



On February 28, I joined hundreds of members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) at a major rally in downtown Ottawa to mark the 3rd anniversary of the launch of the Phoenix payroll system and to express our growing frustration with this completely unacceptable situation. Despite the intense cold, the demonstrators' message to the federal government was very clear.

We demand that the government:

- Establish a clear schedule, for which they will be held responsible for not meeting the schedules, to stabilize the Phoenix system, eliminate the backlog and move to a new pay system.
- Compensate all public servants for the financial and emotional hardship they have endured because of Phoenix.
- Demonstrate more respect for its employees by negotiating seriously at the various negotiation tables so as not to add insult to injury.



On this first day of action, other similar events were held elsewhere in the country. These events represent the first of a series of mobilization actions that will take place across the country in the coming weeks and months. I encourage all members of the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) to join the events taking place in your region. The more people who demonstrate, the stronger our message will be!

In the meantime, UTE continues to ask the federal government to agree to provide the necessary resources to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and to make the necessary legislative changes so that the CRA can complete the development of its system for payroll administration (CAS) into a fully operational payroll system that could replace the Phoenix system and allow the CRA to pay its employees properly and on time. We have not yet received a positive response to our request, but discussions continue with government officials and we are closely monitoring the situation.

Another issue on which we continue to work tirelessly is the reopening of client service counters at the CRA. The Agency exists to serve Canadians. It is committed to reviewing its service model to make the CRA "fairer, more *helpful*, and easier to use". To do so, there is a recognition that it needs to place clients at the centre of program and service design. What better way to achieve these goals, than by bringing back the counter services.

While technology seems to be the way of the future, we must also recognize that nothing beats face-to-face communication when it comes to dealing with complex problems or ensuring that the right information is properly communicated. Collection officers and auditors who work on the road, meet daily with taxpayers and representatives to ensure that appropriate information is provided. Why should members of the public (such as seniors, new Canadians, low-income people) who need our help to meet their tax obligations, not be entitled to receive services in person? In Quebec, the Quebec Revenue Agency (QRA) continues to offer its taxpayers the opportunity to

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**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ RECEVOIR CETTE PUBLICATION EN FRANÇAIS,
VEUILLEZ VOUS ADRESSER À VOTRE PRÉSIDENT- E DE SECTION LOCALE**

YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT REMINDERS, HIGHLIGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

With the significant number of new employees joining the Canada Revenue Agency and becoming Union of Taxation Employees members, the Communications Committee believe this is a good time to highlight some of the important provisions in the collective agreement.

In this article we will discuss leave with pay for family related responsibilities. Article 42 of your collective agreement provides up to a maximum of 45 hours leave for family responsibilities in any fiscal year. (April to March)

Article 42 Leave for Family Related Responsibilities

The definition of family in your collective agreement reads as follows:

"family" except where otherwise specified in this Agreement, means father, mother (or alternatively stepfather, stepmother, or foster parent), brother, sister, spouse (including common-law partner spouse resident with the employee), child (including child of common-law partner or foster child), stepchild or ward of the employee, grandchild, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandparents and relative permanently residing in the employee's household or with whom the employee permanently resides.

It is important to note that NONE of the individuals listed above have to reside with the member in order to qualify for access to these leave provisions. Only relatives not listed above need to reside with you in order to qualify for access to these leave provisions.

Clause 42.02 of this article lists the situations for which this leave is allowed to be taken. Again, it's important to point out that this clause states "the employer SHALL grant leave with pay....". This means that as long as the situation falls under the provisions of the collective agreement, the employer cannot deny a member's request for this leave, other than if they have reached the maximum allowable 45 hours in a fiscal year.

A few of the provisions for which this leave is allowed include:

- to take a family member to a medical or dental appointment
- to provide immediate and temporary care of a sick member of the employee's family
- to provide care for a sick member of the employee's family who was hospitalized
- to provide for immediate and temporary care of a child where due to unforeseen circumstances, usual childcare arrangements are unavailable. It also applies to unexpected school closures.

Please see your collective agreement (clause 42.02) for the complete list. Members are also encouraged to review provisions in the collective agreement to see if other unexpected family situation might qualify for leave under these provisions.

The union believes this article of the collective agreement is quite clear; however, our members are often asked questions by the employer, such as:

- Is there anyone else you can get to look after the family member?
- This is really a bad time; can you not do it later?
- They are in the hospital; do you really need to be there?

Answers to these questions are not required in order to avail yourself of the provisions of this article. While some clarification may be required, we have found in many instances that this is an



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education piece. Local union representatives can bring this to the attention of the employer, after which these questions are no longer asked.

The Collective Agreement is an agreement between both Canada Revenue Agency and the Public Service Alliance of Canada as bargaining agent for employees. All parties need to understand and respect the provisions contained therein and not pass judgement on provisions they may not agree with.

In upcoming issues of the Union News, we will examine other clauses in the collective agreement to provide clarity and insight on provisions, which many members may not be aware.

Gary Esslinger
Chair of the Communications Committee

YOUR UNION YOUR VOICE

It is always eye opening to meet and hear from members from different locals at their various events. I have been getting out to some local AGMS and what is striking is the number of new members showing up. This is an incredibly good sign for all of us. We need new members to shape the union going forward and we need their voice and ideas.

What struck me as most important though was that for several new members this is their first time being in a unionized environment, and while taking nothing away from their experience their first-hand knowledge of the unionized environment would be limited to friend or family experience, academic education or media. Again, this in no way suggests a closed opinion but rather one that is not formed in shop floor experience.

I was one of those members once as well. My employment and education before joining the public service was in purely non-unionized, and frankly non-union-friendly, environments. My only exposure to unions was through my parents who were both proud union members. But, as anyone will attest, we try not to adopt our parents' opinions.

(Especially if they like the Maple Leafs.)

What I noticed when I started was the local union's outreach to new members. Back then we had extensive orientation explaining the rights and benefits of the collective agreement and the local executive introduced themselves. It was very welcoming, and while I wasn't ready to be involved right away it took a strike to get me going. I got involved any way I could, and I also did so with a colleague who started the same day at the Agency as I did. Neither of us have ever looked back.

I am a big believer in being involved in something if you have something to offer. Especially so if you wish to see change or expand on your ideas for representation, and doubly so if you just want to be available to help your colleagues. The union has many functions and a great deal of committee work. Some exclusive to the union and some joint with the employer. If you are a new member or someone who has been a member for years - this is your union, you run it, the degree to which is simply up to your desired involvement. Be part of it, be present, be vocal!

The union movement in general is nothing without its members. We are all in this together.

Adam Jackson
2nd National Vice President



I DRESSED FOR SUNNY DAYS... AND GOT RAINED ON

"I know that each and every time a government employee comes to work, they do so in service to Canada, with a shared mutual goal of improving our country and the lives of all Canadians... I believe that in order to have a public service that is valued by Canadians, and a source of pride for its members, it must be valued by its government."

Justin Trudeau, MP (September, 2015)



I remember vividly what life was like as a public servant in the fall of 2015. We had spent the last nine years under the Harper Regime, and by all accounts we were beaten and exhausted. The near constant fight to protect our rights against the malicious and targeted legislation brought down upon us by the Conservative government was taking its toll. At the same time, we were in the process of bargaining for a collective agreement that had expired nearly three years prior, with no real hope of completing negotiations any time soon. When Mr. Trudeau's open letter to Canada's public servants was released in late September, the Liberals and Conservatives were still too close in the polls for anyone to be able to say definitively how things were going to turn out. There was however, a sense of cautious optimism within our offices that change was around the corner... maybe. I remember reading the open letter and feeling for the first time in my career we had the opportunity

to deal with a government that not only understood the important and profound contributions that our Public Service makes to the country, but one that legitimately respected us for it. (Full disclosure; I voted for the Liberal Party in 2015, and have done so reliably at the federal level for almost my entire adult life, something for which I often catch flack from my fellow union members.) Perhaps it was youthful optimism, or even some naivete on my part, but I really did feel like things were about to change.

All this has made the latest proposals tabled by the government's negotiators during the last round of bargaining all the more difficult to digest. The proposed wage increase of 0.75% per year over the four-year contract will not even allow us to keep up with inflation, which has ranged from 1.60% in 2015 to 1.9% in 2018. I'm certainly no economist, but even I know that if things are costing me more every year, and the minimal increases to my salary aren't keeping up, eventually I am going to be in trouble. Add to this the fact that the government has proposed not allowing retroactive payments, as well as stipulating that the contract not come into effect until 365 days after both parties sign, and we have what amounts to a two-year wage freeze. This proposal is not only economically unviable, but runs counter to much of what we were told our relationship with this government would look like.

The fact is, when wage stagnation and a rising cost of living represent some of the biggest challenges faced by the middle class in our country, an offer like this simply does not cut it. After having spent years under the dark cloud of the Phoenix pay system and all of the hardship that has come from it, our members continue to show up to work everyday to provide the services to Canadians that help keep our country running... literally. Is it too much to ask then that we not see our ability to pay our bills and live our lives slowly eroded by a contract offer that will put us further

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and further behind each year? Or even, just maybe, to be offered a contract with economic adjustments that actually allow us to get ahead? After living (and continuing to live through) the Phoenix fiasco, as well as years of grinding contract negotiations and the threat of labour action looming over us, is it really too much to ask for a fair deal? Most Canadian MP's contribute greatly to the overall functioning of our country, and they are recognized and compensated for it. They also understand the economic concept of inflation and they see quite clearly the fact that the cost of living in Canada is continually rising. We can only assume that this understanding has led them to approve salary increases over the last number of years that have kept pace with, and surpassed the overall rate of inflation. In 2015 MP's salaries increased 2.3%, in 2016 they increased 1.8% and in 2017 they increased 1.4%. I am in no way suggesting that these increases are somehow ridiculous or unwarranted. I am however suggesting that if the people responsible for overseeing the departments and agencies of the government understand the necessity of reasonable economic increases that allow them to maintain their lives in the face of upward economic pressures, we as public servants deserve the same.

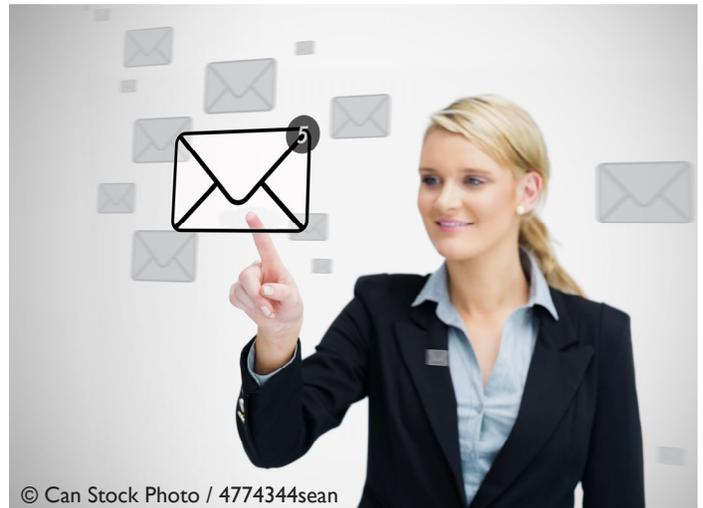
Nate Angus-Jackman
Communications Committee

TECH TALK!!

Recently, the Technological Change Committee received an update on an item called the **Digital Mailroom Project (DMP)**.

The project scope will include five standardized business capabilities:

1. **Receive** – Paper and electronic correspondence is received and opened, electronic mail is received and virus scanned;
2. **Digitize** – Paper and electronic documents are converted to digital images;
3. **Extract** – Data from the image is extracted through automation and/or manual keying and made available in a format ingestible by a CRA system;
4. **Store** – Images are stored so that authorized individuals from various program areas can access it, and dispose of it according to the appropriate disposition requirements; and
5. **Notify** - Existing internal systems are notified when data is available and an acknowledgement of receipt is sent to clients.



At the November 2018 working group meeting, the UTE was informed of the posting of an Invitation to Qualify (ITQ) on the Government Electronic Tendering Service procurement site. The ITQ has been posted and was expected to close in December 2018. The project team anticipates establishing a list of pre-qualified vendors that meet the high-level requirements of the project, and they will be engaged in the second step of the procurement process in early 2019, when the project requirements will be refined.

The Committee will receive a further update at the upcoming May 2019 meeting.

The DMP will be implemented in the following divisions: Charities program, Legislative and Policy committee, Regulatory Affairs, and the Service Complaints Problem Resolution Program.

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UTE has asked how many employees would be impacted by these changes. Management explained that at this time the impact to CRA's workforce profile was not known. It will take three to four years before the impacts to CRA employees currently involved in manual correspondence processing are fully identified. UTE asked why the project had to be outsourced and could not be kept in-house. Management advised that all internal, external and Matane, Québec options were considered and that the options analysis included an evaluation of costs, organizational risk and time to develop and implement the solution. The analysis revealed that it was favorable to the CRA to go outside.

The Technological Change committee will continue to receive updates on the progress of the Digital Mailroom Project and refer any loss of positions to the Workforce Adjustment Committee.

Going forward, always be aware of any new technological changes in your workplace and notify your local UTE representative.

Brian Oldford
Chair of the Technological Change Committee

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY – A HUMBLE VIEW FROM HERE

During the week of February 18th, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with a couple senior union officials of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. We had an open and frank discussion on a number of issues. At one point in the discussion, I was asked why Employment Equity (Equal Opportunities) was important to me. I was taken aback by the question at first – due to the fact so many strides forward have been made and so many battles have been won for our marginalized employees, yet more is left to be done.

The fact that I am sitting here entering into meaningful conversations about my career with Canada Revenue Agency – as a woman – in a position that many years ago was male dominated. I feel that I am an Equal – mainly due to my union never accepting less for me. And...

- if I chose to bring a child into my family – I am entitled to take time to nurture and bond with that child – provide it with medical care – and in theory (Phoenix) bring home a wage that doesn't risk my standard of living because I choose to expand my family.
- my employer allows me to self identify (especially invisible disabilities which can be hard to recognize), manage my disability, and be treated with respect.
- I can raise the Pride Flag at my desk, put a picture of my partner on my desk for all to see – to be able to celebrate and share what my family looks like with my co-workers.
- my choices of birth control are now determined by my family physician and I – Not based on the cheapest option on the market. (Thank you PSAC)
- my office is diverse and reflects the world I represent as a member of the Public Service; it allows me to grow and experience life as seen by different cultures and generations.
- my aboriginal members are able to educate me on their struggles and celebrations through educational events and lunch and learns.
- my union has continually fought for the rights of all members – to be able to work – and be paid an equal and fair wage – to have leave provisions to balance their life and work – to be respected regardless of the colour of their skin – the dynamic of their family unit – their disability – their history.

Last week I realized just how much my union has done for me – and continues to do –

Thank you, Union of Taxation Employees – A very humble thank you from here.

Mary (MEL) Lucier
President's representative
UTE Equal Opportunities Committee

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speak to an agent in person at one of its service counters. Why are all Canadians not entitled to access this type of service when dealing with the CRA? UTE believes that restoring counter service would enhance the current services available at the CRA and would ensure that all Canadians receive more comprehensive and efficient services.

To this end, UTE presented a business case to the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Chief Service Officer of the Canada Revenue Agency on March 15, and intends to meet with the Minister of National Revenue, the Honourable Diane Lebouthillier, on this subject.

This year will be an important year for us all as there will be a federal election which is scheduled for October. As federal public servants and Canadian taxpayers, the 2019 election is extremely important as we will be electing both our government and our employer.

Remember what happened during Prime Minister Harper's years in power. The federal public service suffered drastic cuts in services and a significant reduction in the number of jobs. During the period 2012-2015, the number of UTE members decreased from 27,000 to 22,000. However, since the election of the current government, our membership has steadily increased and now stands at 27,000 members again.

I must point out; the Conservative Party of Canada promises to create a single tax return in Quebec so that Quebecers no longer have to file two tax returns and be treated like all Canadians in other provinces... **with one difference**. Unlike the rest of the country where the single return is processed by the CRA, the Conservatives promise to give tax administration to the Quebec Government. If this happens, the jobs of **all CRA employees in Quebec**, including our 3500 members, are at risk. This situation is unprecedented for our union and that is why I think you should be aware of it.

All this to say that it is important for all our members and their families to vote in the upcoming federal election, while keeping in mind the issues that are important to you.

As you read this, you are most likely aware that the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board (FPSREB) has decided to put on hold our request to establish a Public Interest Commission (PIC) and has instead decided that the parties should return to the bargaining table with the assistance of a federal mediator. Our negotiator contacted the mediator without delay and the next negotiation meeting will be held from April 2nd to the 4th. Your bargaining team will continue to work tirelessly to improve your working conditions. For several weeks now, our Locals have been organizing a multitude of mobilization activities to enable our members to show their continued and unwavering support for their bargaining team. I invite you to participate in these demonstrations of solidarity in order to keep up the pressure on the employer.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of UTE who signed the petition concerning our negotiations, that have circulated across the country over the past two months. On March 15, I delivered this petition, which contained thousands of signatures, personally to the Commissioner of the CRA. I sincerely thank you for your continued support of YOUR union.

In solidarity,

Marc Brière
National President



UPDATE: ONTARIO PROVINCIAL SALES TAX ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PSTAR) CLASS ACTION

The UTE-PSAC has initiated legal recourse to seek redress on behalf of members who incurred losses due to a pension transfer from the Ontario Government to the CRA.

The parties are currently selecting a mediator in an attempt to settle the class action. Note, however, that there is no fixed timeline for this process. If mediation proves unsuccessful, the matter will move to litigation (a trial). Should that happen, the lawyers acting on behalf of the UTE-PSAC will be contacting the affected members.

We will endeavour to keep you apprised as the matter progresses.

*Mathieu Juneau
Labour Relations Officer*

UTE SCHOLARSHIPS

The Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) each year offers two (2) two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00) National Scholarships, one of which has been named the Diana Gee Scholarship and ten (10) one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) Regional Scholarships (Al Rollins Regional Scholarship, Quebec, Jean Bergeron Montreal Regional Scholarship, National Capital, Greater Toronto, Nick Stein Southwestern Ontario Regional Scholarship, Northern and Eastern Ontario, Prairie, Don Davoren Regional Rocky Mountains Scholarship and Pacific).

All scholarships are available for **members in good standing** of the UTE (or who at the time of their departure from CRA in the same calendar year were members in good standing of the UTE), including their spouse, their common-law spouse (including same sex partners) and/or their children or grandchildren.

Your application must be postmarked no later than **June 15.**

For full details, please follow this link:

<https://www.ute-sei.org/en/for-members/ute-scholarships>



CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that all address changes should be done via e-mail to Louise Dorion (dorionl@ute-sei.org) or via the national web site. If you do not have access to an e-mail, please pass it on (with your PSAC ID) to a local representative or mail it directly to the National Office at 233 Gilmour Street, Suite 800, Ottawa ON K2P 0P2.