strikes and pressure tactics supporting the bargaining teams upon notice to bargain in order to get the employer to sign an agreement. In the past, this was done only when we were about to strike.
- ❖ Improvement of the bargaining process with the employer. Bargaining sessions now begin as soon as the employer has been issued the notice to bargain, in other words four (4) months before the collective agreement expires. (Prior to that, the time frame was three (3) months. This change was adopted when the *Public Service Modernization Act (C-25)* was passed.
- ❖ The UTE made representations to get bargaining to be constant and continuous, i.e. members of the union's and employer's bargaining teams remain at the table until there is an agreement or an impasse.

The committee is comprised of 2 National Officers, a President's representative, elected by the local presidents every two years, and a staff advisor.

The objective of the committee is to ensure that communication at all levels of the UTE is effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of the union and its members. To do this the committee reviews and analyzes communications, identifies and recommends improvements/enhancements, develops, implements and monitors communication processes, promotes, encourages and continually strives to improve communications at all levels of the union.

## **Political Action Committee (PAC)**

The Political Action Committee became the 13<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee of the Union of Taxation employees by way of resolution 468 at the Thirteenth Triennial Convention, July 2005 in Saint John N.B..

The Committee is comprised of two Executive Council members and a member elected by the Presidents' Conference.

The PAC coordinates UTE's national message which will be used by our Locals when asked to lobby their local federal, provincial and municipal politicians on issues of importance to the members.

The mandate of the committee includes:

- ❖ Ongoing review of the UTE's financial position.
- ❖ Recommending changes to our by-laws or regulations regarding financial matters.
- ❖ Detailing guidelines for expenditures on such specific items as conferences, equipment acquisitions, computer communication, etc.
- ❖ Developing the Triennial Convention budget that is presented to the Executive Council for approval.

Despite expanded services, prudent financial administration has kept our union in a sound financial position. This has been achieved through wise investments, as well as using fiscal responsibility when dealing with our expenses.

## Communications

An informed membership is an empowered membership.

To ensure this the UTE established a National Communications Committee in September 1999.

- ❖ Change in the number of members on the bargaining teams. This ensures more effective effort and facilitates decision-making. In our experience, it is not the number of members that guarantees effective bargaining, but rather the expertise, qualifications and experience of our representatives.
- ❖ The UTE, along with the PSAC, created the Bargaining Info bulletin to inform members from time to time about the progress of bargaining sessions.
- ❖ The UTE amended and passed its regulations in light of the new reality in bargaining requirements.
- ❖ The UTE developed and adopted a strike and ratification vote policy for our members. These changes harmonized Local meetings and ensure that meetings are set up for disseminating information to members.
- ❖ The UTE adopted a bargaining demand collection process so members and locals can send us their demands between bargaining rounds.
- ❖ The union has ratified three (3) collective agreements since the Agency was established, resulting in substantial improvements.

- ❖ The bargaining team achieved a breakthrough by reducing the number of zones for GLs and GSs.
- ❖ The UTE got bargaining to be a permanent agenda item for the National Union-Management Consultation Committee.
- ❖ The UTE developed a “Négoquizz” contest to foster members’ interest.

Bargaining success depends on UTE member participation and commitment. Your cooperation during the bargaining process is essential in the preparation of bargaining demands and the pressure tactics we need to use to obtain the best employment conditions for all of you.

Our goal is to ensure that our members have access to a highly confidential and professional service.

Management has decided that the National EAP committee is no longer a joint committee and that it is an advisory body only. The UTE National EAP committee will continue to strive for a confidential and professional service.

## Finances

As befits a union representing workers at the Canada Revenue Agency, the UTE watches its pennies and takes its finances very seriously.

A National Finance Committee, chaired by the UTE Vice-President responsible for Finance, was established in 1996 to oversee all union expenditures. Two additional members of the Executive Council plus a member elected by the Presidents' Conference and the staff Financial Officer round out the committee's membership.

- ❖ To provide support and guidance to members regarding the Employee Assistance Program
- ❖ To promote a greater understanding of issues relating to the Employee Assistance Program
- ❖ To monitor the implementation of the Employee Assistance Program and to recommend action as necessary
- ❖ To consult with the employer on all aspects of the Employee Assistance Program
- ❖ To review, discuss and provide advice and recommendation on policy issues and proposals
- ❖ To liaise with other organizations both outside the union and within to ensure that the needs of members are taken into consideration
- ❖ To identify emerging EAP issues of concern to union members and to recommend action as necessary
- ❖ To recognize best practices that raise the profile of the EAP and enhance service to the members

## Staffing Issues

Staffing was, and still is non-negotiable within the federal public service. The UTE fought hard and long to have this prohibition removed from the legislation establishing the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. It seems, however, that the employer has gotten used to playing with a stacked deck, especially when it alone can change the rules of the game whenever it wants to. The UTE continues to place staffing as a priority demand in the bargaining process.

Nonetheless, the UTE some years ago formed a Staffing Committee to act as the members' advocate on staffing issues with the employer. The Committee's persistence and dogged work has succeeded in having a real impact on many employer staffing initiatives.

Here are just some examples of UTE achievements realized through the intervention and advocacy of the Staffing Committee:

- ❖ The elimination of quotas used in the Performance Review process.
- ❖ The reclassification of 700 CR04 Collection Clerks to PM01 Collection Officers.

- ❖ The creation of a union-designed template for use in narrating the Agency Classification System elements of the job description rewrites in the Assessment and Collections Branch and other Branches.
- ❖ The establishment of specific job descriptions for the Business Number/Business Window positions.
- ❖ The establishment of separate Business Window Units in Client Services.
- ❖ The issuance of acting PM-02 pay to employees in Tax Centres who were completing Rulings workloads. Furthermore, members performing these functions were assigned the PM-02 CPP/UI Coverage Officer job description.
- ❖ The development of effective and persuasive allegations and arguments for use in appeals where the Agency determined jobs to be "new" instead of "existing". The employer's "unfettered" right to rely on section 10(1) instead of 10(2) of the Public Service Employment Act to staff these positions was successfully challenged.
- ❖ The creation of joint union/management committees to deal with problematic issues surrounding Term Rehire, Casual Delegation Authority, PM Educational

Each UTE member is entitled to respect and dignity. Your union is dedicated to this end.

## Employee Assistance Program

All of us come up against personal problems one or more times in our lives. And, it is hard, if not impossible, to leave these difficulties at home. Personal problems may affect your attitude or performance at work, and have a negative impact on your co-workers. This, in turn, can create a vicious circle where an uncomfortable work environment adds to an already heavy personal burden.

That's why access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) - with its expert, confidential advice - benefits those in need, their co-workers and the employer.

The UTE has its own Employee Assistance Program Committee. The four-person committee consists of two National Officers, one member selected by Local Presidents and one Labour Relations Officer.

The aim and objectives of this UTE committee are to promote the existing EAP, monitor its operation and urge improvements.

Other initiatives undertaken by the Committee include:

- ❖ Distribution of a survey on harassment to all Locals.
- ❖ Presentation of gathered information during consultation with the employer on a new Agency Harassment Policy.
- ❖ Holding of workshops on the issue at Presidents' Conferences.
- ❖ Participation by the Committee's two Executive Council members on two of the Agency union-management working groups - one dealing with the development of the Agency policy and guidelines and the second on the Workplace Enhancement Plan (involving such concrete measures as prevention, issue education and staff training).
- ❖ The development of a 'Fact Sheet' - available from the UTE National Office - for use by local UTE representatives when dealing with harassment cases.
- ❖ Development of a training course on Investigation of Harassment complaints.
- ❖ Conception of a data bank.

Requirements in Audit, Performance Management and Tax Centre Modernization.

- ❖ The development of a national policy to address irritants identified by Tax Centre Local Presidents concerning the Term Rehire process.
- ❖ Effecting substantial changes to 1,000 national and regional job descriptions during the Modernization, Administrative Consolidation and UCS/ACS initiatives.
- ❖ Effecting significant changes to the Agency's assessment of "dependability" in the Term Rehire process.
- ❖ The rescinding of many Developmental Assignment Programs where the UTE was able to prove they were inconsistent with the Public Service Employment Act and Regulations.
- ❖ Reclassification of the position of Compensation Advisor to the AS-01 group and level.
- ❖ Persuading the employer to return to national, instead of regional job descriptions, in Finance and Administration, resulting in the reclassification of some positions.

The above accomplishments are all the more noteworthy because, as previously noted, the employer has no requirement to negotiate or consult the UTE on staffing matters.

## Work Force Adjustment

The Work Force Adjustment Appendix (WFA) sets out the job security provisions negotiated by the PSAC in its role as bargaining agent for UTE members. The Appendix, while once a Directive separate from the collective agreement, is now an integral part of your contract.

The UTE has its own Work Force Adjustment Committee, put into place as a watchdog over employer attempts to cut staff or move workloads that impact our members. The committee meets on an ongoing basis.

And while Canada Revenue Agency was one of the very few agencies to actually increase its work force through the years of federal public service downsizing, the UTE's WFA Committee still carried out important work.

- ❖ The Committee has prepared and distributed easy to read flow charts for locals and members on WFA situations

The UTE Harassment Committee has two overarching goals; to document factual workplace incidents and to raise the profile of the issue throughout the union.

Information gathered by the Committee included: The number of harassment cases (both formal and informal); how or if the case was resolved; and the time frame involved for resolution of the case.

This information was valuable in presenting UTE's position with the employer during consultation on a new Agency Harassment Policy. The UTE's participation and impact on these working groups was significant. The employer and the UTE presented the resulting harassment awareness sessions, developed by the joint national working group, to employees across the country.

Confidentiality is absolutely critical in dealing with instances of harassment. Members can be assured that all information gathered by the UTE is handled in the strictest confidence.

We also attempt to "practice what we preach". Accordingly, the Committee developed an internal Harassment Policy for the UTE that promotes a zero-tolerance level of harassment in the union's operations and activities. The policy was approved by the National Executive Council in March 1997 and distributed to all UTE Locals. Members can obtain a copy of this document from their Local contact or from our Web site.

- ❖ The committee was successful in ensuring that more advance notice would be given prior to technological changes being implemented.
- ❖ In addition, the committee was successful in ensuring that the UTE would be advised as soon as technological change pilot projects were being set up.

Technological Change is also a recognized consultative committee under the National Union / Management Consultation Committee umbrella.

## Harassment

Harassment in the workplace is a perceived or real power that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

As its members' advocate, the UTE created a National Harassment Committee in June 1995 to promote and work towards a harassment-free workplace.

The Committee is comprised of two Executive Council members, a person elected by the Presidents' Conference and a Labour Relations Officer acting as technical advisor.

- ❖ The Committee has distributed to all locals "suggested" terms of reference for Joint Local WFA Committees.
- ❖ Through the Joint Action Committees, we ensured that many PSAC members declared surplus in other agencies were placed in vacant Canada Revenue Agency positions.
- ❖ As well, not all UTE members escaped the slash and burn policies of successive Conservative and Liberal governments. As an example, the WFA Committee was successful in having a staff reductions exercise at the Ottawa Taxation Centre (now Ottawa Technology Centre) declared a work force adjustment situation. In this way, the affected employees came under the provisions of the Work Force Adjustment Directive and received its protections and rights, rather than being subjected to the unfettered discretion of managers.
- ❖ The Committee challenged the employer at the Public Service Staff Relations Board with the filing of numerous Section 99 references. As a result, the first reference heard by the PSSRB was successful and found that the employer contravened the collective agreement. The Committee expects that other Section 99 references will be successful at the PSSRB.

- ❖ In addition there have been a small number of cases where certain management teams have used the Workforce Adjustment Appendix for our members as a direct result of the committee's intervention.

The Committee continues to try to educate all members of the importance of ensuring the correct application of the Workforce Adjustment Appendix. As well, the Committee continues to remain vigilant to all situations that can create a workforce adjustment and counsels the members to file grievances as well as challenging the employer at the Public Service Staff Relations Board.

Fortunately, the PSAC was successful in having the WFA provisions incorporated into your collective agreement. While not ironclad, these provisions provide a greater level of protection than the "job guarantee" provided Agency employees under the transfer from departmental status. The Workforce Adjustment Appendix is the member's job security. We must all defend it from the employer's attempts to violate it.

## Technological Change

Technological change in today's workplace is never-ending and relentless. Since the first technological change provisions were negotiated in 1975, the UTE has continually lobbied the employer both to give greater notice of planned technological change and to provide appropriate employee training.

The UTE Technological Change Committee is comprised of two Executive Council members, a person elected by the Presidents' Conference and a Labour Relations Officer acting as technical advisor. The Committee meets on a regular basis at the national level with senior managers to discuss the implementation of new technology or changes to existing technology. This committee also deals with problems that members identify as having been created as a result of technological change.

The committee strives to ensure that the employer realizes the human aspect of technological change in the workplace and how some of these changes affect the members. The committee also continues to enlighten the employer on the rights of employees affected by a technological situation that are beyond the technological change articles of the collective agreement.

Critical and important issues are dealt with immediately with the employer.

The committee also prepares and delivers a series of health and safety conferences in order to keep its locals and health and safety activists up to date on current issues and concerns. At the 2002 and 2005 UTE Conventions, delegates voted in favor of funding a series of Regional Health and Safety Conferences as well as a National Health and Safety Conference. These conferences are attended by the Health and Safety activists from all locals and have proved to be a very valuable source of information and education. The Committee issues bulletins on Health and Safety and organizes presentations at the Presidents' conferences. Our members also have access to ongoing PSAC health and safety courses and documentation.

The UTE also strongly backs the work of its volunteer members of local health and safety committees in workplaces across the country. These women and men deserve our support and appreciation for their dedicated interest in the well-being of their co-workers.

## Equal Opportunities

The UTE supports equal opportunity for all its members, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious or political belief, family or marital status, or conviction for which a pardon has been granted.

These principles led the UTE to establish an Equal Opportunities Committee. The committee consists of two National Officers, one Labour Relations Officer, one member elected by Local Presidents and representatives from the following equity seeking groups: Persons of colour, people with disabilities, women, Aboriginal peoples, lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons.

The EO Committee has a wide mandate;

- ❖ To provide support and guidance to members regarding equal opportunities issues;
- ❖ to provide input towards the development of UTE Regional and National Equal Opportunities conferences;
- ❖ to promote a greater understanding of equity issues;

- ❖ to consult and collaborate with the employer on all aspects Employment Equity and diversity to insure abidance of the legislation;
- ❖ to monitor the application of the Agency National Employment Equity Action Plan;
- ❖ to develop awareness of equity/diversity issues and to develop support for these issues among union members and the public;
- ❖ to identify emerging equity/diversity issues of concern to union members and to recommend action as necessary; and
- ❖ to participate in and promote Union campaigns involving EO issues.

The Employment Equity Act specifies that employers must consult and collaborate with Unions in employment equity policies, procedures, and the implementation of programs and action plans. The UTE strongly believes that collaboration and co-operation is to take place at all levels. The UTE has Guidelines available for Local Joint Employment Equity / Diversity Committees.

Communication and working jointly with elected members of our Union is also a priority. It ensures that all partners play an active role in the implementation of employment equity.

- ❖ Awareness Campaign on Scents in the Workplace
- ❖ Agreement to Conduct Job Hazard Analysis for Field Workers
- ❖ Revised First Aid Policy
- ❖ communication guidelines regarding situations where asbestos has been identified;
- ❖ an Agency policy against abuse, threats, stalking and assaults by persons outside the CRA; and
- ❖ Health and Safety training for managers

The UTE also has a National Health and Safety Committee. It consists of two National Officers, one member selected by the Presidents' Conference and a Labour Relations Officer who acts as a technical advisor.

This UTE Committee is the cornerstone of our efforts to ensure the employer follows both the letter and the spirit of federal health and safety laws and the CRA Health and Safety policies. Committee members play an important role in providing information, resource material and assistance in resolving issues brought forward by health and safety activists, workplace health and safety committees and Executive members.

provides for the education of workers in health and safety matters;

- ❖ to monitor data on work accidents, injuries and health hazards; and
- ❖ to participate in the planning of the implementation and in the implementation of changes that might affect occupational health and safety.

The Policy Committee meets on a regular basis four times a year and is co-chaired by the Assistant Commissioner of Human Resources. The committee deals with a number of issues as outlined above and other issues deemed appropriate by the committee in respect to Health and Safety on a national basis. The committee is also provided with regular updates on accidents, incidents and occurrences.

Some of the achievements of the Policy Committee (and previously the Joint Occupational Safety and Health Committee (JOSH)) are:

- ❖ Revised Agency Health and Safety Policy
- ❖ Revised Joint Training Course for Committee Members
- ❖ Revised Emergency Procedures for bomb threats, fire, thefts, etc.

Over the years, the committee has been very influential in having the UTE adopt resolutions to make our union more inclusive by accommodating people with disabilities and by encouraging members of all equity groups to participate in our union.

Some of these achievements include:

- ❖ The organization of regional and national UTE Equal Opportunities conferences.
- ❖ For educational purposes, the UTE provides financial support to their members who wish to attend non-UTE conferences organized for equity groups.
- ❖ The holding of UTE-sponsored events in facilities accessible to people with a disability.
- ❖ Provision of technical aids needed to fully participate at union meetings.
- ❖ Material in alternate format - such as large print and Braille - to members who have self identified.
- ❖ Creation of a \$5,000 fund to assist Locals in providing adequate communication and access for physically-challenged members, or those with a disability.
- ❖ A comprehensive regulation governing

family-care expenses for members attending UTE organized events.

Union-management consultation on equity issues is also a priority. Ongoing meetings are held with management's National Employment Equity Co-ordinator and the Assistant Commissioner of Human Resources to discuss issues such as Employment Equity Action Plans, Employment Equity Strategic Direction, Workforce Analysis Results, awareness training on equity issues, special programs for members from designated groups and any issues that are barriers to the promotion of equal opportunities.

## Workplace Safety and Health

Your workplace shouldn't make you sick. Nor should it place your health and safety at risk. This common sense logic seems unassailable. Yet, UTE members couldn't always count on legislative protections from an unhealthy or unsafe work environment.

Unbelievable as it may now seem workplace health and safety matters were determined by arbitrary employer policies until the mid-1980s. There were no mechanisms to ensure that policies were enforced.

Only in 1986, after a major three-year PSAC campaign, were federal public service workers included under the Canada Labour Code's health and safety provisions.

The PSAC continued to play a leadership role on the legislative review of the Code to further improve the rights of their members. In 2000, the Code was amended introducing major changes. It places greater onus on employers and workers to work together to ensure a healthy and safe work environment. The Code requires the employer who normally employs directly 300 workers or more to establish a National Policy Health and Safety Committee. The purpose is to ensure that health and safety issues are addressed at the corporate level. UTE is an active participant on the Policy Committee.

Jointly with the employer and other unions as members of the Policy Committee, our duties are:

- ❖ To participate in the development of health and safety policies and programs;
- ❖ to consider and expeditiously dispose of matters concerning health and safety raised by members or referred to it by a workplace committee or a health and safety representative;
- ❖ to participate in the development and monitoring of a prevention program that also