



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Sisters and Brothers,

Summer is now coming to an end and I hope you have had the opportunity to take a vacation and have a good time with your family and friends during this beautiful time of year. I have done so over the past few weeks because the fall is once again looking very busy.

For more than a year now, we have been urging the employer to reopen the service counters at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Although these counters were closed in the fall of 2013, Canadian citizens continue to flock in large numbers to the doors of CRA offices day after day. In recent months, the CRA has undertaken a service transformation initiative and surveyed taxpayers in several of its offices for their comments. Public consultations were also held across the country. The Agency has had to face the fact that there are still many people who come to its offices and demand to meet with an agent in person to discuss their taxes. There is a real need to be met.

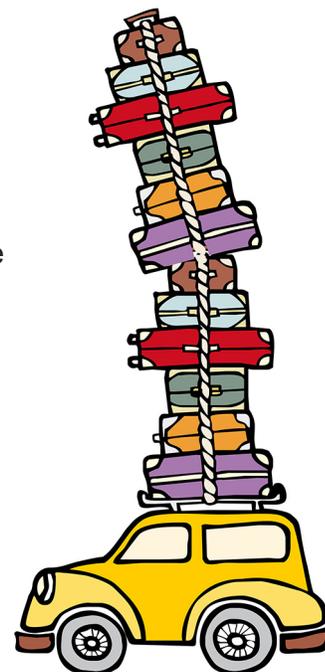
On May 27, I had a lengthy meeting with the Minister of National Revenue during which I presented her with our case study justifying the return of Counter Services to the CRA in order to complete the current offer of services to taxpayers. Following this meeting, which went very well, and the last meeting of the National Union-Management Consultation Committee held last June, I am optimistic that the Agency will once again, in the not so distant future, offer this personalized service on which so many Canadians depend on.

As you know, the Phoenix payroll system continues to give headaches to many federal public service employees, including members of the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE). According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, this intolerable situation should continue until at least the end of the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

After more than two years of negotiations to obtain fair and equitable compensation for all public servants paid by the Phoenix payroll system, who suffered and continue to suffer significant damage, the federal government has made an offer that the PSAC and its Components have rejected as insufficient.

Despite this, some unions and associations have decided to accept the government's offer. UTE regrets this decision. Indeed, this lack of solidarity works in favour for the government. What is

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**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ RECEVOIR CETTE PUBLICATION EN FRANÇAIS,
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even more deplorable is the fact that these unions insisted on including a “Me too” clause that guarantees that if another bargaining agent, such as the PSAC, gets additional compensation for its members, they will get the same compensation for their members without having had to fight for it.



We are obviously extremely disappointed and frustrated by this situation and, although the Phoenix payroll system was imposed on us by Stephen Harper's Conservative government, it is high time for Justin Trudeau's Liberal government to resolve this issue and show us they truly respect federal public service workers, as promised in the 2015 federal election campaign.

Rest assured that we continue to put pressure on and negotiate with the government to reach an agreement as soon as possible.

In the meantime, UTE continues to follow up with federal government officials on our proposal to launch a pilot project at the CRA to replace the Phoenix payroll system. On June 12, the government announced the names of the three selected service providers. These included SAP, the manufacturer of the CAS system used by the CRA. It is expected that the pilot projects will be announced and launched by the end of the year.

As far as contract negotiations are concerned, the situation is equally frustrating. Our current collective agreement expired October 31, 2016 and our current round of negotiations is stalled. I am extremely disappointed with the employer's attitude at the bargaining table. From the beginning, the CRA has not shown a true willingness to seriously approach and resolve our members' significant issues raised at the bargaining table. Negotiations have now reached an impasse and the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board (PSLREB) has advised us that the Public Interest Commission (PIC) hearing dates will be held on January 6 and 20, 2020. I fully agree with the members who are writing to us to complain that this waiting period is completely unacceptable, but there's nothing we can do about it.

I would like to point out that our union has made it clear to the employer on several occasions, that our bargaining team is ready to return to the table at any time and seriously negotiate, provided that the CRA itself is ready to finally address our members' important concerns. So far, despite all our efforts, the necessary conditions have not been met to allow us to return to the negotiating table. We are still waiting.

We realize that many of our members are frustrated by the situation. We are as well. We want to sign a new collective agreement as soon as possible, but this is not always possible. And especially not at any price! As they say, it takes two to tango.

There are important issues at the CRA that need to be resolved and things need to change.

During this election period, I invite all members of the Union of Taxation Employees to meet or at least contact their Member of Parliament. Let them know how frustrated you are by the lack of progress at the bargaining table and the slow pace of negotiations to obtain fair and equitable compensation for all damages suffered as a result of Phoenix.

We must also continue to apply pressure on the CRA.

Feel free to let the employer know that you are tired of waiting forever and ever to get a new fair and equitable collective agreement that includes the decent wage increases that you fully deserve. You nevertheless continue to work hard every day and deserve more respect.

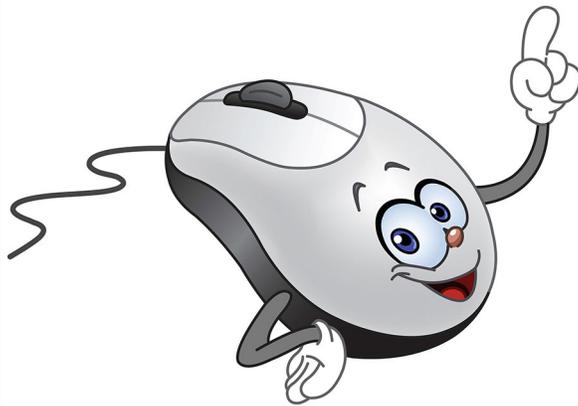
Let's keep fighting together.

In closing, a quick word on the next federal election that is now on our doorstep. All elections are important. But this year, they are particularly important for UTE members. In addition to electing the next government, which will also become our ultimate employer, we must be very concerned about the Conservative Party's proposal to Quebecers to implement a single tax return in Quebec administered by Revenu Québec. If the Conservatives win the election and move forward with this project, all UTE members in Quebec and many others across the country are at high risk of losing their jobs. As you know, the UTE launched a campaign in August to fight this proposal and to protect our members' jobs.

On October 21, I invite all UTE members and their families to vote and consider the above before making their choice.

In solidarity,

Marc Brière
National President



TECH TIDBITS

The Technological Change Committee meets regularly with the Canada Revenue Agency (at least semi-annually) to discuss issues related to the introduction of new technology. This includes the potential human impact; loss of jobs, fewer or possibly more career opportunities.

The committee also consults with the employer on issues surrounding systems in place that are not necessarily working as well as designed and are causing problems for employees in accomplishing their tasks.

The committee recently met with CRA management regarding the Collections Verification Workload

Management System (CVWMS) to discuss the many issues that have been raised across the country.

The committee was advised that if employees using this system follow the information and workarounds found in the CVWMS News Page, most problems can be alleviated.

Members working in non-filer are encouraged to subscribe to the CVWMS News Page in order to receive updates by clicking on the "Subscriptions" button at the top right of the page.

Lastly, if you continue to experience problems with this system or any CRA system it is suggested you contact a member of your local executive who can pass these concerns on to the Technological Change Committee.

Brian Oldford
Chairperson, Technological Change Committee

BARGAINING UPDATE

Since the last bargaining update on July 24, 2019, the Union has had many questions about parts of our bargaining process. To be clear, both sides are required to go through the Public Interest Commission (PIC) process. We cannot take a strike vote, nor take any strike actions until this step is complete. The timing of the hearing is also something outside of the union's control as the hearing dates are set by the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board. (PSLREB)

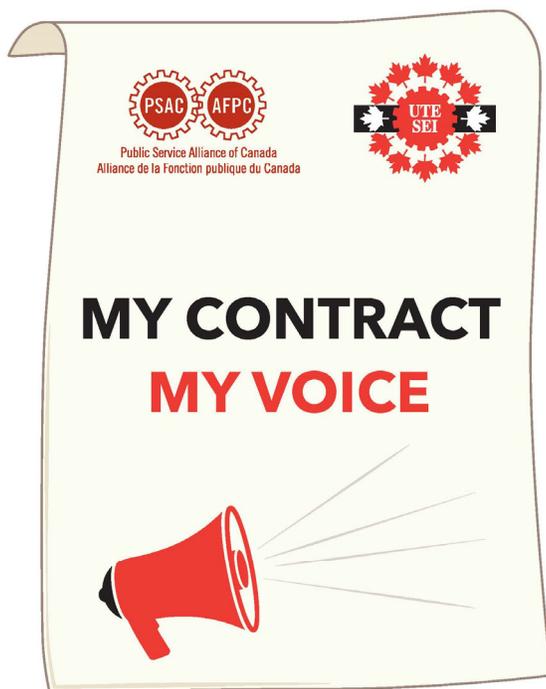
An impasse is declared when the two sides have made too little progress to proceed. When we felt we were at that point, we declared an impasse. The PSLREB determined that we may be able to move forward with the help of a mediator. We met for two sessions with the federally appointed mediator in an attempt to move forward. Unfortunately, the process did not yield any tangible results and an impasse was then re-declared and approved by the PSLREB.

We have also heard from our membership asking about why PIPSC was able to get a deal and UTE has not. To start, the AFS Group-PIPSC negotiations with CRA and our negotiations with the employer are distinct and different:

- The AFS Group-PIPSC doesn't have people working in poor conditions in call centres.
- It doesn't have members that are terms who have to wait years before getting declared a permanent employee.
- It doesn't have members doing shift work.

We do.

So far, the employer has **failed to table any wage offer** and has not answered favourably to any of our main demands which came directly from our members.



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We know, all too well, that our membership wants a new contract. We want the same thing, but not at any cost.

Make no mistake. We agree that wage increases are very important. But the working conditions and the well-being of our members are equally important. We have been absolutely clear that if the employer wants to negotiate a fair contract and is committed to addressing our concerns, we are always willing to return to the table at any time.

While waiting for the PIC to take place, many actions can still be taken. We encourage ALL members to meet with your member of parliament, especially given the impending election and their canvassing. Letter writing is also an option as the incumbents want to be re-elected and they need your votes to do so. Take advantage of that power. If you haven't done so already, please consider writing the Minister of National Revenue as well.

We can do this together.

Adam Jackson
2nd National Vice-President

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION ESSAY

As a member of the Honours and Awards Committee, when reviewing the scholarship application essays, I considered this to be a great story on the topic of: "What affected you most in the previous year" and thought it would make a good article to include in the Union News. The submission presents, in an exceptional manner, the writer connecting her mental health issues to the support and benefits provided to her and her mother through the efforts of the union, which allowed her to more easily cope with these struggles.

Gary Esslinger



Children grow up believing that the world is a colourful dream with endless possibilities. They do as they wish without fear and rely on others to protect them. As children mature, this magical journey is abruptly stopped by reality wake-up calls. As for me, my alarm went off when my close friend's brother suddenly passed away in his sleep. I've never had to deal with loss of this magnitude before this incident. This tragic event affected me in unimaginable ways. It introduced me to a side of myself I didn't know existed. I went through a prolonged period of grief. As a result, I suffered emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Receiving the news of his death felt as though I was sleeping for the past sixteen years and someone poured ice cold water on me to wake me up. The news shook me and changed me forever. It was a change I never knew possible and I was not prepared for. I kept asking myself, "How can someone so young and healthy just leave the world like that?" I kept telling myself, "If anyone can die at any time, what makes me think that I am going to live the next moment?" These thoughts manifested into the fear of death. This phobia slowly translated into anxiety and panic attacks resulting in debilitating physical symptoms that were mentally rooted. I would complain to my parents about chest pain and abdominal swelling. I began to obsess over the fact that I could have a detrimental illness consuming my body. I would text my mother to come and pick me up from school because I felt too sick. My mother had to take many 'family-related leaves' so she can take me to doctors' appointments and medical tests. She had to change her work schedule many times so she can accommodate my needs. I was no longer the person I once was. I became a person terrified to enjoy life, scared to be happy, and afraid not only of dying but also of living.

It was a struggle to gain control of my life again. My mother booked me for therapist sessions through her Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The recovery took a lot more effort than I had anticipated. Although this rehabilitation journey was not easy, it allowed me to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually stronger. I evolved as an individual and realized that the person I was prior to this incident was not the best version of me. I took this experience to my advantage and reinvented myself. I became a person with purpose. I joined the gym, started volunteering at the senior's home, began a part-time job, obtained my driver's licence, and will be graduating twelfth grade this month.

I am beyond thankful for this eye-opening experience and grateful to the Union of Taxation Employees for fighting for its employees' rights. The recovery journey would have been more difficult if it wasn't for the presence of my mother by my side. My mother would have struggled even more to support me financially and emotionally if it wasn't for the flexibility of her workplace. She explained to me that the union has fought and continues to fight for the employees' work-life balance on many fronts. She had used the services of the EAP herself by attending workshops at her workplace to learn to deal with stress. I value the role of the union in the betterment of the employees' workplace

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and have a true appreciation of their work. I believe that the union is a crucial element in our society. My experience is a prime example of how the union's work helps its employees focus on the basic building blocks of our community, the family.

My struggles have encouraged me to pursue a career in nursing where I plan to help patients with mental illnesses. I also plan to become an active member of the British Columbia Nurses' Union because I believe in its mission to improve the health and economic welfare of its members. I might not be a child anymore, but I will always surround myself with people who will empower me such as family, friends, or the union.

ELECTIONS

It's summertime in Canada. Sweltering hot days filled with outdoor fairs, exhibitions and warm nights spent around the campfire. The smell of grilled meat on the barbeque mixes with the clink of cold drinks coming out of the cooler. This is the best time of year in the best country on earth. As the lazy summer days start to slowly become shorter, and the evening breeze starts to take on a cooler tone, our thoughts turn towards the coming autumn and the changes that it will bring. This autumn brings with it the federal election, and the opportunity for us to exercise our free and democratic right to choose who will lead us over the coming four years. As federal public servants we are particularly impacted by the upcoming election, and the changes that it may, or may not bring. We have decided to highlight some of the policies, positions and past actions taken by the various political parties in our country, in the hope that we will all be in a better position to make an informed decision this October.

Conservative Party of Canada

Many believe, with good reason, that the actions and policies of a federal conservative government would in many ways mirror those of the provincial conservatives in Ontario. If this is the case, here are a few things that we as workers should all be aware of.

In late 2018, the provincial Conservatives passed sweeping legislation aimed at rolling back many of the changes made by the previous Liberal government. These changes included a freeze on minimum wage in the province, as well as a cut to the number of paid personal leave days for workers. The latter presenting yet another opportunity for workers in the province to choose between their mental and physical well-being and their ability to pay their bills. "It's going to be good for employers..." mused Conservative House Leader Todd Smith at the time. While the changes were welcomed by many in the business community, the fact is, they clearly will have negative impacts on the lives of workers. At the federal level, the previous Harper government mounted one of the most sustained and vicious attacks on organized labour in the history of our country. Legislation including bills C-60, C-4, C-525 and C-377 targeted everything from workers' rights in regards to taking job action all the way up to a union's ability to certify. Nothing, absolutely nothing, should lead anyone to believe that a new conservative government led by Andrew Scheer would do anything differently.

Liberal Party of Canada

The Liberal Party swept to power amid great fanfare in the fall of 2015, promising a new way of doing business and sunny days ahead. While the reality has been more a mix of sun and cloud (at times more cloudy than anything else), as far as organized labour in this country is concerned there

have been some positive developments.

The adoption of Bill C-4 in 2017 marked the repeal of much of the previous Harper government's anti-union legislation, including Bills C-377 and C-525. While the much anticipated "reset" in the relations between Canada's labour organizations and our federal government has been less than comprehensive, the tone of our interactions and the fundamentals of the relationship are markedly different than those during the Harper years. That being said, the current impasse in negotiations and the government's inability to properly manage the Phoenix fiasco brought on by the previous government, are clear reminders that this government still has a long way to go if it plans on living up to its promise that "Organized labour has a strong partner in the Government of Canada".

New Democratic Party of Canada

The traditional and natural ally of organized labour in this country, the New Democratic Party of Canada has, for its entire history advocated and fought for the rights of workers in this country. As the only party who has, as of today released their election platform, we are able to gain some insight into the commitments being made:

New Democrats believe that the federal government has an important role to play in making work better, fairer, and more secure for everyone. We believe that membership in a union is the best ticket into the middle class – and it leaves workers and our entire economy better off.

New Democrats will make sure that workers and employers can take action together to improve health and safety, eliminating unsafe working conditions and ensuring that whistleblowers are protected. We believe that it's time to update the Canada Labor Code to enhance safeguards for workers and ban the use of replacement workers in labour disputes – for good.

Green Party of Canada

At the federal level, the Green Party has committed to increasing paid vacation entitlement, as well as supporting provincial policies mandating shorter working hours. Furthermore, as stated on the Green Party of Canada website:

"The Green Party understands that decades of evidence proves that a society with a strong labour movement is healthier, has less income disparity, and a stronger middle class. Greens believe in the rights of workers to organize and in the free collective bargaining process. Labour rights are human rights. We believe in pay equity for women, in the equal treatment of organized and non-organized workers, and in workers' right to fair wages, healthy and safe working conditions, and working hours compatible with a good quality of life."

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People's Party of Canada

Is this even a real political party?

As we head towards the upcoming federal election, we have an opportunity to shape the direction in which our government takes our country. From our international priorities and domestic policies, all the way to the laws that govern the workplaces in which we earn our living. We find ourselves in a unique position. We are tasked with electing not only our government but also our employer and our votes will fundamentally shape the relationship we have with the Canada Revenue Agency. As we consider the various factors that will ultimately decide which party's policies and philosophy we support, it is of incredible importance that we keep in mind the profound impacts that our decision will have on our workplaces, and ultimately our lives.

Joseph de Maistre once wrote that "Every country has the government it deserves". This October it is time for us to decide as Canadians what type of government that is.

Nate Angus-Jackman
Communications Committee

LOOKING FOR IDEAS FOR OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

The Communications Committee hopes that you enjoy receiving and reading the Union News. The Committee tries to provide articles that are both informative and useful to the readers. Sometimes, however, we need to step back and reflect on what issues or topics are of interest to you, the members.

We encourage members to consider contacting the Communications Committee with ideas for articles they would like to see included in future editions. These will be reviewed and considered for publication in upcoming newsletters.

Members can send questions to the committee that may be considered for an article, however, if the responses would be too brief to constitute an article, they could be included in a Q's & A's section where we could present questions along with answers or commentary on other matters.

The committee does from time to time receive feedback in respect to the newsletter or an article. These are both positive (usually the case) or may offer constructive criticism. This information is very helpful to the committee in the development of future newsletters. It is satisfying for the committee to know that members are indeed taking the time to read the publication.

Please send your comments, topics or questions to: communications@ute-sei.org



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.



STAFFING PROGRAM REDESIGN

As you may be aware, the Canada Revenue Agency, in the spring of 2018, announced its intention to commence a review of its Staffing Program and to undertake a Staffing Program Redesign aimed at making improvements and efficiencies to the Program. A project team was established to review all aspects of the Staffing Program and to make recommendations where deficiencies were noted and where improvements could be made. The project team included representatives from the many Branches of the CRA, from the Regions, and specialists from the Human Resources Branch. Both the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) and the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) were also invited to have two representatives from each Union participate.

The project team was tasked with soliciting feedback from all of the various stakeholders including employees, Team Leaders, Managers and Union representatives in order to identify the irritants and issues in the current Staffing Program and to attempt to identify concrete and specific ideas for improving the Program. The project team was, however, a consultative group and final decisions rested with senior management of the Agency.



The project team met frequently and diligently for more than a year and jointly identified, debated thoroughly and submitted recommendations for changes and improvements. Throughout all of these deliberations, UTE remained committed in its attempt to advance recommendations that were in the best interests of our members. This was no easy feat as there were often conflicting and competing interests amongst the members of the project team and the constituents that we represented. In an attempt to achieve and realize real improvements to the Staffing Program, the Union representatives often had to revisit our previous opposition to various staffing practices in order to achieve a balance and fairness

for employees and managers alike.

While we took an entirely cooperative approach to this initiative, UTE remained steadfast on a number of key elements. These included, amongst other things, a more effective and efficient system for recourse, enhanced transparency in all staffing decisions, greater management accountability, greater security for term employees in terms of a three-year conversion to

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indeterminate status and seasonal indeterminate employment where practical. Again, even in the face of conflicting interests amongst the project team and our constituents, we were successful in persuading the team to achieve consensus with respect to our recommendations concerning these issues.

Throughout the year that we spent dealing with this initiative, the members of the project team were supposed to consult with their principals and to solicit feedback on the matters being discussed by the team. At no time did any member of the team report that their principals objected to any of the recommendations advanced by the group. The team's recommendations were presented to senior management of the CRA and most recommendations were endorsed, **save and except those recommendations that the Unions stressed were important to our members**. In fact, the recommendation to pilot a revised recourse model involving the Unions was outright rejected. The recommendations concerning term conversion and seasonal employment were also rejected with an explanation that the CRA would need to study these issues further. It is interesting to note, however, that UTE and the employer have been discussing these matters for more than fifteen years with no resolution to date. Moreover, these same issues were identified in the Joint Term Study undertaken by the employer and UTE in 2005 with no concrete actions taken.

While we concede that the recommendations endorsed by senior management will result in some improvements in the Staffing Program for our members, it is obvious that the vast majority of the recommendations serve to allow managers greater flexibility in matters of staffing with reduced accountability. Recommendations surrounding lateral moves and acting appointments less than six months no longer being eligible for recourse and a greater ability for managers to use Non-Advertised Staffing (i.e. appointments without competition) will, in our opinion, lead to bias and favouritism, a lack of transparency and a greater incidence of abuses of authority.

As a result of senior management failing to seriously consider the Unions' concerns and suggestions, both Unions decided to no longer participate in the project team and UTE notified the employer that we wished to return to our normal form of consultation concerning changes to the Staffing Program. Additionally, we requested a meeting with the Commissioner to directly raise our concerns with him. The Commissioner agreed to meet with the National President and me on May 13, 2019, and we had an open and frank discussion of the issues. The Commissioner agreed to look into the matter and respond in due course. As a result of this commitment, UTE decided to await the Commissioner's response before communicating our position to the membership.

A response on the Commissioner's behalf was recently received by us. Again, in the response, we were advised that the Agency would not support the recourse model suggested by the Unions. A commitment was made, however, to "researching potential changes to the process of administrative conversion for term employees, and the options for reintroducing seasonal employment at the CRA". The Commissioner asked that we reconsider and continue working with the project team. We subsequently re-examined our position in this matter. While we are not interested in participating without a meaningful and genuine consultation process, we feel that there may be some value in resuming our participation to ensure that the rights and interests of our members are advanced and protected. While we have for now decided to return to the team, we will remain vigilant and take the necessary actions should the circumstances warrant it.

Shane O'Brien
Senior Labour Relations Officer