



IT'S TIME TO BARGAIN!

Friends,

As you know, our collective agreement expired on October 31 of this year. Our National Bargaining Committee reviewed over 300 demands submitted by locals and pared them down to a comprehensive package that will be presented to the employer the week of January 10. Through the process of preparing the package one thing was crystal clear – this round is about work/life balance.

All of us have seen monumental changes in the way we work and the demands on our work lives coupled with the challenges hoisted upon us through the pandemic. Remote work in environments not necessarily set up for the work we were used to - was demanded, restrictions, while gradually loosening forced workers and the families of those workers to adapt through no fault of their own. The employer must recognize that the work world has changed for our membership and our mandate will be to enhance the collective agreement benefits that will acknowledge this fact.



Please don't ever forget the way we stood up during our last round of negotiations when the pandemic hit. You, the membership, were integral in administering the pandemic benefits so necessary to help Canadians in need. This is something to be very proud of, and now is the chance for the employer to recognize this, not in emails, memos, or words, as genuine as they may be, but in the enshrined addition of benefits and pay that better reflect and acknowledge the incredible work you do and will continue to do.

We must never lessen the solidarity you showed when we called for action and started taking strike votes. We wished never to be at that point but, when called upon, you were there in droves. That is what gets a solid collective agreement – the strength of many is to never be underestimated and it shall not be this round nor in the future rounds.

To say the last round took too long would be an understatement and we enter this round with no appetite for a delayed process and will make that very clear to the employer. In fairness I don't think they wish it to be drawn out any longer than it need be, but last round, as with this round,

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

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your UTE bargaining team will be available as a priority to negotiate at the table to get this done. We hope the same goes for the other side this time.

I know I speak for the team when I say we wish you only the very best in health and happiness into the new year and assure you we will fight like we always have to get you the very best of contracts. That is our mandate, that is our commitment. With your help and support we will deliver.

In solidarity forever

Adam Jackson
2nd National Vice President
Responsible for Collective Bargaining



REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT EQUITY CONFERENCES

The National Equal Opportunities Committee is busy planning the Regional Conferences for 2022. UTE will hold 3 conferences across Canada this year. The dates and locations of the conferences are as follows:

- April 29-30, 2022 - Toronto - Greater Toronto, Southwestern Ontario, Northern and Eastern Ontario Regions
- May 13-14, 2022 - Vancouver - Pacific, Rocky Mountains and Prairie Regions
- June 17-18, 2022 - Halifax - National Capital, Quebec, Montreal and Atlantic Regions

The theme for these conferences is **Coming Full Circle** and will include many interesting and exciting workshops and dynamic guest speakers.

Each local will be entitled to send two (2) members with funding from the National Office. Locals will be able to send others at the local's expense.



Your Equal Opportunities Committee is encouraging locals to send new activists and members who have an interest in becoming involved in workplace Employment Equity Committees. We would very much like to see many new faces at our conferences next year.

If you have an interest in Employment Equity and would like to attend one of the conferences in your region, please speak to someone on your local executive.

Kimberley Koch
Equal Opportunities Committee, Chair

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The year 2021 is ending and, like the previous year, it has been marked by the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to plague us here in Canada and around the world. In all likelihood, it will unfortunately be with us for some time to come.

As a result of this pandemic, our union has had to rethink its ways of doing business. For example, we have provided logistical support to our Locals to allow them to resume holding Annual General Meetings in order to account for their activities to their members. So far, these events have all been held virtually and have gone very well.

The fact that most of our members continue to work remotely from home presents a challenge for our Locals in communicating not only individually with a member but with their membership at large. As we complete our preparations for the next round of bargaining in January 2022, we need to find ways to communicate effectively with our Locals and our entire membership. To that end, it is anticipated that UTE National will be holding virtual town hall meetings from time to time over the next year in order to communicate with as many members as possible. Other means of communication will also be used.

We continue to have regular meetings with the employer regarding a possible return of more employees to the Agency's premises. Some employees will continue to telework, others will return to the office, while many will have a hybrid work schedule (alternating between working at home and at the employer's office). With the fourth wave of the pandemic raging this fall, the timeline has been pushed back and, at the time of writing, a fifth wave of COVID-19 is unfortunately on the horizon.



Your health and safety remain our top priority and we will continue to work with the employer to ensure that you can continue to work in a safe and healthy environment, regardless of where you perform your duties.

As you are aware, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has followed Treasury Board's lead in implementing a mandatory vaccination policy against COVID-19 for all its employees. The Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) has raised issues and concerns, including the protection of our members' personal information and privacy, with the employer and has proposed changes to the policy but the Agency has not responded favourably to any of our requests. The UTE National Office has had several discussions with the PSAC on this policy and the UTE Executive Council has also been working on this issue.

In a message to all our members on November 9, I informed you that the PSAC has decided that it will not oppose the mandatory vaccination policy. Furthermore, the Alliance has informed us that it will not support a statutory freeze complaint under the federal Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Act or the filing of a policy grievance. As the bargaining agent, the PSAC is the authority in this matter and our Component is bound to follow its direction and respect its decisions in this regard. In our message, we provided instructions for members who wished to challenge the

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employer's decision to place them on administrative leave without pay or if the employer denied them an exemption or accommodation for legitimate and compelling reasons. Indeed, we have a duty as a union to represent the interests and rights of all our members.

We have also provided instructions to our local union representatives to help them respond to members' questions and concerns. Any member wishing to challenge an employer's decision has the right to expect a sympathetic ear from their union. As in any other matter, the decision to support or not support a member's request to grieve a decision made by the employer under this policy is made on the individual and specific merits and circumstances of each case.

That being said, the UTE agrees that vaccination is an effective tool to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus and its various strains, and we strongly encourage all of our members to get vaccinated.

As the year draws to a close, I would like to congratulate you once again for your excellent work and extraordinary dedication in difficult circumstances. Canadian taxpayers can always count on you to provide them with a professional and quality service. It is a credit to you, and I am very grateful. I would also like to thank all our union representatives for their hard work and dedication to our members.

In closing, I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season. And may the New Year bring you joy, happiness and prosperity!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Stay safe and take good care of yourself and your loved ones!

In solidarity,

Marc Brière

National President



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As of June 1, 2021, all CRA employees and their family members have access to external Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services through one national provider, Homewood Health.

Services may be accessed by:

- telephone (1-800-663-1142 EN or 1-866-398-9805 FR)
- teletypewriter (1-888-384-1152)
- app <https://homeweb.ca/app>
- website <https://homeweb.ca/>

The Committee strongly recommends that our members and their family members create their own accounts using personal email to access online tools and resources, to ensure unrestricted

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availability and to avoid any potential discipline issues.

An orientation video is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKjqV6gmp38&t=207s>

Some difficulties may have been experienced during the transition phase as overlapping services with outgoing providers were maintained until October 1, 2021. If you experience any difficulties, please advise your Local, who will forward your concerns to the Well-Being Committee.

Clarification on the new financial and legal services has been obtained and members have a one-hour session with a financial advisor and a one-half hour consultation with a lawyer, but this could vary depending on the individual situation. Both provide only consultation and referral services, they do not sell products, and the legal service does not include advice on issues related to Labour Law.

Again, please ensure that any issues experienced are promptly brought to the attention of your Local. The sooner we know, the sooner it can be corrected.

In Solidarity,

Gregory Krokosh
Chair, Well-Being Committee

YOU AND YOUR COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

In November 2020, a new collective agreement was signed between the Union of Taxation Employees and the Canada Revenue Agency. The December 2020 edition of the Union News had an extensive article explaining additions to the collective agreement along with changes negotiated to existing language in the collective agreement.

It has been over a year since this collective agreement was negotiated and during this time there has been extensive hiring of new employees. The committee felt it would be valuable to highlight areas that would affect a significant portion of the new hires. It is also quite likely that many of our new members have never seen the collective agreement or possibly have very limited knowledge of the information and rights afforded members, contained therein.

This excerpt will attempt to do that. This article is not meant to be a legal interpretation, but rather the intent of the clause from the union's perspective.

We also want to provide our members some directions or suggestions relating to what information we believe that you should provide when requesting leave under various provisions of the collective agreement. This will hopefully minimize problems that members occasionally face when requesting leave.

Lastly in some instances we will include the full text of the new or revised collective agreement clause or alternately we would ask that members review the information that will be available on the UTE website (www.ute-sei.org) under Bargaining.

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ARTICLE 42 – Leave with Pay for Family Related Responsibilities

42.01 For the purpose of this clause, “family” is defined per Article 2 and, in addition, a person who stands in the place of a relative for the employee whether or not there is any degree of consanguinity between such person and the employee.



This was a significant change in Article 42. This change means that for most clauses in Article 42 where a reference is made to family, the member can have access to leave granted under this clause for persons who are not defined as family as noted in Article 2. It is the Union’s opinion that under clause 42.02 all situations listed should qualify. With the new collective agreement being in place for over a year we have seen little indication that the employer is interpreting this article in a manner contrary to the position that the union holds.

We encourage members to review and become familiar with article 42, there are 9 sub-clauses listing situations for which family related leave can be requested and approved.

Several scenarios are listed below:

- taking a family member for medical or dental appointments or for appointments with school authorities
- to provide for the immediate and temporary care of a sick member of the employee's family and to provide an employee with time to make alternate care arrangements where the illness is of a longer duration
- for the care of a sick member of the employee's family who is hospitalized
- to provide time to allow the employee to make alternate arrangements in the event of fire or flooding to the employee's residence
- to provide for the immediate and temporary care of a child where, due to unforeseen circumstances, usual childcare arrangements are unavailable.

Please note that the total amount a family related leave available to a member in any given fiscal year remains unchanged at 45.0 hours.

Hint: When requesting leave in situations where the individual is standing in place of a relative, it is suggested that you advise your team leader or manager that the leave is being requested under 42.01 advising it is for a medical/dental appointment, care of a sick individual etc. and that it is for someone not defined as family per Article 2. It is the union’s opinion that no other personal information is required.

Article 44 - Domestic Violence Leave

An extremely important addition to the collective agreement was a provision to protect and support members who may be experiencing domestic violence. We invite members to review the article, as it is fairly lengthy, we will just highlight some of the details.

For the purposes of this clause, domestic violence is considered to be any form of abuse or neglect that an employee or an employee’s child experiences from a family member or someone with whom

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an employee has or had an intimate relationship.

There is a total of 75 hours leave with pay available to the employee in any fiscal year. The article lists a number of reasons leave may be required such as receiving counselling, relocation either temporarily or permanently.

This leave does not have to be taken in a single block and can be taken in increments meeting the needs of the employee up to the maximum of 75 hours as noted above.



New Members – Printed Copy of the Collective Agreement

It is likely that many members who started at the CRA in early 2021 would have never received a printed copy of the collective agreement. During the last round of bargaining the employer pushed for an electronic version only, the union resisted this position and a compromise was reached. Members who were working at that time were given the option to request a paper copy and one would be provided to all members requesting one. It was also agreed to, that new members could request a printed copy of the collective agreement from the employer, and one would be provided. We encourage members who would like to have a paper copy of the collective agreement to request one from their manager, the employer is committed to providing one.

Article 40 - Parental leave without pay

During the last round of bargaining the Union of Taxation Employees (UTE) was able to negotiate improvements to the Parental leave without pay provision of the collective agreement.

This allowed members accessing this leave to choose between a standard option of up to a 37 week period or an extended option of up to a 63 week period.

However, we were not successful in negotiating the extended parental allowance to top up Employment Insurance (EI) to 93% of weekly salary to cover the extended Parental leave without pay period. This means employees need to be aware of the rules in place and the consequences of the options that are chosen. Not only for the employee, but for the other parent of the child. This is clarified below under the reference to section 40.02 on Parental allowance.

Article 40 is quite lengthy which may have contributed to some situations where the option chosen turned out not to be the most advantageous depending upon the situation. This article will try to provide some guidance and clarification however, this does not replace contacting either Compensation or Service Canada to ensure the member is aware of all the implications of their choices.

An important factor to consider is that when the mother chooses either the standard or extended parental leave the spouse or partner must request the same option.

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In section 40.02 Parental allowance, the first paragraph refers to options: 1: standard parental benefits or 2: extended parental benefits.

A significant consideration when looking at options is that under option 1, the employee could receive a parental allowance which will top up their EI resulting in a benefit of 93% of their weekly salary. When choosing option 2, the employee could receive a parental allowance which will top up their EI, however for the entire period, members will receive a reduced allowance resulting in a payment representing 55.8% of their weekly salary.

Unfortunately, there have been situations in which employees were not aware of the differences which resulted in some unforeseen financial hardship.

The goal of this article is to provide guidance and understanding to our members when requesting leave under this article.

Lastly, during the upcoming round of bargaining it is hoped we will be successful in achieving the parental allowance top up of 93 % of weekly salary to be applied to the extended parental allowance period.

Gary Esslinger
Chair of the Communications Committee

***SEASONS GREETINGS
FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
AND STAFF OF THE
UNION OF TAXATION EMPLOYEES***



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.

COVID -19, THE PANDEMIC, A MEMBER'S REFLECTION

Can you believe 2022 is within sight?

I have yet to digest 2020, or to process 2021.

Was it over 18 months ago that this invisible, viral monster took hold of every aspect of our lives? Created fear and isolation. Hitting our marginalized groups even harder, already fighting the fight - new challenges and demands can be too much.

Our new offices now look like our dining rooms or spare rooms redesigned to our comfort level. Hinging on some temporary arrangement before the world becomes more predictable. I sit at my desk doing a job that looks the same - yet feels different. Alone.

People state that they want the world to go back to "normal" - my life has never been normal and the thought of that is terrifying.

What the world needs now is predictability; where we can plan events and get hugs, and clink glasses, and have more than 20 people present. Organize conferences, see the smiling faces of colleagues and Union leadership. Stop worrying that the next slip of my mask could be detrimental.

I must admit that the pandemic has affected me mentally, the isolation, too much time with my own thoughts. Watching people on Facebook and Instagram write books, bake bread and run marathons have impacted my self worth. Have I completed any tasks that I always promised myself I would do when I had more time??? How much more time do I need?

If all you did was survive - I am proud of you. Hopefully someone shared their bread and let us read their book. Hopefully someone checked in on you to make sure you were doing OK.

I made lunch from groceries I had delivered because someone sneezed at Sobeys last week and scared me; I have learned I actually spend less when I don't step foot in a store hungry and tired. A good thing - because I have less now.

I have Facetimed my friends and relatives and missed them more than ever.

I have lost people I loved and could not say goodbye. I have watched my family income decrease, cost of living increase; Groceries and housing are out of reach for some.

I have had enough time in isolation to develop a wine habit and kick it. An online shopping habit that is waning.

I am double vaccinated - my body - my choice.

I have watched people defend freedom and rights while feeling uneducated - yet - defending people's decisions. It has all become too much - I thank my union for staying informed and sharing with us, reassuring us, defending our rights and jobs.

All of this has been unpredictable - I am ready to know what will happen in 2022 and beyond. I am ready for people and hugs.

Mel Lucier
Local 00018 Windsor

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

LET'S TALK ABOUT HONOURS AND AWARDS!

Did you know that your Union offers many ways to recognize activists in the community and in the Union? We invite members to visit the UTE website: www.ute-sei.org and see for yourself, it's easy.

From the Home page click on Committees in the Banner near the top of the page. This brings up a list of committees. On the left hand side, you just choose the Honours and Awards Committee.

Look through the information on the committee site. It may be an eye opener to many members unaware of all recognition UTE provides to both members and union activists.

There are scholarships available for you, your children and grandchildren that would help with the cost associated in furthering their education. It is worth noting that the amounts have recently been increased to \$3,000 and \$1,500 for National and Regional scholarships respectively.

There are ways to honour community activists. The Humanitarian Award for example has a financial award going to the charity of the recipient's choice.

Have a look and see if you know someone who should be recognized. It is important to be aware that some of these awards have specific deadlines.

Contact your local executive, they can help!

Cosimo Crupi
Honours and Awards Committee, Chair