

Union News

A Union of Taxation Employees Publication



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Si vous préférez recevoir cette publication **en français**, veuillez-vous adresser à **votre président-e de section locale**.

This Round of Bargaining

By now you have seen that bargaining with the employer has started. We exchanged demands with the employer on September 11 and 12. We met to negotiate in both October and November and have dates set for the months of December, January and February thus far. As usual, we expect the employer to give bargaining the attention it deserves as we have now passed the expiry date of our current agreement.

Scan to see
both parties'
demands



The fight for remote work provisions is never over, and in this particular round we are facing an austerity budget from the current government, coupled with the exponentially increasing use of Artificial Intelligence. As the employer rolls out new AI initiatives, they may say it has no impact on staffing levels. While this may be true for some tools that are implemented, it is far from a guarantee for the future. For the first time ever, the government has created a Minister of Artificial Intelligence. This is a message we cannot ignore. When an austerity budget is presented, and this ministry exists, it is not unreasonable to assume that the employer will leverage AI advancements to save money. More often than not, "saving money" in the public sector means decreasing staffing. Job protection is of paramount importance in these times. Taxpayers don't want to talk to automated "chatbots": they want real live workers with empathy and reasonable judgement.

As with all rounds of bargaining with this employer, securing better working conditions and pay is like pulling teeth. They

have no mandate, or frankly interest, in making your life better: that is not their job and to suggest otherwise is disingenuous at best. Their mandate is to get more work for less cost (pay and benefits). It has always been that way and will remain the same. There has yet to be one benefit or pay increase that the employer simply volunteered to provide. It has always taken a fight, or legislation because of advocacy and lobbying.

Given the most recent wave of Work Force Adjustment, ask yourself if the employer would have been providing guarantees of a reasonable job offer or reasonable job offers or alternations if they didn't have to because of our collective agreement.

Ask yourself if the employer would give you a paid leave to attend to a sick member of your family if they were not obligated because of our collective agreement.

Ask yourself if you could use paid leave for attending a family member's funeral if the employer did not have to allow it.

As we negotiate with, quite literally, the most powerful legislative body in the country, please understand for whom the employer is fighting and for whom the union is fighting.



Solidarity

Adam Jackson

2nd National Vice-President

Message From the National President



Dear Sisters, Brothers, and Friends,

To say the least, 2025 has been quite an eventful year. Indeed, the first half of the year has been difficult. Since my last message in the spring, hundreds of term members working in Specialty Collections, Government Programs, Customs Collections, and Insolvency have had their contracts terminated. The same thing happened to term members working in the Debt Management Contact Centres. And it didn't stop there. The contracts of more than 450 members working in the Objections and Taxpayer Relief Programs of the Appeals Branch were not renewed. In May, the contracts of 1,300 members working in the call centres of the Assessment, Benefits and Services Branch (ABSB) were also not renewed.

All of these job losses affected employees appointed for a specified period (terms). Later in May, the Agency conducted its first large-scale Workforce Adjustment (WFA) exercise since the fall of 2016. Approximately 600 members of our union were affected by this exercise, which targeted employees appointed for an indeterminate period (permanent employees). The steps in this process are ongoing, and we continue to assist affected members and try to save as many jobs as possible.

During this time, our union has made multiple representations to the Agency's senior management to reaffirm our strong opposition to all these job losses. We emphasized the impact these cuts have on the lives of thousands of our members, their families, and their communities, as well as on the services provided by the Agency to the Canadian population and to businesses.

This summer, the Agency confirmed more bad news. It had decided not to renew the contracts of 850 term employees working in the ABSB Call Centres. These contracts were due to expire on September 5. On several occasions, we argued to the employer that this made no sense, as the situation in its Call Centres was already extremely precarious and unacceptable.

The Agency was informed that we were preparing to launch a major national campaign to denounce all these budget cuts, their impact on jobs and services, as well as the cuts planned for this fall. I informed the Commissioner that we would begin with the catastrophic situation in the Call Centres to persuade him to change his mind about the 850 Call Centre employees who were going to lose their jobs at the beginning of September, but to no avail.

Faced with the intransigence of senior management, I turned directly to the new Minister of National Revenue, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne. I met with him to explain the seriousness of the situation and invited him to see it for himself on site, which he agreed to do. On July 3, I accompanied him on a visit to the call center in Montreal. During the visit, I made sure he spoke with a few employees so he could hear what was really going on and how the severe staff shortage was affecting our members, his employees.

The message clearly resonated. The following month, the Agency informed us that it had changed its mind and was renewing the contracts of the 850 call center employees. This was excellent news that we welcomed with enthusiasm. However, this is far from being enough, given the massive cuts made by the Agency over the past two years.

On August 21, with the support of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), we launched the **"Canada on Hold"** campaign. To say that this campaign was successful would be an understatement. From the outset, it had a spectacular impact. The media were very receptive and reported on it extensively. The public and businesses gave us tremendous support and expressed their deep frustration to federal MPs about the enormous difficulties they faced in reaching call center agents. Opposition parties began to press the government on this issue in the House of Commons, and MPs from all political parties complained to the CRA.

On September 2, Minister Champagne and Secretary of State for National Revenue, the Honourable Wayne Long, issued a letter acknowledging that the service delays and difficulties citizens are experiencing in accessing Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Call Centres are unacceptable. They stated that they take the situation very seriously. In addition, they indicated that they had instructed the Agency to implement a 100-day plan to strengthen services, improve access, and reduce delays.

The first positive consequence of this announcement did not take long to materialize. The Agency immediately hired 400 people from its rehire lists to return to work in the ABSB Call Centres. Subsequently, the Agency also began rehiring more than 100 people from the Revenue Collections rehire lists.

We welcome the intervention and initiative of Minister Champagne and Secretary of State Long. We fully agree with them that the current situation at the CRA is unsustainable and unacceptable. The reason is apparent: the CRA has laid off 10,000 employees since May 2024. The Agency simply does not have enough staff to handle the volume of calls and process taxpayers' files in a timely manner.

Things continued to evolve positively this fall. The CRA had initially informed its employees and our union last May that it planned to proceed with further job cuts this fall through another WFA exercise. It also informed us that it needed to achieve savings of \$715 million by the end of fiscal year 2028-2029, in accordance with the request of the Minister of Finance, Mr. Champagne. The renewal of some contracts and new hires were good news and a step in the right direction. However, I made it clear to the Agency, the Minister, and the Secretary of State that this was far from sufficient and that it was impossible to improve service while making such significant cuts at the CRA.

I personally asked the Minister of Finance and the Secretary of State to abandon the planned budget cuts for the Agency and to reinvest significant amounts of money in the budget to hire employees to stop the bleeding and improve service. I informed the Agency's senior management and the Minister's office that our union was willing to work with them to find solutions to reverse the situation and improve the services offered to the public and businesses. I made it very clear that this would inevitably require adding staff, not further cuts resulting in more job losses.

Our union continued to apply pressure and denounce

the impacts of irresponsible budget cuts that led us into this deplorable situation. On September 17, we launched phase 2 of the "**Canada on Hold**" campaign. This phase aimed to denounce budget cuts and job losses across the CRA and their impact on the time it takes to provide the most basic services. We provided concrete examples of the devastating impact of these cuts on citizens and businesses to keep up the pressure on the government.

Subsequently, I had numerous lengthy discussions with Secretary of State Long until the day the budget was tabled on November 4. I reinforced the message that the cuts had to stop and that reinvestment was needed instead. I emphasized the need to rehire staff not only in the ABSB Call Centres, but also in the Taxation Centres, Tax Services Offices, and National Verification and Collection Centres. In short, there are needs everywhere.

Just before the budget was tabled, the Secretary of State told me that my message had been heard "loud and clear." It seems to be true, at least in part. The budget now includes much smaller cuts and reinvestments. In the end, net cuts (gross cuts minus reinvestments) total approximately \$194 million by the end of fiscal year 2028-2029. This is far from ideal, but it is already much better than what was planned. Now it all depends on how the savings and reinvestments will be achieved.

As part of the 100-day improvement plan, the Agency temporarily transferred approximately 400 employees from the ABSB Call Centres to assist with processing T1 adjustments, Appeals, Uncashed Cheques, and Benefits claims in an effort to reduce backlogs. These employees will return to their substantive positions at the end of January 2026. We have expressed serious reservations about the effectiveness of this initiative and will continue to follow up with the employer.

It's one thing to have a 100-day plan, but that's far from being enough. The Agency needs to come up with a solid short, medium, and long-term plan to turn things around and really improve the service to restore its reputation with Canadians, who have had enough, and to improve the working conditions of its employees.

At a meeting held on November 25, the employer shared some very good news with us. The CRA has informed us that it is extending the contracts of term employees at the ABSB Call Centres until September 2026. In addition, the Agency recognized that it needed additional resources to cope with the upcoming tax filing season. It will therefore hire 1,600 additional employees (400 per region) in the call centres with a contract end date of September 2026.

The employer will use its rehire lists and launch external processes. Other staffing measures may also be used. We took the opportunity to remind the Agency that we firmly believe it should also add additional staff in other areas, particularly in Taxation Centres.

In addition, I held serious discussions with the Secretary of State, the Commissioner, and other senior Agency officials to convince them to reopen customer service counters to provide in-person service to taxpayers. In our view, the Agency's decision to permanently close these counters in October 2013 was a serious mistake and showed a lack of respect and consideration for a large and vulnerable segment of the population. These service counters also allowed taxpayers with complex cases and businesses to get answers to their questions in a more appropriate manner. We still firmly believe that the CRA should reverse this decision.

We will continue to hold discussions and follow up regularly with the Agency's senior management, and I will also continue to maintain a dialogue with the Secretary of State and the Minister of Revenue with the objective that further positive changes will be announced during the year 2026. It should also be noted that the Agency has postponed the WFA exercise scheduled for this fall to a later date. We will continue to follow up on this matter.

Another piece of good news is that the CRA has also continued to hire collections officers following the budget announcement, with the aim of increasing federal government tax revenues, as we have repeatedly suggested over the past several months.

The Canadian population and businesses deserve to be able to count on high-quality public services. Our members want to provide such services. All that remains is for the government and the Agency to ensure that they give us the tools and resources we need to better serve Canadian taxpayers. We know you can deliver. When we unite and work together, and when the Canadian population joins us in speaking with one voice, **we make things happen.**

Dear Sisters, Brothers, and Friends, I sincerely thank you for your support of our **"Canada on Hold"** campaign. Together, and with the support of the public and businesses, **we have made a difference** and forced the government to reconsider its position on the planned CRA budget cuts. But we must not give up. We must stick together and remain vigilant. Our future and that of public services depends on it.

I invite you to contact your local union representatives if you have any questions or concerns, or if you need representation. They are there to help you.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your dedication to the Canadian population, and please know that we are proud of and appreciate all the good work you do every day.

I wish each and every one of you and your loved ones a wonderful Holiday Season. May the New Year bring you peace, joy, happiness, and prosperity! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Stay safe and take good care of yourselves and your loved ones!

In Solidarity,

Marc Brière
National President





Know Your Collective Agreement

Article 44 – Domestic Violence Leave

As of 2024, Canada reported 349 victims of family violence and 356 victims of intimate partner violence per 100,000 population, indicating a concerning trend in domestic abuse that is likely to continue.

Article 44 was added to our Collective Agreement in 2021 because both parties recognized that domestic abuse is on the rise and employees may be affected by it, which can, in turn, affect an employee's attendance at the workplace.

Domestic violence is any form of abuse or neglect that an employee or an employee's child experiences from a family member, or someone with whom the employee has or had an intimate relationship.

An employee who is subject to domestic violence as defined above shall, upon request, be granted domestic violence leave for:

- i. seeking care and/or support for themselves or their dependent child in respect of a physical or psychological injury or disability;
- ii. obtaining services from an organization which provides services for individuals who are subject to domestic violence;

iii. obtaining professional counselling;

iv. relocating temporarily or permanently; or

v. seeking legal or law enforcement assistance or to prepare for or participate in any civil or criminal legal proceeding.

The total domestic violence leave with pay that can be granted in a fiscal year is 75 hours, to be taken in the manner requested by the employee.

Unless otherwise required by the employer, a note from the employee stating that they meet the requirements of this article will be sufficient to support the request for leave.

An employee is not entitled to domestic violence leave if the employee is charged with an offence related to that act or if it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the employee committed that act.

Melanee Jessup

Member, Communications Committee

A Local's Journey

Recognizing an activist and giving back to the membership

In July 2024, the Union of Taxation Employees lost a respected long-time activist. Patrick Ferguson, President of Local 40022 Regina TSO, passed away. The Local discussed some ideas as a way of remembering Patrick and collectively determined that creating a bursary in Patrick's name would allow them to recognize his long contribution to the Union, as well as give back to the membership.

As they did not have a bursary that could be renamed in the memory of Patrick, they wondered where to start. The Local reached out to the Honours and Awards Committee to ask for any suggestions and assistance in order to create the bursary. They discussed potential bylaw changes, the mechanisms required to receive applications and assess the individuals, who are children of members, to find the best qualified candidate to receive the \$1,000 bursary.



In March 2025, the Local held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) and they presented the following to the membership:

- The proposal to create the bursary;
- The amount of the award;
- Deadlines for receipt of the applicant's applications;
- The criteria that would be used to select a successful candidate.

The proposal was adopted unanimously.



A few weeks later, information was communicated to the membership advising of the creation of the bursary, along with access to the application form.

By the application deadline (mid-June), the Local had received two submissions for the bursary. A committee reviewed the applications and on June 27, 2025, awarded Anna-Marie Oxman the Local's first Patrick Ferguson Memorial bursary. Anna-Marie will be attending the University of Calgary in the fall and will be majoring in physics. Congratulations to Anna-Marie.

The Honours and Awards Committee recommends that any Local who may be considering creating a bursary contact them with respect to the application process, important factors to consider when choosing assessment criteria, and potential topics to be reflected in one of the following presentation media: essay, video, audio, artwork.

Gary Esslinger
Chair, Honours and Awards Committee

Scholarship Award Recipients 2025



The National \$3,000 scholarships for 2025 are awarded to:

Muhammad Aaschir Sheikh, Moncton
Gabriel Lamonica Sleczkowski, Toronto West

National Robert "Bob" Campbell Scholarship
National Diana Gee Scholarship

The Regional \$1,500 scholarships for 2025 are awarded to:

Boyd Bembridge, Saint John
Mathieu Cooper, Rimouski
Maxime Cazeneuve-LaCasse, Montréal
Usman Khan, Ottawa Centre
Preston McNeill, Hamilton
Bryce Mitchell, Belleville
Logan Pighin, Toronto North
Shansel Nouzamani, Winnipeg TSO
Olivia Sczesny, Edmonton
Erica Akene, Surrey

The Al Rollins Atlantic Regional Scholarship
The Quebec Regional Scholarship
The Jean Bergeron Montreal Regional Scholarship
The Shane O'Brien National Capital Region Scholarship
The Nick Stein Southwestern Ontario Regional Scholarship
The Kent MacDonald N & E Ontario Regional Scholarship
The Linda Collins Greater Toronto Regional Scholarship
The Gary Esslinger Prairies Regional Scholarship
The Don Davoren Rocky Mountains Regional Scholarship
The Pacific Regional Scholarship

The \$1,000 UTE/ The Personal Insurance Company Scholarships for 2025 are awarded to:

Raphaelle Brideau, Bathurst
Mathis Brière, Laval
Kiera Duhamel, Pacific Region Call Centre
Fatou Gadji, Winnipeg TC
Kaitlin Hiscock, St. John's TC
Elizabeth Plouffe, Laval
Eeshaan Shahnawaz Ottawa Centre
Ryden Wiebe, Vancouver
Natasha Zaccaria, Edmonton
Larkiss Zheng, Toronto

Atlantic Region
Montréal Region
Pacific Region
Prairie Region
Atlantic Region
Montréal Region
National Capital Region
Pacific Region
Rocky Mountains Region
North Greater Toronto Region

Gary Esslinger

Chair, Honours and Awards Committee



“Elbows Up”

How has the recent political climate affected us here in Canada? I ask myself as I look around for a shot of Jack Daniel’s and am unable to find it, so I reach for J.P. Wiser’s, distilled here in my back yard in Windsor Ontario. I am not suggesting that alcohol is the solution to anything, but it stands as the perfect example of a breakdown in a once respectable relationship with the USA — an international border guarded only by *“neighborly respect and honorable obligations”* — Sir Winston Churchill.

“Elbows up my friends!” It’s a phrase conjured up by the great Gordie Howe, a Detroit Red Wings hockey player known for his toughness, most likely found in his Saskatchewan roots.

Canada has always sat back and been known for its manners, peacekeeping and democracy, always highlighting its peaceful existence and avoiding a conflict — hockey aside.

Oh, how things have changed, but in such a Canadian way. Buying Canadian products, watching all provinces shake hands with each other, no jet setting vacations to sunny Florida or Vegas, my hard-earned dollars will stay in Canada.

Even in these times of international political unrest — “deal or no deal,” trade wars, “Buy Canadian!” — I must admit I have never been prouder to say **I AM CANADIAN!** I proudly flaunt my “Canadian AF” tattoo, I wear my red hoodie, I am a federal employee and a proud member of UTE.

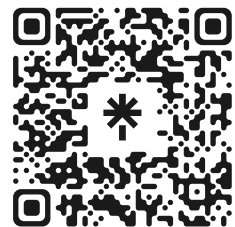
I am Canadian! We will never be the 51st state!

Elbows Up, my Brothers, Sisters, and Friends!

Mel Lucier
Local 00018 Windsor

Don’t miss what affects you.

Follow your union on all social platforms for the latest bargaining news, workplace updates, and member resources.



Don't leave your loved ones in a financial lurch...

As an important member benefit, the Public Service Alliance of Canada will provide you with **\$10,000 of life insurance plus \$10,000 of accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance absolutely free** through the **PSAC FREE \$10,000** program.

That's right! **Free insurance!**

This offer is available only to members in good standing of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. All you have to do is confirm your membership in PSAC by completing the PSAC **Free \$10,000** member information card. **There are no medical exams and no obligation or commitments of any other kind required.**

Please also note that if you are no longer an employee of the public service, move to another bargaining unit outside of the PSAC, or go on leave without pay (sick or maternity/parental or other), you are no longer a member in good standing and you will no longer be entitled to this benefit.



To maintain your member-in-good-standing status if you are on long term leave without pay, please visit the following link www.psacafpc.ca/migs and follow the instructions to request to maintain your member-in-good-standing status.

Remember, this insurance coverage is provided free of charge through Coughlin Insurance, compliments of the PSAC. **However, this free coverage is NOT provided automatically.** Our insurers require that the PSAC FREE \$10,000 member information card be completed in full before coverage takes effect. Please ensure that you save, download and/or print a copy of the completed Insurance Plan Certificate, and keep a copy in a safe place with your valuable documents.

So, complete the PSAC FREE \$10,000 member information online now, and get your completed Insurance Plan Certificate.

**Scan for
Online
Enrolment**



Patricia Sleczkowski

Co-Chair, Communications Committee



Got ideas for our Spring Newsletter?

We'd love to hear from you - email us at communications@ute-sei.org

Join Our Mailing List and Get Email Updates



Need to Change Your Address?



Please note that all address changes should be completed online using the QR code to the right, or by sending an email to:

membership@ute-sei.org

If you do not have access to email, please pass the information (along with your PSAC ID) to a local representative, or mail it directly to the National Office at:

275 Bank Street, 4th Floor, Ottawa ON K2P 2C6.

Season's Greetings



FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND STAFF OF THE UNION OF TAXATION EMPLOYEES.

As we close out the year, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all our members for your dedication, resilience, and solidarity.

Wishing you and your loved ones a peaceful holiday season and a bright year ahead.

