UTE Owner’s Manual

**A Guide to the Union of Taxation Employees** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**A word from**

**UTE’s National President**

Welcome to the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE). Welcome to **YOUR UNION**.

Why your union? Because you, along with over 26,000 other UTE members, own our union. As a UTE member, you are in the driver’s seat. You contribute to the direction of our union, through your local, regional and national representatives. Each UTE member has the opportunity to participate in the activities and life of our union. Whether you do so, of course, is entirely up to you; but I urge you to get involved to the greatest extent possible. You will find an open, welcomingorganization willing and able to give you greater control over the workplace issues that affect you personally. This Union is people stepping forward to help others.

The world grows more hectic; our lives more complicated. Working in the federal public service, whether for a Department or an Agency, has never been more stressful and demanding. Challenges and crises appear to be constant. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) presents a completely new set of challenges almost daily for all of us. The continuing changes to our systems, the constant realigning of workloads, whether it relates to staffing, classification, harassment or any of the other problems that we run into, the role of our union has never been more important.

**Our union, the Union of Taxation Employees, can only be as strong and as united as its membership.**

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

This booklet will show you the many ways UTE fights along with you and for you. If you have any questions, or are interested in receiving more information, contact your local union representative. You can also call or email the address at the back of this booklet.

The more you put into your Union, the more you will get out of it.

In solidarity,

Marc Brière,

National President

**Who we are….**

We’re the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE), representing more than **26,000** employees of Canada Revenue Agency. We exist to maintain and advance the workplace rights of our members – a big task in today’s federal public service!

It’s a job we take very seriously. The UTE believes in fostering a constructive relationship with Agency management. However, we’re aggressive in protecting our members’ interests – from the workplace to Parliament Hill.

As a progressive, innovative union, our vision extends into the future. At the same time, our roots go back more than half a century. In 1943, employees working for the then Taxation Department first organized themselves into the ***Dominion Income Tax Staff Association***. Then, as now, federal workers recognize that being unionized is the best insurance policy against unfair and unreasonable employer actions.

In 1966, with the advent of free collective bargaining in the federal public service, the UTE joined the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) as the “***Taxation Component***”. Our 1987 convention voted to adopt our current name. With the passage of the CCRA Act, we moved from a department of the federal public service to an agency. This Agency was proclaimed on November 1, 1999. On December 12, 2003, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) became the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

UTE members work in Tax Centres, Tax Service Offices and Call Centres in areas such as Taxpayer Services, Debt Management, Audit, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Information Technology (IT), Compensation, Enforcement, Appeals, and the Legislative Policy and Regulatory Affairs Branch (LPRAB). They fall into either the SP or the MG Classifications.

These groups are covered under one collective agreement (the Program and Administration Services agreement).

### **Where we’re found**

UTE members work in all Canada Revenue Agency offices across the country – from headquarters and large metropolitan areas to service offices in small towns. We are a part of the fabric of the community – inside and outside working hours – from coast to coast!

Our members are the union. UTE representatives and services are never difficult to access. The “Local” is the heart of our union. All UTE members in good standing have the opportunity to run for office and/or elect their Local Executive. The Executive comprises such positions as President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Chief Shop Steward. The Local may also include~~s~~ stewards to whom members in a particular area of their workplace can turn for assistance.

Each Local holds regular meetings, along with an annual general membership meeting where elections are held and the annual budget, By-Laws and Regulations changes are presented for adoption.

**How we’re structured…**

The UTE is structured to ensure that our union is run the way it should be – from the bottom up.

# **Locals**

The UTE is organized into 60 locals, from St. John’s to Victoria. Every member has the opportunity to shape our union by becoming directly involved in determining its policies, strategies and directions.

# **Regional Vice-Presidents**

Ten Regional Vice-Presidents (RVPs) serve as the link between UTE Locals and the National Officers. RVPs provide guidance and counselling to Local Presidents and/or Local Executives. They sit on regional and national committees. RVPs act as representatives in the presentation of complaints and grievances.

The RVPs are distributed across ten regions:

**Pacific**
Comprised of comprised of Vancouver, Penticton, Victoria, **Fraser Valley TSO**, Surrey, Prince George, Kelowna and Pacific Region Call Centre Locals;

**Rocky Mountains**

Comprised of Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Lethbridge and Calgary Call Centre Locals;

**Prairie**

Comprised of Winnipeg, Regina, the Winnipeg Taxation Centre and the Winnipeg Compensation Client Service Centre (CCSC) Locals;

**Southwestern Ontario**

Comprised of Windsor, London, Kitchener, Hamilton and St. Catharines Locals;

**Northern and Eastern Ontario**

Comprised of Belleville, Kingston, Peterborough, Sudbury and Thunder Bay Locals;

**Greater Toronto**Comprised of Toronto Centre, Toronto North, Toronto East, Toronto West and Barrie Locals;

**National Capital**

Comprised of Headquarters, Ottawa Technology Centre, Ottawa TSO, International TSO, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa East, Connaught Building and Albert Street Locals;

**Montréal**

Comprised of Montréal, Rouyn-Noranda, Montérégie South Shore, Sherbrooke, Laval and Outaouais Locals;

**Québec**
Comprised of Québec, Trois-Rivières, Shawinigan, Chicoutimi and the Jonquière Locals;

**Atlantic**

Comprised of the St. John’s, Charlottetown, Sydney, Saint John, Halifax, Bathurst, Moncton, St. John’s Taxation Centre and Summerside Locals.

# **Executive Council**

The Executive Council comprises the National President, the First and Second National Vice-Presidents (NVPs) and the 10 Regional Vice-Presidents (RVPs).

All Executive Council members are elected every three years by delegates to the UTE’s national convention.

The National President is assisted by the First National Vice-President who is responsible for finance and the Second National Vice-President who is responsible for collective bargaining.

The Executive Council meets at least four times a year to discuss any issues that arise between Triennial Conventions.

# **Executive Committee**

The UTE Executive Committee, which meets at the call of the National President, normally deals with issues referred to it by the Executive Council.

The Executive Committee is composed of the following officers: The National President, the two NVPs and an RVP (who serves for a one-year term). It may conduct the affairs of our union between Executive Council meetings.

# **Standing National Committees**

There are 14 Standing Committees that deal with issues of ongoing importance to UTE members.

They are:

Bargaining

By-laws

Communications

Call Centre

Equal Opportunities

Finance

Health and Safety

Honours and Awards

Political Action

Staffing

Technological Change

Union Management Approach (UMA)

Well-Being

Workforce Adjustment

Standing Committees are usually made up of at least two Executive Council members, a Staff technical advisor and one or two Local members elected every three years at the September Presidents’ Conference after Convention.

# **Convention**

Convention occurs every three years. Convention is the governing body of the UTE. For representation at a Convention, each Local is entitled to one (1) delegate for each block of two hundred (200) members or fraction thereof. Every delegate must be a member in good standing.

These delegates elect the Executive Council and vote on resolutions brought to Convention which provide direction to the elected national officers.

This is when UTE By-Laws and Regulations are adopted, modified or rescinded and the union’s three-year budget is adopted. Convention decisions are binding.

* **Presidents’ Conference**

Two Presidents’ Conferences are held each year, in March and September. Each Local is represented by one delegate, normally (but not always) the President. Locals may also send observers and any member in good standing can attend at their own expense. Members of the Executive Council attend the Conference asobservers.

Presidents’ Conferences include an educational component, with time devoted to such items as workshops, seminars and reports from Standing Committees. This is an opportunity for delegates to discuss agenda items such as resolutions brought forward by Locals, as well as issues of general interest and importance to the membership.

The Presidents’ Conference is not a decision-making body. Resolutions adopted at the Conference are referred to the Executive Council for consideration and action.

# **Regional and Inter-Regional Conferences**

RVPs are allocated funds to hold Regional or Inter-Regional Conferences on issues or common concerns of UTE members in their regions. These conferences provide an opportunity for UTE activists to participate in the work of their union. Each Region is also allocated funds to help it hold educational courses.

## **What we do…**

Service to the membership is the UTE’s prime reason to exist. Our union provides a wide range of services, available to every member, wherever they may work.

# **Bargaining**

Bargaining objectives include salary increases in addition to important issues such as job security and improving and/or maintaining working conditions previously gained in the collective agreement. Bargaining is a long, arduous process. UTE’s goal is to negotiate until a fair and reasonable collective agreement is achieved.

Members can send bargaining demands to UTE at any time, via their Local Executive.

The Standing Bargaining Committee is responsible for calling for and collecting bargaining demands from the locals and the UTE Labour Relations Officers. The Committee must compile the bargaining demands and propose a program of demands, which is submitted to the PSAC. This program is submitted to the National Bargaining Committee.

The National Bargaining Committee selects, modifies, writes or composes bargaining demands using the demands obtained from the Standing Bargaining Committee / locals and the UTE Labour Relations Officers. The Committee prioritizes all bargaining demands and submits them to the PSAC Collective Bargaining Branch within the established time frame. These bargaining demands are the UTE’s official demands.

Members of the UTE bargaining team, jointly with the PSAC, represent and defend UTE members’ interests at bargaining meetings with employer representatives.

The National President and 2nd National Vice-president sit on the National Strategy Committee with several key people from the PSAC to synchronize all strategies, actions and support that the bargaining team needs for achieving the bargaining objectives.

# **Day to Day Activities**

# Union representatives deal with issues of ongoing importance to UTE members. They answer inquiries from members and even the employer. Union representatives, among other things attend meetings with the employer, monitor compliance with our contract, and support the training and education of our members.

# **Grievance Representation**

The collective agreement, negotiated between the union and the employer, along with other legislation, sets out the terms and conditions of work. Whenever a member believes that his or her workplace rights have been violated, they should contact their union representative as soon as possible. The UTE representative works with that member to try and resolve the problem informally. If that effort fails, the union will assist the member in filing a formal written grievance to management.

Unless management allows the grievance and acts to remedy the problem, depending on the type of grievance, it may be processed through four additional levels.

The UTE Local representatives in the specific workplace where the problem occurred normally handle first and/or second level grievances. Third level grievances are generally submitted to the Agency’s Assistant Commissioners. These grievances are put forward and argued by UTE RVPs. The UTE Labour Relations Officers, working out of our national headquarters, handle final level grievances.

Should the issue still not be resolved to the member’s satisfaction, the PSAC can decide on the merits of the case whether to take the grievance to a quasi-legal forum called **adjudication**, if applicable.

# **Agency Staffing Recourse Representation**

Within the CRA staffing program there are three levels of recourse: Individual Feedback (IF), Decision Review (DR), and Independent Third Party review (ITPR). Within these processes, members have the right to be represented at DR and ITPR.

Representation at DR is provided by the local.

Representation at ITPR is provided by the UTE National Office.

At any time, we can provide advice on the staffing process. If you have any concerns, please contact your local representative at your earliest convenience.

# **Education Programs**

The UTE has developed its own education courses in Grievance Representation, Staffing, Local Officers Training and Developing Membership Activism – four practical areas of everyday use to Local activists. Given several times a year throughout the various regions on an as needed basis, these courses provide Local officers and stewards with the knowledge and skills to effectively represent their members. Other training courses are developed as needs are identified. A national staffing or grievance course is normally held annually in Ottawa.

As a component of PSAC, UTE members have access to Alliance education courses and seminars. These range from a single day to a full week or more. Topics are as varied as steward’s training, health and safety, human rights and political action.

# **Membership Communication**

An informed membership is an empowered membership. That is why the UTE makes every effort to keep its membership up-to-date on the major issues of the day. Bulletins are sent to all UTE Locals for distribution to their members. Three times a year the publication “Union News” is mailed directly to each member’s home. If you are not receiving the newsletter, please contact your Local.

The UTE has a website (ute-sei.org) which is constantly updated with the most current information on a wide range of topics of interest to the membership, such as bargaining. Other information found on the website includes bulletins, minutes of national meetings, as well as Executive Council and each Local’s executive contact information. The UTE also has an email distribution list that you can sign up for and we can be found on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

**A final word…**

 At the end of the day, the union is you! The UTE is committed to providing our members with the best service and representation. We need to hear your voice - have your say and become involved!

Contact a local representative to learn more about how YOUR UNION is working for you and when your next annual general meeting will occur.

 We hope that, as a UTE member, you join other members in building an effective, responsive and progressive organization.

**Union of Taxation Employees (UTE)**

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**Your UTE Local Contact:**

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