



Ready to Represent

Three participants in AUPE's new Union Steward training share their perspectives on the course

By Merryn Edwards
Communications Staff

Kevin Glubrecht never belonged to a union before he started his job as an electrical inspector with the Government of Alberta, and he was eager to learn what it was all about.

“It really was a home-run hit”—that’s how Glubrecht felt when he started taking AUPE courses that allowed him to channel his curiosity and energy into learning

more and helping his coworkers.

For Angie Pala, it was her involvement in the remarkably successful Keep Michener Open campaign that motivated her to take more union training. And Cherie Lamb decided she might as well take the plunge, since her relationships with people at work and her role on her bargaining committee

meant her coworkers were already asking for her help.

Glubrecht, Pala and Lamb all attended the inaugural session of AUPE’s revamped Union Steward course, which got underway last November. Once they complete the mentoring portion where they will shadow a Membership Services Officer, they will be full-fledged Union Stewards, ready to represent other AUPE members and support their coworkers.

“Being a steward is a big commitment, and it seemed a bit daunting,” said Pala, but she found the pre-requisite courses prepared her well, especially Conflict Management. “In a high intensity situation, you have to be aware of your own emotional reaction.”

All three mentioned the group dynamic in the class as a key part of their learning

process. “We were all learning together,” said Lamb. Similarly, Glubrecht shared a story of how he helped to draw another participant out of his shell, drawing on his own experience of overcoming a natural tendency toward shyness.

Coming from the health-care sector where she is on her feet most of the time, Lamb found it challenging to be sitting in a classroom for three days, “but the group discussion and case studies were a huge help.”

Course participants work on a homework assignment that gives them the chance to explore possible union solutions to real life problems they or their coworkers are experiencing at work. Glubrecht used an example that a coworker brought to him just as he was heading to the course for the homework. “It was good timing! I was able to let him know all the information he needed to gather.”

Glubrecht is eager to put what he learned into action at his worksite, especially to get more young people involved in the union.

“I feel more equipped and knowledgeable,” said Pala, “and if I don’t have the answer I know I can find it.” ■

Become a Union Steward

Learn new skills, support your co-workers and help strengthen your union by becoming a Union Steward. Start by enrolling in the prerequisite courses, including *Introduction to your Union*, *Contract Interpretation*, *Introduction to Occupational Health and Safety* and *Basic Conflict Management*. If you like what you have learned in those courses, you are ready to sign up for the *Foundations for Union Stewards*.

The next sessions of the prerequisite courses will run between April and June in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge, and an online version of *Introduction to Your Union* will be offered in June. The next session of *Foundations for Union Stewards* will be offered in May in Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer.

For more information or to enrol, call the Member Resource Centre at 1-800-232-7284.



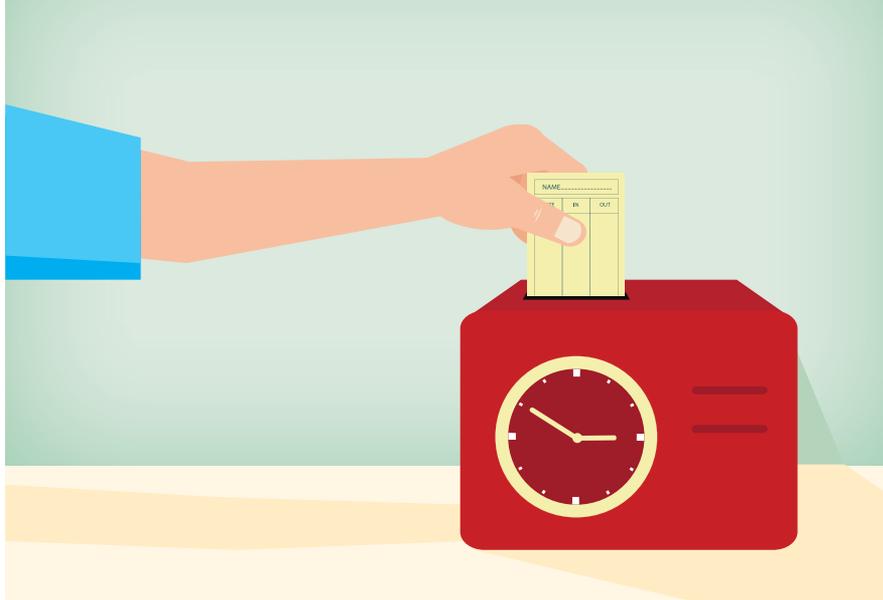
HAVE QUESTIONS?

CONTACT YOUR MEMBER SERVICES OFFICER

CALL 1-800-232-7284

Have your local/chapter number and worksite location ready so your call can be directed quickly.





Time off for union business

AUPE is run by members for members, but running a union takes time. Members can arrange to take time off work to participate in union activities without suffering a loss of earnings

By Merryn Edwards
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Finding time off provisions in your contract

Different collective agreements deal with the issue of time off for union business in a variety of places. Your agreement may have a specific article or it may be covered as part of the Leave of Absence provision. Many agreements also contain provisions specific to participation in joint union and employer committees, negotiations, union representation or grievance handling. Make sure you understand which provisions apply.

What kind of activities are covered

Time off for union business can only be granted to members who have been officially authorized by the union, such as elected component officers, Union Stewards who have completed the required certification or members whose registration in education courses has been confirmed. Informal meetings, discussion and other activities are not covered by time off provisions.

In some cases, such as participation in a joint employee management committee or the time required by a Union Steward to

represent a member in a disciplinary meeting or handle a grievance, the employer may pay for the time required. However, generally in the case of union meetings, training and activities, it is the union that will cover the cost of an employee's missed time.

In all cases, the employer's permission must be secured in advance of taking time off for union business.

Paying for time off

Once the employer's permission has been granted, members need to provide AUPE with the number of hours of work they will miss and their hourly rate of pay (including shift premiums if applicable). AUPE will then provide a form that members are responsible for taking to their employer. Most employers will pay the employee as normal and invoice AUPE for the cost.

Can requests be denied?

The fact that AUPE is willing to cover the cost of a member's time is usually sufficient to demonstrate to employers that the activity falls within the scope of union business or activities. However, some precedents

exist that uphold employer challenges as to the scope of "union activity." A 1985 Canada Public Service Staff Relations Board decision regarding a training not directly provided by the union upheld that such provisions "ought to be accorded a fairly liberal interpretation."

If the employer is denying the time off request, it will more likely be on the basis that granting the request would not allow the employer to meet its operational requirements. In such cases, the employer should provide proof as to why taking reasonable steps such as arranging for cover off workers could not mitigate possible operational difficulty.

The earlier a request is made, the more likely it will be granted. Nevertheless, if a time off request has been denied, members should follow the principle of "work now, grieve later."

Too much time off?

As members get more and more involved in AUPE, the number of days away from work on union business can start to grow. However, as long as the amount of time off taken is not impacting an employee's performance, employers should consider each request on a case-by-case basis considering operational requirements and not unreasonably withhold permission.

If you feel you have been wrongly denied time off or treated differently because of the time off you have taken, contact your Union Steward or other union representative as soon as possible. ■

Time off checklist

- Has the union officially authorized participation in the activity?
- Which collective agreement provisions apply to this type of activity?
- Has the employer granted permission to take time away from work?
- If so, what arrangements, if any, need to be made to reimburse the employer for the time?
- If not, what is the basis for denying the time off and what evidence has been presented to support that basis?



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Labour education helps ensure AUPE members are trained and willing to take a stand for services to the public, decent jobs and fairness in the workplace and their communities. AUPE's Education Program is responsible for developing and delivering continuing education courses to members and officers in support of the role they perform in their Union.

AUPE courses are scheduled to be offered in Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary and Lethbridge. Core course registration opens Jan. 5. To register for core courses, contact the AUPE Resource Centre at 1-800-232-7284. You can also email the registrar for the area closest to you: Edmonton (edmontonregistrar@aupe.org), Red Deer (reddeerregistrar@aupe.org), Calgary & Lethbridge (calgaryregistrar@aupe.org).

Education Schedule - Spring 2016 ** schedule subject to change*

	EDMONTON	CALGARY	RED DEER	LETHBRIDGE
Introduction to Your Union	May 4	May 5	May 3	
Contract Interpretation	Apr. 15 June 10	Apr. 14 June 10	June 9	Apr. 14
Introduction to OH&S	May 26 & 27	Apr. 12 & 13 May 26 & 27	June 14 & 15	Apr. 12 & 13
Basic Conflict Management	June 8 & 9	June 8 & 9	May 30 & 31	
Component Officer	Apr. 21 & 22 June 16 & 17	Apr. 21 & 22 June 16 & 17	Apr. 19 & 20	
Foundations for Union Stewards	May 17-19	May 31-June 2	May 11 - 13	
OH&S for Stewards	Apr. 13 & 14 June 28 & 29	May 3 & 4 June 28 & 29	June 22 & 23	
Online Introduction to Your Union	June 6 - 20			

Please note:

Members within the Grande Prairie, Peace River and Athabasca servicing areas are required to register for courses in Edmonton. Members within the Camrose servicing area are required to register for courses in Edmonton or Red Deer, whichever location is closest to your home.

Members within the Lethbridge and Medicine Hat servicing areas are to register for courses in Lethbridge where possible, and can otherwise register for courses in Calgary.

When registering for courses, members are required to call to register for themselves. As well please ensure all course prerequisites are met.

For more details regarding courses AUPE has to offer please refer to the AUPE website at www.aupe.org/my-aupe/benefits/education/. This includes the core course schedule for Winter 2016, course descriptions with prerequisites, Union Steward nomination forms and other AUPE Education details.

Steward Notes is published by the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees to provide information of technical interest to AUPE Union Stewards, worksite contacts and other members. Topics deal with training for union activists, worksite issues, disputes and arbitrations, health and safety, trends in labour law, bargaining and related material. For more information, contact the editor.

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The goal of Steward Notes is to help today's AUPE Union Stewards do their jobs effectively. To help us, we encourage readers to submit story ideas that deserve exposure among all AUPE stewards.

Story suggestions for Steward Notes may be submitted for consideration to Communications Staff Writer Merryn Edwards by e-mail at m.edwards@aupe.org or by mail. Please include names and contact information for yourself and potential story sources.

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