



## MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE IN CALL CENTRES

Call Centres have been described as, “the fastest growing industry since the gold rush”. The gold rush; however, didn't have the technological support from a billion dollar a year industry that call centres now generate. Just try googling "call centres monitoring" and don't be surprised by the almost 8 1/2 million results you receive. A great many of these sites extol the virtues and the absolute necessity of monitoring to provide quality customer service... then they attempt to sell you a product. Call me a cynic, but I think it's a little naive to believe a sales pitch is always credible, and I fear the call centre industry as a whole, has not been quite as sensible. In reality, there is little empirical data that links call monitoring practices to client satisfaction, with the majority of the industry realizing average or below average customer satisfaction.

Many studies now show that oppressive levels of monitoring lead to high levels of anxiety and stress, resulting in low levels of job satisfaction and morale.

The same holds true when monitoring is used to punish instead of developing employees. Used in this manner, monitoring can have serious negative impacts on employees' well-being.



Zealous managers continually questioning minor variations in employees' adherence to schedule does not contribute to a respectful work environment. Professionalism is not fostered when managers question or discuss employees' washroom visits. Requiring employees to submit detailed reports analyzing and accounting for every minute of their non-phone related activities, in addition to their regular time reports, does anything but demonstrate trust and integrity. If you expect employee cooperation, you must also be cooperative. The Agency's values will only be embraced when employees experience them from a top-down approach.

That being said, monitoring does play an essential role in the management of call centres. Employee expectations should be made clear from the onset. The measurement of adherence to these expectations should be done humanely and collaboratively, using team leaders' observances supplemented by reports the technology produces. Managers should encourage employees' engagement in developing communication strategies about their results and view these communications as an opportunity to improve employees' performance and job satisfaction.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**SI VOUS PRÉFÉREZ AVOIR CE COMMUNIQUÉ EN FRANÇAIS, VEUILLEZ VOUS  
ADRESSER À VOTRE PRÉSIDENT- E DE SECTION LOCALE**

## HONOURS AND AWARDS DEADLINE REMINDERS

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AWARENESS  
UTE HUMANITARIAN AWARD

SEPTEMBER 15, 2009  
DECEMBER 07, 2009

**CHECK THE UTE WEB SITE FOR DETAILS  
WWW.UTE-SEI.ORG**

### OLYMPICS - UTE STYLE

Founded on the concept of fun, and designed to foster both regional and interregional solidarity, the Executive Committee of UTE planned and organized UTE's second Olympic Games.

Six events over two evenings took place. The events included Texas Hold 'Em Poker, a Cribbage Tournament, an Egg Relay Race, an Essay Contest and the Regional Vice Presidents' Game of Pass the Ace and a Sequence tournament.

All 10 Regions fielded teams comprised of attendees to the Presidents' Conference from their respective Locals. It was great fun for all who participated, and for those who observed. And yes, it did become competitive.



Congratulations to The South Western Ontario and Pacific Region who shared top spot with the Nation Capital Region coming in third. A great time was had by all.

The participants want another Olympics sooner than later, so that they can knock off the current champions.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Agents may be required to explain lapses in adherence and making quick notes on their electronic calendars is a good and expeditious way to accomplish this, as opposed to submitting regular detailed reports. It's far less intrusive and time consuming and less likely to foster a "big brother is watching" work environment. If managers address and manage successfully the human side of call centre work, by using technology responsibly to develop employees, they are more likely to reap positive results. Use your power for good. Remember that just because you possess the ability to monitor almost all an employee's actions, does not mean that you should.

Debbie Ferguson, Local 60005

### UTE UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 15-20th,  
2009**

Executive Council  
(Ottawa)

**September 17-19th,  
2009**

Presidents  
Conference  
(Ottawa)

**September 25-27th,  
2009**

National Grievance  
Course  
(Ottawa)

**September 25-27th,  
2009**

Reg EO Conference  
(Niagara Falls)

**October 23-25th,  
2009**

Regional EO  
Conference  
(Quebec City)

**December 7-10th,  
2009**

Executive Council  
(Ottawa)

**December 10th ,  
2009**

NUMC  
(Ottawa)

## BARGAINING

Time marches on and bargaining time is approaching in leaps and bounds; at least the preparations are “leaping and bounding”.

Since the last issue of *Union News* in April 2009, the PSAC filed its objection to the impacts of Bill C-10 with the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario. The UTE's 05/09 Bulletin was published and posted on our UTE website. The bulletin allows you to see the various steps of the bargaining process as well as the proposed schedule.

We have amended the official UTE demand form to enable you to fill out a bargaining demand in a simplified way. You are no longer required to refer to a clause in the Collective Agreement and you can express your demand in your own words, by explaining the essence of the demand or problem.

The Executive Council of your local has also been called upon to prepare demands as part of the review of the directives of the PSAC Dental Plan (see Bulletin 07/09 on our website).

At our Union Management Meeting on June 18, 2009, we reminded the CRA that, once back from vacation, we have to coordinate our agendas to schedule the preparatory meetings for our next bargaining process. Of course, we focused on the need for the person in charge of the employer's bargaining team to have a mandate enabling him/her to make decisions. That mandate is important, as we will start the bargaining with a previously negotiated salary reduction (Bill C 10) as well as a salary freeze for the first year of our next collective agreement. As you can see, bargaining preparation is underway

The members of your standing bargaining committee are developing “ FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ” about bargaining.

To pique your interest and invite you to regularly check our website and union newsletter, here are the first suggested questions:

1. What is the UTE's position on increments?
2. Why not try to pay out sick leave at retirement?
3. Where are eligible health and dental care expenses negotiated?

In closing, I hope you enjoyed a relaxing summer and are now looking forward to the beautiful colour changes of our fast approaching autumn.

Denis Lalancette  
2<sup>nd</sup> National Vice-President

## *the president's corner*

### MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Three thousand eight hundred and ninety-one members completed and returned the UTE membership questionnaire sent to them this spring. The responses have been tabulated and analyzed by the marketing company Environics.

A thorough review of the results will be completed at the September Presidents' Conference. It is anticipated that Action plans will be developed shortly for the local, regional, and national levels.

The following is only a short list of points of interest and possible items for UTE's action.

The five most important issues identified by the respondents:

- (1) Collective Bargaining
- (2) Employment Security
- (3) Defending Collective Agreement
- (4) Staffing / Recourse
- (5) Workplace Safety & Health

This is the second time your union has solicited your direct input to facilitate a review of the operations of the component. The first time was 2003, and while we are very pleased that we have improved in almost every aspect of representation and communications, we as union representatives intend on continuing to seek and implement ideas and concepts to further improve on these results.

UTE would like to thank all of the members that participated.

Betty Bannon

## WHY SHOULD I GO TO MY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING?

I have no problems at work. Everything is fine in my world. I make decent money. I get a raise each year. I pay union dues each month but I'm not sure how they are used. Why should I go to the union Annual General Meeting (AGM)? Does this sound familiar? We, as union executive members, hear this from many members on a regular basis. Members should realize that they are a part of their union and the local is the first point of contact.

Hopefully, you know who your local executive members are and how to get in contact with them. If not, check your local union boards and most locals have information on the office website where the executive names, positions and contact information is posted. This is a start. Your local executive consists of volunteers elected at the AGM for a specific term, usually two or three years. They are responsible for handling the affairs of the local between each AGM, which includes a portion of your monthly union dues.

It is at the AGM where the local executive reports on the activities of the previous year and lays out the plans for the next. Members can see who is in control of the local; what they have achieved; and how they plan to continue doing the good work they said they did last year. The executive will also report on all the significant aspects of their activity as a local. This *should* include the President's and Vice-President's reports, the Chief Steward's report, various committee reports and most importantly, the financial statements. It is the income and expense statements and budget that suggest whether the local is functioning properly. Are the figures from last year realistic? Have they spent more than their budgeted amounts? Is a dues increase being proposed and have they justified the need for it? Only when these questions are answered can you feel confident that your local is functioning properly.

Whether it is the AGM of your UTE Local or even the AGM of the Hydro Quebec shareholders, *annual general meetings* are important events in the life of every organization. Each member (or shareholder) should attend. Think about the recent downturn in the economy for a minute. How many shareholders of large corporations are asking themselves why they did not take advantage of an AGM to pose questions to their leaders? And now these shareholders are discovering that the corporation who previously told them "everything is OK" is announcing that there will be cuts and rollbacks. What if they announce that the pension you were expecting in a year from now will be only worth 30%? The way to make changes or ensure that your local affairs are being dealt with effectively and in the best interests of the members is to attend the AGM and make your opinion heard and count.

Most AGMs have free food and prizes but more importantly they give you an opportunity to be heard and to provide input into the direction of your local.

So, this year plan to attend your AGM and become informed about your local. If they are holding elections think about running for a position. But above all else, ask questions and satisfy yourself that your local is being run by the right people in the best interests of all members.

Hugh McGoldrick, Local 7000

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Please note that all address changes should be done via e-mail to Sylvie Bastien ([basties@ute-sei.org](mailto:basties@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.**





## **International Children's Awareness (ICA) Canada and the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC)**

Your Union, the Union of Taxation Employees would like to remind you of our "Charity of Choice" and **ask you to consider making a direct donation or payroll donation to the "International Children's Awareness" organization through the GCWCC.**

### **WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AWARENESS (ICA) CANADA?**

*International Children's Awareness (ICA) Canada is a small, non-profit organization committed to long-term development throughout countries in need. At any given time, ICA has a handful of projects being completed and is working to obtain funding to begin other projects.*

*ICA projects help small community groups and families in developing nations. ICA works carefully to screen and select projects. Currently all projects are being completed in Cameroon, Ghana and Romania.*

*The scope of ICA is intentionally "small". We believe this makes us unique:*

- *ICA focuses on relatively inexpensive projects that are usually overlooked by larger, better known non-profit agencies;*
- *Our projects range in cost from a couple hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars; regardless whether you're an individual, a small group, or a large organization, there will be a sponsorship choice that is right for you. Furthermore, ICA believes that it's important for kids to get involved with humanitarian projects. Having choices available that are inexpensive provides kids an opportunity to sponsor a project through to fruition and get a sense of accomplishment;*
- *By focusing on a few projects at a time, ICA can commit to ensuring proper quality control, ensuring that your money is spent effectively;*
- *Project sponsors have access to complete information and updates about their project.*

*ICA is a registered Canadian non-profit organization (**Registration # 88785-8660-RR-001**).*

*We follow all federal guidelines and contributions are fully tax deductible.*

### **ICA is staffed entirely by volunteers.**

The UTE has funded this organization through donations for the last five years by individual members, resolutions passed by the Presidents Conference and Executive Council, as well as, donations voted on by our members at their Annual General meetings.

**We would now like to ask our 26,000 members to also get involved with this worthy organization by diverting their very generous donations through the workplace campaign to ICA Canada.**

**At this time, I ask that you consider donating to this very worthy organization through the current and future GCWC campaigns.**

Betty Bannon  
UTE National President



**ICA Canada**  
International Children's Awareness

142 Willingdon Drive  
North Bay, ON  
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[www.icacanada.org](http://www.icacanada.org)

15 July, 2009

Union of Taxation Employees  
233 Gilmour St, Suite 800  
Ottawa, ON K2P 0P2

Hi Betty,



On behalf of ICA I wanted to thank you for the recent donations of \$1,436.50 and \$1,340.91.

The continued support of UTE and the individual support we receive from so many of your members has proved to be invaluable to our work in Africa and Romania.

Betty you guys have become true partners and I wish there was a way we could inform all of your members on the work their support has enabled. If you can think of something please let me know and I'll make it happen.

At your service,  
Ed Smith





# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## OFFICE LIGHTING, TRIGGERS MIGRAINE

Traditional office lighting presents potential headache and migraine triggers namely:

- Overhead lighting glare
- Fluorescent lighting flicker

Fluorescent lighting has a flicker, that's actually a migraine trigger. People who are sensitive to that flicker will have a problem with it. The best solution is to remove it from your immediate work area.

From the eye strain angle, Ophthalmologist Scott Strickler M.D., explained that fluorescent lighting has the ability to cover a large area in light, but provides very poor task lighting. He suggested that workers in offices with fluorescent lighting also need desktop lighting for working papers, books etc. As for problematic fluorescent lighting, it's as simple as turning off the tubes.

Wearing a sunshade hat reduces direct eye glare. According to the paramedic I spoke to, it is a very common workplace incidence that a call to 911 is a result of a migraine triggered by workplace fluorescent lights.

That explains the lighting trend in banking institutions where there is enough light but it does not shine directly on your eyes.

Some employees may find their work capacity greatly reduced by migraine through reduced concentration, fine motor skills and judgment. Migraine in fact may also affect an employee's ability to work safely.



People who suffer from migraine are usually advised by their doctors to avoid or minimize the trigger. Some migraine triggers in the workplace includes certain foods, fluorescent glare and flicker, noise, overexertion and stress.

Make and review your Headache & Migraine Diary. If you are experiencing more headaches and migraines at work, check if the lighting is the trigger. Remember, trigger identification and management is part of good care.

It is important that employers be aware that the condition is real, not emotional or imaginary, and may impair an employee's ability to work during an attack. Sufferers should be treated with fairness and empathy.

## **WORKPLACE BULLYING (HARASSMENT)** (1)

### **What is Workplace Bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as acts or verbal comments that can mentally hurt or isolate an employee in the workplace. Bullying involves repeated incidents or behaviours that are intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a person.

### **What are some examples of Bullying?**

- \* spreading malicious rumours, gossip and innuendo that is false
- \* excluding or isolating someone in a work group
- \* intimidating a person
- \* physically abusing or threatening abuse
- \* removing areas of responsibility without cause
- \* constantly changing work guidelines
- \* establishing impossible deadlines that an individual can never meet
- \* withholding necessary information or giving wrong information on purpose
- \* making jokes that are obviously offensive to individual
- \* intruding on the privacy of a person by pestering, spying or stalking
- \* assigning unreasonable duties or workload
- \* yelling or using profanity towards person
- \* belittling a person's opinions
- \* blocking applications for training, leave and promotion
- \* unwarranted or underserved punishment

### **What you can do if you are being bullied?**

- **Firmly** tell the person that his/her behaviour is not acceptable and ask them to stop immediately. You can ask your supervisor or union rep to be with you when you talk to the person.
- Always document everything. Keep a journal or diary of events that have occurred that record:
  - \* Date, time and what happened in as much detail as possible.
  - \* Names of any witnesses
  - \* Outcome of the event / resulting action taken on your part
- Keep copies of any letters, memos, emails, faxes etc received from the offending person
- Report the harassment to your union representative and delegated manager. Remember if no one knows, no one can help.

Dave Pinard ,Local 70004





# MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

## END STATE

On February 24, 2009, the Commissioner announced the transition to the end state of the pre-qualification process (PQP). All (or nearly all) CRA regions then put information about this on their websites. If the information chain worked well, your supervisor must have spoken to you about it.

But what does this actually mean? For me, it means three things:

- The staffing system is not effective. Also, the auditor general criticized them about it.
- To address the criticisms, they are hurrying to place the responsibility on members' backs.
- It is best to get prepared, before April 2010, if you want to apply for a staffing process.

In recent months, we have had Observe and Attest, which allowed the manager to confirm the threshold level of some of your competencies. Then we had the BBQ that can help achieve level 2, if you obtained a 1\* and are doing a competency overview.

In all these measures, it is the member who does the work, no longer the employer. The member must prove that he/she has the required competencies.

Despite this, there wasn't the need for haste, because if we intended to apply for a process, we could wait to find out what competency was required, and proceed with assessing it at that time.

**With the announcement, the rules have just changed. As of April 2010, you will have to have the basic competency profile required for the desired position before applying for the process. This requires you, right now, to look at your current competency levels that are attested and compare them with the threshold competencies of the desired position.**

Below are the base competency profiles for:

### Non-MG Position

- 1-Client Service Orientation
- 2-Effective Interactive Communication
- 3-Teamwork and Communication
- 4-Analytical Thinking
- 5-Writing Skills

### MG Position

- 1- Client Service Orientation
- 2- Effective Interactive Communication
- 3-Developing Others
- 4-Conflict Resolution
- 5-Team Leadership
- 6-and one of the following three
  - a-Analytical Thinking
  - b-Perspective and Strategic Alignment
  - c-Decision-Making

Therefore, if you intend to advance in the organization, make the effort to look at your competencies and those of the desired positions and do what is required so that the basic competences are attested.

So take your pencil and ask to take the tests now, before you find yourself at an impasse and cannot apply for the desired position.

Daniel Gagnon President, Local 10004

## PSAC TO CHALLENGE HARPER GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON WORKERS' AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Public Service Alliance of Canada announced that it has filed a case with the Ontario Superior Court, challenging the constitutionality of the *Expenditure Restraint Act* and the *Equitable Compensation Act* for breaking collective agreements and denying women the right to pay equity in the federal public sector.

The 166,000-member union maintains that the Harper government attempted to hide its disrespect for workers' and women's rights by burying the two contentious laws deep in the *Budget Implementation Act*.

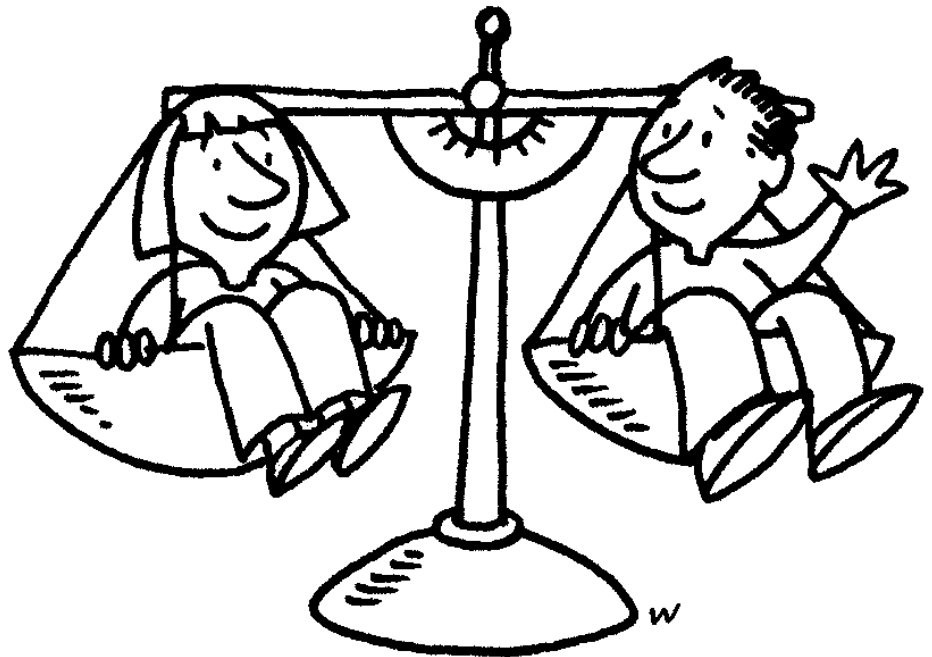
According to PSAC, the *Expenditure Restraint Act* violates the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* by denying workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Act legislates rates of pay for employees of Treasury Board, federal agencies, and employers in the federally-regulated private sector. In several cases, the legislation overrides previously negotiated wages – breaking open collective agreements that were bargained in good faith.

The union also maintains that the changes to the pay equity system for federal public sector workers contained in the *Equitable Compensation Act* deny women's equality rights under section 15 of the *Charter*.

According to PSAC, the Act removes pay equity's status as a human right by turning it into a bargaining chip in negotiations where the federal government traditionally holds the balance of power. It also prevents women in the federal public sector from addressing pay equity cases at the Canadian Human Rights

Commission, threatening to fine unions \$50,000 for representing or even assisting their members in making complaints.

These measures legislatively curtail the union's ability to voice its support for and provide assistance to its members – violating the *Charter's* guarantee of freedom of expression and association.





## **EVEN DURING DOWNTURNS THERE IS POWER IN A UNION**

As the economic crisis continues relentlessly, the spotlight on unions has focused mainly on what unionized workers are prepared to give up if it means either saving their own job or someone else's.

The union advantage has always been in the area of wages, benefits and having the collective leverage to gain more rights, respect and dignity in the workplace. With that kind of advantage balanced against management's rights and pressure to cut costs, unions like the United Steelworkers (USW) have championed issues such as adequate pensions, anti-harassment, health and safety, training and much more, advances that rarely make it into media reports riveted on the crisis of the moment.

A union can transform a low-wage job into a good job. Unionized workers' wages in 2007 averaged \$23.58 an hour compared with \$18.98 for non-unionized workers. A full 80 per cent of unionized workers have negotiated pensions compared with 27 per cent of non-unionized workers, who do not have any ability to negotiate pensions or benefits.

Generally, unionized workers have better job security, and they are part of an entire structure focused on standing up for working people and defending them against arbitrary treatment, including various forms of discrimination and favouritism. The union can create a more level field and a work environment that equitably manages stress and workload. That kind of environment also creates conditions that build strong, fully integrated communities.

All of that union advantage is challenged by an economic situation in which jobs are disappearing at an alarming rate. The USW and other unions are campaigning for more government action to stimulate job retention and creation, as well as more protection and support for unemployed workers – whether they have a union or not.

Despite the downturn, belonging to a union – and everyone has that right in law – is still better than being without one. There is a benefit not only to union members themselves but to the economy as a whole. Good, unionized jobs keep the wheels of an advanced, democratic society turning. Unionized jobs not only mean the ability to purchase goods and services, they also put money and participation back into the community through a variety of sponsorships and involvements. In many communities, the union hall itself is the scene of community meetings, weddings, banquets, dances, sporting events and more.

The bottom line is that without good (unionized) jobs, the middle class begins to disappear, and along with it our ability to support continued economic and social development. It is a race to the bottom – a race that Canadians must not agree to enter.

An economy based on good jobs and sustainable growth is exactly what was missing in the Great Depression prior to industrial unionism and the struggle for economic justice. There were no pensions, no Employment Insurance, no publicly funded, universal, accessible health care.

It may be argued that the current economic crisis is not as debilitating as the one in the 1930s, but that is only because of the social safety net that unions have fought to maintain in the face of the conservative politics that would privatize health care, cut back welfare, short-change EI even further and hobble our ability to recover from recession without being ruined.

In recent years, the United Steelworkers in particular has been very involved in corporate restructuring, found purchasers for companies on the brink of extinction and negotiated closure agreements that include such provisions as enhanced severance pay, preferential hiring rights, notice of closure etc. We have also negotiated language aimed at restoring or preserving the union's bargaining rights in anticipation of the business resuming.

When concessions from workers are demanded by employers, the union is in the position to get the employer to justify its actions by opening its books. From there, the union has the expertise and the power to negotiate on behalf of its members for the best outcome possible. Workers without a union are at a far greater disadvantage.

Also, it must never be forgotten that the minimum protections under the law that non-union workers can access – if they know their rights – are the result of the work of unions to raise those standards for all workers. In Ontario, the health and safety laws that apply to every workplace are the direct result of battles taken up by the USW in the 1970s. Subsequent improvements to those laws and to workers' compensation are also the result of collective action by unions.

The United Steelworkers injured workers' program has recovered literally millions of dollars for Steelworkers, former Steelworkers and their survivors who have not been dealt with fairly by the compensation system. Again, workers without a strong union to go to bat for them are unlikely to see justice done – unless they pay privately for it. The process of demanding that kind of justice beyond the workplace is ongoing.

It is important for Canadians to understand how unions function in a democratic society, especially now as we struggle with this troubled economy.

**Yes, there is power in a union.**

Ken Neumann,

CANADIAN NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STEELWORKERS



Betty Bannon, UTE National President, and Terry Dupuis, RVP Rock Mountain Region, present Brenda Skayman with her UTE Community Service Award.