

SGEU

Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union

WORKING
TOGETHER FOR
SASKATCHEWAN



MEMBER HANDBOOK

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Welcome Message from the President

Hello, and welcome to **your** union!

SGEU is a truly home-grown, made-in-Saskatchewan union with over 20,000 members working in the public, private and non-profit sectors across the province. I hope this handbook is helpful to you in understanding your union and the rights you enjoy as a member.

You are part of a union with a long and proud history. SGEU strives for healthy and productive workplaces that enable you and your co-workers to provide quality services in every corner of our province. We value respect, learning, cooperation, equality, justice and diversity.

As an SGEU member, you are provided with professional bargaining support to help you reach a fair contract. SGEU also offers experienced and trained staff to help you solve workplace issues fairly. Our commitment is to stand up for your rights in the workplace, protect you from unfair treatment and negotiate fair and reasonable terms of employment for you and your coworkers. SGEU members are part of the best long-term disability plan in the province and the union also offers access to a Health and Welfare Trust to Bargaining Units at competitive rates.

Be sure to follow SGEU on social media (we're on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and visit our website regularly to find out about the latest union news, apply for training courses and scholarships, learn about upcoming events, and perhaps most importantly, get to know your collective agreement, which provides details about your working conditions, wages and benefits.

There are many opportunities to participate in your union, and I encourage you to get involved. Your union is only as strong as its members — the success of SGEU depends on members like you. Working together with your fellow union members, you can make a difference and improve your workplace, your community and your province.

My door is always open if you have questions or suggestions. Feel free to contact me at bbymoen@sgeu.org or 306-775-7219.

In solidarity,

Bob Bymoen
SGEU President

About the Member Handbook

We created this member handbook to help you learn more about SGEU, its structure, the union's decision-making processes and the resources that are offered to members.

Some of you may be joining a union for the very first time, and you may not be familiar with what it means to be a union member. We want to change that!

We hope this handbook will answer many of the questions that are often posed by new members and act as a refresher for long-time union members as well.

It's important for members to understand how your union works, what it can do for you and how to get more involved. Educated and engaged members make the union strong and a strong union can lead to a better workplace.

This handbook will also direct you to other resources where you can find additional information or get clarification about issues of interest to you. Please take some time to read through the material and feel free to contact your Steward or your nearest SGEU office if you have questions.



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General Information About Unions

What is a Union and Why are Unions Important?

A union is an organized group of workers who join together to achieve common goals, which generally include improving working conditions, wages, benefits and other work-related issues. Unions have a wide variety of responsibilities such as member representation, negotiating collective agreements or contracts, providing job security for members by ensuring they are not fired or disciplined without cause, organizing, member education, political action, community building, charity work and more. Having support from your union to ensure fair treatment in the workplace is one of the key reasons for people to join. Unions strive to bring equality, economic prosperity and social justice to the workplace as well as the community and the broader society. All of these things are especially important during times of high unemployment and economic turmoil.

Unions work like a democracy. Your Union holds elections for officers to provide leadership and make decisions on behalf of members. The elected officers and leaders work with staff at the union office to improve and uphold union members' rights on the job.

About four million people, which is just over 30 per cent of Canadian workers, belong to unions, including teachers, journalists, nurses and professional athletes. There are traditionally unionized occupations like hospital and care home staff, factory workers, retail employees, government employees and those who work in the trades (electricians, plumbers, construction workers, etc.).

Unions in Canada are regulated by federal or provincial legislation. The law requires unions to be democratic and financially accountable to their members. All unions are required to have constitutions that must be registered with government labour boards.

Historically, many people believe unions contributed to the rise of Canada's middle class and the general prosperity of the country. Unions work hard to ensure their members earn fair wages and have job security, which helps stabilize the economy and stimulate growth. Because of the work of unions,

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more working people can afford houses, better food, clothing, cars and other consumer goods. Increased demand for consumer goods creates jobs and stimulates economic growth.

Workers who are paid better and enjoy job security pay taxes to support the growth of public services like schools, roads, clean water, police services, electricity and health care. Union workers make more money and spend more, thus increasing economic activity and creating more jobs with that spending. The health care benefits enjoyed by union members (dental, prescription drugs, optical, etc.) lead to healthier families that are less of a burden on the health care system. Unions negotiate pensions for workers so they can retire comfortably and continue to contribute to the economy in their golden years. Many union members also feel it's important to contribute as volunteers and in leadership roles in their communities.

How Do You Benefit From Being a Union Member?

Higher Wages – Various studies have proven that unionized workers earn more than non-unionized workers. This is because unions work to negotiate fair wages for their members and help ensure equal pay for equal work. Research conducted by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) showed that in 2014, unionized workers in Saskatchewan earned an average of \$5.48/hour more than non-unionized workers

Additional data from CLC research concluded that:

- Unionized women earned \$7.46/hour more than non-unionized women
- Unionized young workers earned \$5.54/hour more than non-unionized young workers
- Unionized new Canadians earned \$4.83/hour more than non-unionized new Canadians
- Unionized indigenous workers earned \$6.92/hour more than non-unionized indigenous workers

Better Benefits – According to a 2003 paper by Mathew Walters and Lawrence Michel (“How Unions Help All Workers” at www.epi.org), one of

the biggest advantages of unionization is improved benefits in the workplace such as paid sick leave, employer-provided health insurance (which may include such things as prescription drug coverage and optical and dental plans) and employer-provided pension plans. Unionized workers receive 26 per cent more vacation time and 14 per cent more paid leave.

Better Working Conditions – Through negotiating fair collective agreements, unions help regulate hours of work and give you stronger protections and rights related to occupational safety and health, including requirements for employee training, rules for the safe use of equipment and processes in place to prevent accidents from occurring in the workplace. And your union works to ensure you are protected from unfair treatment, harassment and discrimination at work.

A Stronger Voice at Your Workplace and in Your Community – It makes sense that many voices are stronger than one when you want to make change or stand up for what you believe in at work or in your community. That's what the union gives you — a collective voice! At the same time, every member has the right to influence what the union does and how it spends its money. That's done when you participate in meetings, provide feedback and suggestions on surveys, take on leadership positions or vote to decide who will represent you in the union's various leadership roles.



A Team of People Standing with You – Being a union member means you are never alone. Your union is there to stand up for you and your rights in the workplace. You have the support of your fellow union members, your union's leaders, the union's professional staff and all other resources your union has at its disposal. You are no longer just one individual; instead you have the strength of the entire membership standing beside you.

Unions and Union Membership: The Legal Context

SGEU is a legal entity recognized as a trade union under the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA).

The SEA applies to all employees in Saskatchewan except the self-employed, immediate family members working for a family business or those covered by federal jurisdiction. It determines such things as annual holidays, hours of work, minimum wages and other basic rules involving the workplace.

The SEA also provides the legal context for the establishment of trade unions and the bargaining relationship on behalf of union members and their employers.

The Act provides for:

- The certification and de-certification of trade unions
- Guidelines for fair bargaining practices and penalties for violations of these guidelines
- Dispute resolution mechanisms when requested by unions or employers
- Union security and a process for the deduction of union dues
- Duty of fair representation of union members by their union

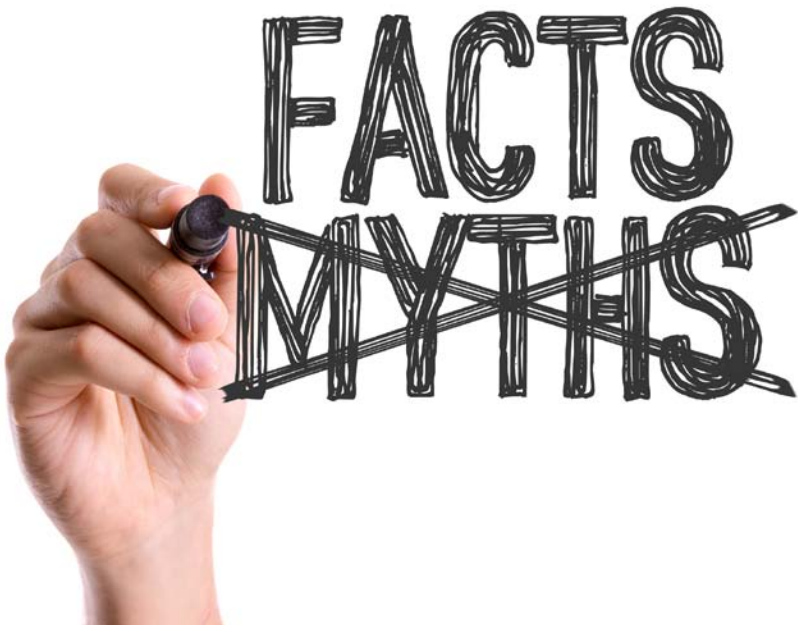
The SEA lays out the obligations and responsibilities that employers have with their employees and the union that represents them. It also makes it illegal for employers to intimidate people from forming, joining or assisting a union, or participating in union activities.

This Act also provides guidelines that unions must follow with their members. Every member of a union has a right to the application of the principles of natural justice with respect to all disputes between the employee and their union relating to matters in the constitution of the union, the employee's membership in the union or the employee's discipline by the union. A union cannot expel, suspend or impose penalties on a member, refuse membership in the union, impose any penalty or make any special levy on a person as a condition of membership if it is done in a discriminatory manner.

Details about the provisions in the SEA can be found at www.saskatchewan.ca/business/employment-standards.

Busting Anti-Union Myths with Facts

Several myths and misconceptions about unions exist. Sometimes this is a result of a lack of knowledge or understanding about unions. Often, these myths are promoted by employers and organizations who do not like unions or are intimidated by them.



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Here are some common anti-union myths and the truth behind them:

MYTH: I don't need a union because the boss already treats me well, or promised they will fix the problems at work.

FACT: If your boss currently treats you well, you might be one of the lucky ones. But what happens if the boss decides you no longer deserve to be treated that way? Or what if you get a new boss who isn't so nice? A union can help ensure everyone is treated fairly no matter who the boss is or what mood they are in. Sometimes, if the employer hears that employees want to form a union, the boss will be on their best behavior and offer to fix problems in the short term. But, what happens afterward — will the boss be as willing to respond to your concerns once they're no longer facing a union?

MYTH: If I sign a union card or help form a union, I'll get fired.

FACT: Organizing your union is a legally protected activity. The law gives you the right to help other people join the union so you can work together to improve your working lives.

The law protects you. SGEU makes sure that the law is upheld. According to the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA) it is an unfair labour practice for your employer, manager or supervisor to fire you, suspend you, punish you or threaten you in any way for joining a union or helping your co-workers join. Your employer will not be told if you did or didn't sign a union card. If your employer asks whether you signed a union card or are helping organize a union, you are not required to answer. If any of these occur or you believe they are occurring, you should report this to SGEU because it is considered illegal. In cases like these, SGEU will stand with you and challenge it at the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board.

MYTH: Unions just want workers' dues. I won't be able to afford the union dues.

FACT: Dues levels are set by each union through a democratic process, and represent only a small percentage of each worker's pay. SGEU dues are currently 1.7 per cent. Unions are not-for-profit organizations; the money that workers pay in dues goes back into running the organization so it can help its

members. Dues from every member are pooled together to help all members have access to expert staff who can help them get better pay, benefits and fair treatment.

The services you receive as a union member are far greater than the cost of union dues. If you didn't belong to a union and had to hire an expert or a lawyer to help you when you have a problem at work, it would cost much more than the amount of dues you pay as a union member. A union can also negotiate wage increases that more than offset the cost of your union dues — the average unionized Saskatchewan worker makes \$5.26 per hour more than the average non-unionized worker. On top of that, your union dues are tax-deductible.

MYTH: Unions are always forcing their members to go on strike.

FACT: The main goal of a union is to negotiate a contract or collective bargaining agreement that is fair for its members. Strikes occur only when a contract has expired and the employer and union cannot reach an agreement at the bargaining table. Unions are required to hold a vote before taking any strike action, and strikes only occur when a clear majority of affected members vote in favour of a strike.

Strikes are controversial, and so they usually make the news. However, a majority of collective agreements in Canada are negotiated without a strike. In fact, more working days are lost each year due to workplace accidents and injuries than are lost to striking employees. A strike means a sacrifice for workers and their families. For this reason, strikes are only used as a last resort.

MYTH: Unions mean more conflict and complications in the workplace.

FACT: Unions can make the workplace a better, less stressful place to work because a union contract helps lay out how workers will be treated by the boss and what workers are expected to do. A contract allows the company and workers to sit down as equals and discuss problems as they come up. Without a union, workers' lives are often more complicated because they must worry about things like favoritism, rules that change for no good reason, and

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low economic security. Unions can help resolve conflict and work with the employer on things like occupational health and safety issues, training needs, job security, and ensuring workers are happier and more productive.

MYTH: Unions used to be effective, but they're not anymore. Unions were good at one time but they have outlived their usefulness.

FACT: Unions are still the best way for working people to have economic security and a voice on the job. Statistics show that Saskatchewan union members make over 20 per cent more in wages than workers who don't have a union. Union members are more likely to have good benefit and pension plans compared to workers without unions. Unions also help keep the workplace safe, prevent discrimination on the job and give workers a say in what happens at their workplace.

MYTH: Unions protect the lazy and bad workers who should be fired.

FACT: Unions do not require an employer to keep a worker who is lazy, incompetent, or constantly absent or late. However, a union helps ensure that dismissals are for "just cause."

A union helps prevent workers from being fired without a good reason. A union will protect you from being fired if you miss work due to illness, or just because your boss dislikes you. This protection can be especially important for older workers, women, visible minorities, LGBTQ2S workers and those with disabilities. In this way, unions do protect people's jobs.

MYTH: Unions lead to lower productivity and laziness.

FACT: Studies have shown that productivity is higher in unionized workplaces; there is a positive association between unions and productivity. In general, unionized workplaces are known to attract and retain more skilled and experienced employees.

MYTH: Unions hold you back from advancement and promotion.

FACT: Unions help to set work and salary standards that are clear and apply to everyone. Unions do not prevent employees from being promoted. They provide a structure that is applied fairly to all employees, based on objective reasoning rather than on the employer's mood or attitude.

Unions help prevent your boss from playing favourites or treating employees differently. You and your coworkers are entitled to be treated equally under the same rules and have the same chance to get promoted.

MYTH: Unions are too political and give my money to certain political parties and causes I don't always support.

FACT: The main job of the union is to stand up for its members by fighting for good contracts that provide a fair wage, benefits and good working conditions. But the union also advocates for other issues that make a positive difference in the lives and communities of members and their families — things like affordable health care and prescription drugs, access to childcare, affordable housing, human rights including 2SLGBTQIAP+ issues, and much more. We sometimes lobby federal or provincial governments, and we work to make sure our members have information on political parties and candidates who work for good laws and support issues that matter to working families. However, SGEU does not donate to any political parties. Any political work we do it not about electing a particular party, it's about raising issues that matter to working people.

MYTH: Unions are mostly interested in demanding wage increases that eventually force the employer to cut jobs or go out of business.

FACT: Wages are important, but unions are also concerned about fair treatment and better working conditions. Over the years, unions have led the fight for medicare, workers' compensation, occupational health and safety laws, stronger human rights laws, and pay and employment equity. Unions try to find a balance when asking for wage increases because they know it would harm employees if a company could not afford to pay its workers and had to

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cut jobs or go out of business. This is a scare tactic that is sometimes used against unions, but it makes no sense for a union to act in a way that would result in jobs being lost or a business closing down.

MYTH: The union is controlled by big union bosses who don't know anything about our workplace or our community.

FACT: A union is made up of its members at each workplace. The members get to control the direction of the union by attending meetings or conventions, voting when decisions are being made, and electing leaders to represent them. This helps ensure that members who know their workplace and their community have a say in what the union is doing. SGEU is a Saskatchewan-based union that is proud to represent members who live, work and raise their families in communities across the province.

MYTH: Unions are too big and powerful.

FACT: Unions are governed by their members, using a democratic decision-making process to elect their leaders and make decisions on what the union does. Unions are formed by their members and are accountable to them. Even the largest unions are small in comparison to the size, financial resources and power that large corporations hold. Governments also hold more power than unions and can change the laws that apply to unions, intervene in strikes, force workers back to work, or impose a contract on a union. Do you ever see a government do the same thing to large corporations?

Certainly, there are times when some corporations or governments claim unions are too powerful. But remember — union power is really worker power. Unions are only as strong as their members make them. When business or governments say unions have become too powerful, it's because they're worried about the impact workers can have when they are organized and prepared to work together for their collective well-being.

Who is SGEU?

Saskatchewan General and Government Employees' Union (SGEU) is a Saskatchewan-based union that represents over 20,000 government and general employees who live and work in communities across the province. We provide many of the services that families rely on every day — fixing our roads, keeping our communities safe, supporting the most vulnerable citizens, helping people recover from illness — and much more.

On any given day, you will likely be helped by a member of SGEU. Here are just some of the places you will see the difference our members make every day of the year — whether we're out on the front lines or working behind the scenes:

- Providing community services in daycares, counselling centres and group homes
- Helping adults learn in regional colleges, post-secondary institutions like Saskatchewan Polytechnic and the Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Serving you as a customer and protecting you as a consumer with the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, and overseeing related industries
- Delivering quality, compassionate health care through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, the Saskatchewan Health Authority and other health service providers
- Keeping many of our provincial Crown corporations strong and effective, from Workers' Compensation to Saskatchewan Crop Insurance and provincial Housing Authorities
- Working for you in provincial government agencies, boards and ministries such as corrections, agriculture, highways, social services, parks, environment and many others

SGEU's leaders are members of the union who were elected by the members to serve in various positions such as Sector Vice-Presidents, the chair of your Local, your Union Steward — even the President and Secretary-Treasurer are

SGEU members, just like you. This helps ensure that the union's leaders can represent you more effectively because they are familiar with the union and the issues that members face on a day-to-day basis in the workplace.

History of SGEU

SGEU has a rich and proud history of more than 100 years of serving working class people and communities within the province. The organization, founded in 1913 as a social club called Saskatchewan Civil Service Association (SCSA), with 200-300 members, has now grown into a large union — and we are still growing.

A book titled *"For Dignity, Equality and Justice: A History of Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union"* by Doug Taylor, includes important and interesting information and stories about the formation and evolution of your union, including:

- In 1913, a small group of civil servants working in various departments of the provincial government established the "Association of Civil Servants". Initially, it was created to promote social discourse and sports among civil servants who worked in the legislative building. During that time, it was a daring step to form an association of employees even to promote social activities.
- From 1914 until 1920, because of World War I, the association's activities were temporarily suspended.
- In 1920, the scope of the association increased with the mandate of fostering better working conditions for workers. During 1927, pension plans were secured through the creation of the Public Superannuation Act. The association also achieved changes to vacation and sick leaves as well as life and liability insurance for members.
- In 1925, the association changed its name to Saskatchewan Government Services Association (SGSA) to reflect its broader membership base; however during 1934, the name changed again to the Saskatchewan Civil Services Association (SCSA).

- SCSA was affiliated to the Trade and Labour Congress (TLC) on September 23, 1944.
- The province's first Trade Union Act was passed in December, 1944, and in early 1945, the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board approved the Association's application as sole bargaining agent for the entire provincial civil service except for workers in the provincial telephone company and mental hospitals.
- August 2, 1945 was a historic day for SCSA as they achieved their first collective agreement with the signing of a public service agreement which included provisions for sick leave, pay equity, overtime, annual wage increases and much more.
- In 1949, SCSA became Saskatchewan's largest trade union with more than 3000 members still fighting for and winning rights in the workplace.
- In 1962, the Association changed its name to Saskatchewan Government Employees Association (SGEA). The argument for changing the name was that "Civil Servant" had a negative connotation compared to "Public Employee".
- SGEA affiliated to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) in 1975.
- During the 1970s, SGEA continued its fight for workers' rights and benefits through fair and inclusive collective agreements.
- In 1981, the union changed its name from SGEA to Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union (SGEU), an official union incorporated under the Trade Union Act.
- During the 1980s, SGEU rapidly expanded its membership base beyond government and led the fight for social justice in Saskatchewan.
- To reflect its broader membership, SGEU became Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU) in 1998.
- In its journey from 1913 to the present day, SGEU has adapted and changed in order to meet the challenges of the times. History and recent events have proven that unions and working people are often targeted by big business and their friends in government. Over the years, we have

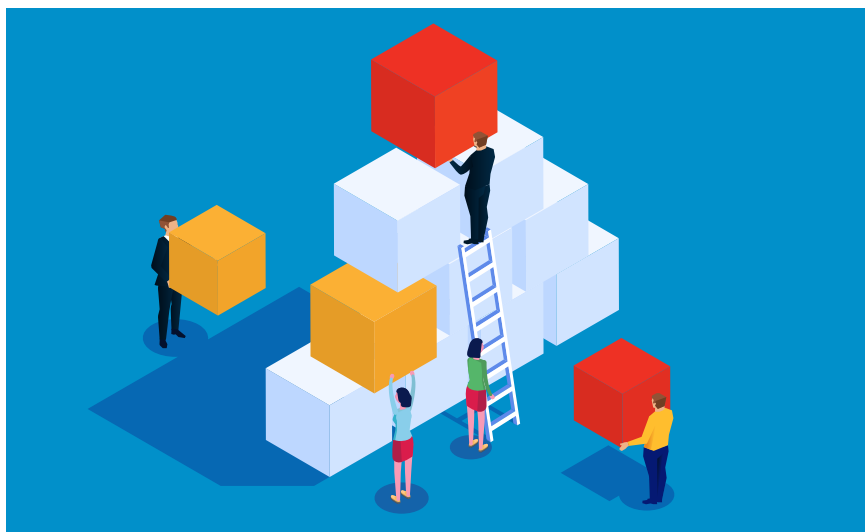
seen policy and legislative changes that were a direct attack on unions and working people's rights and standard of living. History also suggests the only way to withstand the challenge is to be organized and fight back to win justice and dignity for all. You can contribute to the fight for justice in our workplaces and in our communities by being active in your union.

SGEU Structure and Operations

How is SGEU structured?

As a member, it's important for you to understand the structure of your union and how it operates. Detailed information about the union's structure and operations, along with the composition, mandate, duties and responsibilities of each part is included in the SGEU Constitution, which can be found on the union website www.sgeu.org, or obtained from your Steward or any of the SGEU offices.

SGEU is one of the largest unions in Saskatchewan with a membership of over 20,000. The union's basic structure consists of six Sectors that are then broken down into smaller units called Bargaining Units. These are then broken down into even smaller groups called Locals.



SGEU's Six Sectors

SGEU is divided into six Sectors, each based upon the respective commonality of service delivery, funding provisions, mandated criteria or legislated structure of the Bargaining Units. Members become part of the Sector where their Bargaining Unit best fits, as determined by the SGEU Administration Committee.

The Sectors are responsible for electing their own executive, adopting bylaws to govern the Sector, reporting to the annual convention and attending to all matters of interest to the Sector. However, each Sector remains fully accountable to SGEU within the framework of the union's constitution.

What does each Sector do?

Each Sector has its own executive, adopts the bylaws for governing its Sector, provides a report to the annual convention and attends to all matters of local interest to its members. Each Sector's policies and programs are governed by SGEU Constitution and Policies.

Basically, each Sector is responsible to:

- Ensure election of the bargaining committees to negotiate collective agreements on behalf of members and enforce agreements once reached.
- Ensure a structure and process is in place for the initial handling of grievances. The Public Service has its own grievance screening committee, while the other five Sectors work with the union's central screening committee.
- Maintain the Steward structure at the Local level.
- Maintain communication and information-sharing between all Bargaining Units in the Sector to ensure co-operative bargaining strategies and defense of collective agreements.
- Affiliate with the local labour council; maintain a communication network among the Sector, its Locals and the respective labour council; organize educational and social activities and any other business that might promote solidarity amongst the union membership and community.

The union's constitution includes additional details about the structure and responsibilities of the Sectors. You can find the constitution at www.sgeu.org or obtain a copy from a Steward or any of the SGEU offices.

What are the six Sectors?

- Community Services Sector
- Crown Sector
- Education Sector
- Health Sector
- Public Service Sector
- Retail Regulatory Sector

A list of Bargaining Units within each Sector can be found at www.sgeu.org.

What is a Bargaining Unit and a Local?

A Bargaining Unit is defined in a certification order made by the Labour Relations Board. Each Bargaining Unit negotiates its own collective agreement that applies to all members within that Bargaining Unit. Members from each Bargaining Unit elect their own bargaining committee.

In most cases, your Bargaining Unit is the same as your workplace. For example if you work at Information Services Corporation, then that is your Bargaining Unit. If you work at the Melfort Housing Authority, you are a member of the Melfort Housing Authority Bargaining Unit. If you work for the Moose Jaw Housing Authority, you are a member of the Moose Jaw Housing Authority Bargaining Unit. Similarly, Early Childhood Intervention Program Regina Region Inc. employees form their own Bargaining Unit under the Community Services Sector.

It is a little different for the Public Service Sector, where most of the members share the same contract and belong to one Bargaining Unit called Public Service/Government Employment (PS/GE). For example, if you work for the

Ministry of Agriculture, your Bargaining Unit is PS/GE, the same as someone who works for the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Environment.

Locals are the building blocks in the union's structure, and the place where SGEU members can most actively and frequently exercise their decision-making rights. In most cases, you belong to the same Local, or group, along with others who work alongside you. Sometimes, this consists of one workplace, and other times more than one workplace can be combined to form one Local; this varies depending on such things as size of the workplace, proximity of the workplace to others, and similarity of work performed. Each Local is autonomous which means you as member have a say in how your Local is run and how it represents the members. Each Local serves its members on the frontline of the work floor as representatives enforcing the union contract. The Local's autonomy remains accountable to the Constitution and Policies governing our Union.

It is common for members in a Bargaining Unit to form a Local. Depending upon geography and the number of members, some Locals are further divided into Sub-Locals.

The Locals look after their own affairs within the framework of the SGEU Constitution and Sector bylaws, but they also have their own bylaws on how to operate, elect officers and conduct union business.

How Does SGEU Operate?

Your union consists of a number of parts, all of which contribute to the operation and form the larger structure of the organization. Each part is described in the union's Constitution and Policy Manual, along with its mandate, role and composition, along with other details.

Annual Convention

The Convention is the supreme decision-making body of the union and meets annually. Each Sector elects delegates to the Convention using a formula based on the number of members in the Sector. Other delegates to Convention are specified in the SGEU Constitution.

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The Convention delegates determine union policies by debating and voting on resolutions submitted by the Sectors, Provincial Council and the union's constitutional Standing Committees.

The Convention has the power to amend the union's Constitution and to change the rate of union dues.

In addition, Convention delegates deal with reports from Union Officers, Sectors and Standing Committees; review the union's finances and adopt the budget.

Provincial Council

Provincial Council is the union's decision-making body and manages the affairs of the union between Annual Conventions. It is composed of the President, Sector Vice-Presidents, NUPGE Vice-President, SFL Vice-President, Treasurer and representatives elected from the six SGEU Sectors. The Council meets quarterly, at minimum.

Some of the functions of the Council include:

- Approving the membership of all Standing Committees
- Determining the terms and conditions of employment of the SGEU President and Secretary-Treasurer
- Recommending auditors
- Convening an emergency Convention if deemed necessary
- Recommending the union's representative to the Public Service Superannuation Board to act as member and representative of the Public Service
- Nominating the union's representative to the Public Service and Public Employees' Pension Plan
- Developing policies for good order and governance of the union as well as policies relating to bargaining and coordination of common bargaining issues

- Gathering and distributing information from Bargaining Units and informing the membership
- Selecting members of Council to represent the union in contract negotiations with the SGEU staff union

Table Officers

The SGEU Table Officers form the union's Administration Committee which meets as required, and has the authority to act on behalf of the Provincial Council between Provincial Council meetings. The Table Officers may call special and emergency meetings of the Provincial Council.

Your union's Table Officers include:

- SGEU President
- SGEU Secretary-Treasurer
- SGEU Sector Vice-Presidents (one from each Sector)
- SGEU Indigenous Vice-President
- NUPGE Vice-President (elected by Provincial Council to serve as SGEU's representative to NUPGE)
- SFL Vice-President (elected by Provincial Council to serve as SGEU's representative to the SFL)

Standing Committees

The composition, mandate and duties of the SGEU Standing Committees are outlined in the SGEU Constitution and Policy Manual.

Standing Committees develop policies, hold regular meetings and coordinate activities and events within the union, according to their mandate.

As of April, 2019, the Standing Committees are:

- Provincial Grievance Appeal Committee
- Administration Committee

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- Anti-Privatization Committee
- Education and Publicity Committee
- Fostering Acceptance of Indigenous Rights (FAIR) Committee
- Health and Welfare Trust Committee
- Human Rights/Equity Committee
- Long Term Disability Supervisory Committee
- Membership Constitution and Legislation Committee
- Occupational Health and Safety Committee
- Women's Committee

SGEU Staff

SGEU staff are a vital part of the union's ability to represent and provide services to members. They bring a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience to your union, and are located in one of our three offices: Regina (head office), Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

An Executive Director and five Directors provide important management and supervisory functions, as well as support to the senior leadership of the union. Our in-scope staff fall into one of the following broad categories:

- Administration
- Member Information Services and Information Technology
- Finance
- Long-Term Disability
- Health and Welfare Trust
- Communications and Research
- Labour Relations

Constitution and Policies

The SGEU Constitution and Policy Manual are your union's guidebooks or user manuals. Both documents contain rules, policies and guidelines that have been voted on by members at the Annual Convention or Provincial Council. These documents define how SGEU is governed and how it functions.

New sections can be added and amendments to existing material can be made to either document via a resolution at the Annual Convention.

The Constitution and Policy Manual are available online at www.sgeu.org, or through your Steward or one of the Union Offices.

Each Sector, Bargaining Unit and Local have bylaws or guidelines that are the main governing documents at the Bargaining Unit and Local level.

Your Union Dues

Unions are funded entirely by their members. Everyone who belongs to the union contributes a small portion of their wages and, in return, the money is used to provide a wide range of services to the members and for general union operations. Each member contributes a small amount to a common pool of money that, collectively, has more buying power for each individual member and the union as a whole.

Your dues are used for such things as hiring professional staff who provide service, support and representation for members; contract negotiations; arbitrations and legal costs; Steward training; member education; communication; organizing new workplaces; supporting the activities of the union's committees; and much more. A portion of your dues is also set aside in a strike defense fund, which is a savings account that helps provide financial assistance to members in the event of a strike or lockout.

Your union dues consist of a small percentage that is deducted from your regular pay. The amount of dues paid by members can be found in the SGEU Constitution and can only be changed by a vote of the members who are elected to attend the SGEU Annual Convention.

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Although the amount of dues you pay is minimal, they bring you many worthwhile benefits!

- Your union helps negotiate collective agreements or contracts that provide higher wages for you. Studies show that as a full-time unionized worker, you earn more than non-union workers.
- When you, your spouse or children need dental work or eyeglasses, your health benefits help pay the bill.
- When you're ill, you have paid sick leave.
- If someone in your family is sick or dies, you may have access to emergency family or bereavement leave.
- You will have a pension when you retire.
- If your job is abolished, you have bumping rights or access to severance pay.
- When you're treated unfairly at work, your union will represent you and try to resolve the problem with the employer.
- When your collective agreement is ignored or broken by the employer, your union can file a grievance or use problem-solving approaches to address the situation. You will have union leaders and professional staff available to assist in the process.
- To help develop your leadership skills and knowledge, the union will provide education and training courses, as well as bursaries and scholarships.
- To keep you aware of the union's activities and actions, the union will ensure a variety of communications channels are in place.
- When the government brings in legislation that takes away social programs and other benefits for workers and the unemployed, your union will fight for justice.
- Your union will launch campaigns to improve conditions in workplaces and communities, either alone or in solidarity with other unions and labour organizations.

- We know it's important for governments to implement worker-friendly budgets, policies and legislation, so we will be proactive with lobbying and advocacy work on behalf of our members to urge our elected provincial and federal politicians to keep the best interests of working people at the forefront when making decisions.

Your union dues deliver all of this and more, and they are also tax-deductible!

Just imagine if you had to cover the cost for any of these things on your own!

Paying union dues is like buying insurance. You might not need to use some of the services provided by your union, but when you do need help, the union is able to support you because of the money paid into the common pool by all members.

SGEU and the Broader Trade Union Movement

SGEU is a large and diverse union that is accountable to its members. We always put our members' interests first and work to improve your working conditions.

Sometimes, we join with other unions to tackle common causes, especially in the areas of social justice and economic prosperity for all working people and our communities.

Your union is also part of a number of larger labour organizations that provide support and assistance when needed.

SGEU is affiliated with the **Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL)** which is a provincial federation of unions representing over 100,000 working people in dozens of communities across Saskatchewan. As an affiliate of the SFL, SGEU has an even stronger voice on the provincial scene. The SFL provides



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coordination and advocacy on issues that affect all working people, such as occupational health and safety, pensions, labour standards, minimum wage, equal pay and child care. See www.sfl.sk.ca for more information about the SFL.

SGEU is also affiliated with the **National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)**. NUPGE is a federation of unions from across Canada, which includes almost 400,000 members who work mainly in delivering public services to the citizens in their home provinces.

Its mission as a national union is to:

- monitor provincial and federal labour laws and developments
- analyse the restructuring of social programs and public services
- report on and contribute to legislation affecting the workplace
- give its members a national presence through participation in the Canadian Labour Congress and internationally through Public Services International
- develop and share successful bargaining strategies with its component unions
- contribute to a national framework of services and solidarity to benefit all Canadian workers

NUPGE also assists its members by staying on top of national developments, with research and analysis in such areas as federal-provincial transfer payments, national standards for health and social programs, tax policies, Canada Pension Plan, and changes to Employment Insurance. You can find out more about NUPGE at www.nupge.ca.

Through NUPGE, SGEU is affiliated with the **Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)** which is the largest labour organization in Canada, bringing together dozens of national and international unions, provincial and territorial federations of labour and community-based labour councils to represent 3.3 million workers.

The CLC helps unions be a positive force for social change to improve Canada for everyone. Some of the work done by the CLC includes:

- Political advocacy for the creation of better and more secure jobs, better public pension plans and retirement security, a stronger public health care system, affordable and accessible child care, as well as legislative changes that strengthen workplace safety, collective bargaining rights and employment equity.
- Education programs in workplace health and safety, fighting racism and discrimination, media and public relations, economics, campaign management, human rights and global solidarity, as well as workplace representation and union Steward training.
- Nationally recognized research and analysis done by CLC staff on issues such as working conditions, health and safety, wages and benefits, healthcare, pensions and retirement security, immigration, training, employment insurance and social and economic equality.

More information about the CLC can be found at www.canadianlabour.ca.

Finally, on the broader stage, SGEU is a member of the **International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)** through our affiliation with the CLC. ITUC is the global voice of the world's working people. Its primary mission is the promotion and defense of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions. Its main areas of activity include trade union and human rights; economy, society and the workplace; equality and non-discrimination; and international solidarity.

ITUC has a close relationship with the Global Union Federations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It also works closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and several other United Nations specialized agencies. Visit www.ituc.csi.org if you'd like to learn more about the organization.

You and Your Workplace

Your Rights at Work

There are three primary areas that provide for and protect your rights at work:

- Your Collective Agreement
- Provincial legislation, regulations and statutes
- Federal legislation, regulations and statutes

Federally, one of the most important pieces of legislation that protects you is the ***Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms***, which is a part of the Constitution of Canada. The Constitution is the supreme law of Canada, and contains rules about how our country operates and the powers of the federal, provincial and territorial governments. All other laws must be consistent with the rules set out in the Constitution, otherwise they may not be valid. Since the Charter is part of the Constitution, it is the most important law we have in Canada.

The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* sets out rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society, including such things as:

- Freedom of expression, thought, belief and opinion;
- Right to democratic government;
- Right to live and seek employment anywhere in Canada;
- Indigenous peoples' rights;
- The right to equality; and
- Freedom of peaceful assembly and Freedom of association.

Provincially, the ***Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*** protects your right to dignity and equality. Human rights are so important that the Human Rights Code takes precedence over all other provincial laws.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is a provincial agency whose job is to protect and promote human rights and to discourage discrimination against everyone living in Saskatchewan.

Discrimination is unfair action taken against others because they belong to a certain group. It denies people benefits and opportunities that are necessary for a decent life, like jobs or housing. Discrimination can flow from prejudice, negative stereotypes, or a failure to consider the needs of others. Sometimes discrimination is deliberate and direct. It can include such things as racist insults, sexual harassment, or the refusal to hire people because of their age or religion. Discrimination can also be indirect or unintentional. An example would be a public service office that can only be reached by a flight of stairs. People who use walkers or wheelchairs are unable to use the service, even though no one intends to exclude them.

The *Human Rights Code* makes it against the law for someone to discriminate against you because of factors called “prohibited grounds” which include things like religion, marital status, family status (parent-child relationship); marital status sex (including pregnancy), sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability (mental and physical), age (18 or more); ancestry or nationality, and many others.



The Code also protects your fundamental right to freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and freedom of association, within legal limits.

Discrimination is prohibited in employment or occupations; education; housing; publications; public services (restaurants, stores, hotels, government services, etc.); contracts or purchase of property, and professional associations or trade unions. Employers, service providers and others have a duty to make reasonable efforts to assist people who could otherwise be denied opportunities because of gender, disability, religion, or other illegal grounds of discrimination. This is called the “duty to accommodate.” Accommodation is required unless it would cause an undue hardship. For example, employers may have to adjust working conditions or provide technical aids so people with disabilities can participate in the workplace.

More information about the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the process to file a complaint is available at www.saskatchewanhumanrights.ca.

The rights of working people in the province, whether or not they belong to a union, are protected by the **Saskatchewan Employment Act** (SEA), which applies to most employees and employers with some exceptions. This legislation provides for the minimum standards, however an employer can choose to exceed these standards. And, when you are a member of a union, the union will help to negotiate improvements to the minimum standards.

According to the SEA, workers are guaranteed some of the following minimum rights:

- Employees must be paid at least minimum wage for each hour worked or spent at the disposal of their employer.
- In most cases, an employer cannot fire an employee for missing work because of illness or injury.
- Employers can dismiss employees only for “just cause.”
- Employers must pay employees on their regularly scheduled paydays.
- Employers cannot discriminate against their employees by paying them differently for performing similar work based solely on the employee’s sex,

or on the basis of any of the prohibited grounds in The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

- “Similar work” means the work for the employer that is done in the same workplace, under similar working conditions and work that requires similar skill, effort, and responsibility to perform.
- Overtime must be paid at the rate of at least 1.5 times the employee's hourly wage rate
- Under occupational health and safety provisions in the SEA, you have:
 - The right to know the hazards at work and how to control them.
 - The right to find and control workplace hazards.
 - The right to refuse work, which you believe is unusually dangerous.

There are many more provisions under the SEA, which you can find at www.saskatchewan.ca/business/employment-standards. Just remember, these are minimum standards for workers, but your union membership means you have a Collective Agreement that gives you more than the minimum standards in most cases.

Respectful Behaviour and Protection from Harassment and Discrimination at Work

Respect and Dignity in the Workplace

We all deserve to be treated with respect and dignity in our workplace. When people at work offend, embarrass or humiliate us, it affects our wellbeing. It also hurts our working relationships and can lower our productivity. Over time, disrespect in the workplace can lead to an unhealthy work environment and a high rate of employee turnover. According to the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA), it is the responsibility of the employer to provide a safe and secure work environment for you. But as an employee, it is your duty to behave in a respectful manner.



What if you feel disrespected or face disrespectful behaviour at work?

If you feel you have been treated with disrespect, it's important to speak up about the incident. Politely but firmly explain ask the person to stop the behavior and explain the impact on you. If you don't feel comfortable speaking up on your own, seek support or assistance from your union Steward. If you feel that things are getting worse, speak with your Steward about filing a complaint. The employer has an obligation to deal with the situation so that your workplace is safe and healthy. Be sure to keep detailed records of the disrespectful behavior, including date and time, the offender, witnesses, etc. Keep copies of relevant documents like email or other electronic information. This will help in justifying your case. Your Steward will understand the sensitivity of the situation and will confidentially handle the issue.

What if you observe disrespectful behaviour at work?

Many time we witness disrespectful behaviour at work, even if it is not directed at us and we don't feel impacted by it. However, it's important for all of us to speak up if we see disrespectful behavior in the workplace

because it can be poisonous to the entire work environment. Try to speak informally and confidentially to the person who is being disrespected; state what you observed and ask if there is a way you can support them. Respect the person's wishes if they are uncomfortable and don't want to share the story. If they agree to speak to you about it, listen and encourage the person to contact a union Steward.

Remember, if a formal complaint is filed, you will be called upon as a witness to describe the incident, so it's important to keep detailed records of what you saw.

What if you are accused of disrespectful behaviour?

First and foremost, do your best to treat everyone in your workplace with dignity and respect, even if you don't always agree with them. If anyone complains about your behaviour, you should stop and reflect, and then work to change your behaviour. Sometimes, we might not realize or feel our behaviour is inappropriate but the impact upon the receiver might be negative. If your colleague files a complaint against you and you don't understand it or need advice, contact your union Steward. You can be disciplined by your employer for disrespectful behaviour. Remember, SGEU and all employers have zero tolerance for any kind of offensive behaviors or violence in the workplace.

It's important to note, although the union has a duty of fair representation for all its members, the victim of harassment would be the priority if an incident of harassment has occurred. If you think that you are being unjustly accused then speak to your union Steward. An investigation will be conducted before any further actions are taken.

According to the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA), all employers must develop a written policy to prevent harassment in the workplace. The employer must post the policy in the workplace and ensure it is implemented.

If you would like further information about harassment or discriminatory practices in the workplace, please refer to the appropriate sections of the *Saskatchewan Employment Act* (SEA) as well as the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Your Collective Agreement and Why It is Important

A Collective Agreement (sometimes referred to as a Collective Bargaining Agreement or Contract) is a legal contract negotiated, agreed to and signed by the employer and the union (often referred to as “the parties”).

Both the employer and the union are bound by law to abide by the terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement. It's like a “rule book” that defines working conditions and sets out the rights and responsibilities of the employer and the workers.

Some of the provisions contained in your Collective Agreement include:

- Definition of employment status (permanent, part-time, casual, etc)
- Hours of work
- Wages
- Vacation leave
- Sick leave
- Grievance procedures
- Disciplinary process

There can be many more. It's important to read and get to know your Collective Agreement. It will help you know what to expect at your workplace. And, it will help you learn when you have been treated unfairly and need to file a grievance.

Your agreement is unique to your Bargaining Unit, and may be different than contracts in other Bargaining Units and workplaces. If you have difficulty in understanding anything in your Collective Agreement, contact your Steward who can help explain things.

A copy of your Collective Agreement can be found on the SGEU website at www.sgeu.org.

Who decides what's included in your Collective Agreement?

Your Bargaining Committee negotiates your Collective Agreement on behalf of the members of your Bargaining Unit. However, you have input because members have a role in the bargaining process. It is important for you to attend your Local meetings to provide your input.

The SGEU Constitution explains the bargaining process in detail, including guidelines, role, responsibilities and composition of the Bargaining Committees.

In the early stages of the bargaining process, members are asked to provide their ideas about issues that are important to them. The committees report regularly to their members about the status of negotiations. And, when an agreement is reached, all members of a Bargaining Unit have the right to vote on whether to accept or reject it.

What to Do if You Have Questions or Run Into Problems at Work – Contact Your Steward!

Do you have questions about WORK?

Your contract, wages, hours, benefits and rights on the job? Work rules and policies in your employee code of conduct? How your union works and who the Local union officers are? Member events or meetings? Laws that protect your rights?

ASK YOUR STEWARD.

You and Your Workplace

The workplace can be complicated. Sometimes you feel like you have been treated badly by a coworker or your supervisor. And sometimes you have questions about a decision made by your employer. Other times, you believe your boss has not followed the rules outlined in the collective agreement. Or maybe you're worried about how to approach your supervisor to ask them to reconsider your request for time off. And, one day, maybe your supervisor asks you to come to a meeting to discuss something they believe you did wrong at work.

What should you do?

The first thing you should do is contact your Steward.

This is especially important if you are called in to a meeting with your supervisor that might lead to discipline. As soon as you find out about such a meeting, notify a Steward. They will provide advice and support, and will act as your representative to help resolve problems you encounter at your workplace.

If you are not able to find a Steward at your workplace, you should call the union office nearest to you and someone will assist you or arrange to have a Steward available.

Remember — you have the legal right to request union representation during meetings with supervisors and managers that could lead to discipline.

Once you discuss your situation with your Steward, you can decide what action to take.

Whether you have a question or need information, your Steward can help.

Who or What is a Steward?

A Steward is a union member responsible for handling members' problems in the workplace, including filing grievances; attending disciplinary meetings between the members and management; educating members on union policies and activities; and getting the members involved in the union. The Steward is the backbone of the union.

Stewards are members like you, often your coworkers, who volunteer to be the union's main point-person at your workplace.

They are elected by members, and serve a two year term, as per the SGEU Constitution.

SGEU has developed specific educational courses and material to equip Stewards with hands-on skills and knowledge so they are able to carry out their responsibilities. SGEU staff and leaders are available to answer questions or assist Stewards if they need support.

Stewards are there to answer your questions and queries and provide the information you need at work. They can provide advice or information about your collective agreement, the union and workplace issues.

Your Steward can help you in many ways:

Don't underestimate the power of your Steward — they have the same rights as your supervisor while they are representing you.



You and Your Union

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Member of SGEU

As a union member, you have both rights and responsibilities, which are spelled out in the union's Constitution and Policy Manual. If members know their rights and abide by their responsibilities, it makes the union stronger. And a stronger union is better for all of us.

What are some of your rights as a member of SGEU?

- You have the right to express your opinions to the union, and have them heard and respected.
- You have the right to receive information about union activities, events, etc.
- You have the right to participate in union education provided by SGEU.
- You have the right to vote in a fair and democratic process to decide who will fill leadership roles in the union.
- You have the right to see the union's budget and financial report. This can be found on the SGEU website at www.sgeu.org.
- You have the right to have your concerns resolved in a fair and respectful manner.
- You have the right to fair union representation.

What are some of your responsibilities as a member of SGEU?

- You should be aware of the union's policies and practices.
- You should read and try to understand your collective agreement, seeking assistance from your Steward if necessary.
- You should know the name and contact information of your Steward and other union leaders such as your Local Chairperson, Sector Vice-President and others.
- You should become familiar with steps to follow in case you encounter problems in the workplace.

- You should keep yourself updated about union actions, events and activities.
- You should participate in your Local meetings, union activities and encourage others to do so.
- You should respect SGEU policies at work and during union meetings, activities and events.

Education and Training Opportunities for SGEU Members

One of the important functions of SGEU is to educate our members so they have a better understanding of and can participate fully in union activities.

SGEU has been providing education for members in a blended format. Our priority has been in-class education where members from different Sectors and areas of the province get the opportunity to meet and exchange their experiences. SGEU relies on experiential learning as much as possible.



In-person classroom training is preferred for Stewards, other elected leaders or members and often cannot adequately be replaced with online or distance education. However, face-to-face education is often supplemented with online materials.

SGEU offers various training courses for members, Stewards and union leaders, both in the classroom and on our website. Your union is constantly developing relevant, new educational materials. If you have any specific educational needs or suggestions, please email MIS@sgeu.org and they will be considered as new courses are developed in the future.

What are some of the Training and Education Programs offered by SGEU?

Classroom Training

Leadership Development 10 – Introduction to the Role of a Steward

LD10 introduces members to the role of a union Steward within their workplace and SGEU. It deals with the qualities, roles and responsibilities of a Steward, basic concepts of grievances and the Steward's role in organizing and member engagement. Participants will become familiar with the structure of SGEU, establish skills in problem solving and gain confidence in their ability to perform the duties of a Steward in the workplace.

Length: 1 day

Pre-requisites: None. Open to all SGEU members.

Leadership Development 11 – The Respectful Workplace

The purpose of LD11 is to make participants aware of appropriate and inappropriate workplace behaviors and recognize appropriate responses to situations involving inappropriate workplace behaviors.

Length: 1 day

Pre-requisites: None. Open to all SGEU members.

Leadership Development 12 – Know your Collective Agreement

The LD12 course focuses on the language in your collective agreement, and its interpretation. It will be based on your specific collective agreement.

Length: 1 day

Pre-requisites: None. Open to all SGEU members.

Leadership Development 20A B C – Second Level Steward Training

Our LD20 course builds on the introductory Steward training and is comprised of three parts. The course provides more information about collective agreements, along with conflict resolution and grievance handling. Participants will practice problem-solving techniques and prepare and present grievances at Step 1. They will explore concepts such as Duty of Fair Representation and support for a representative workforce, as well as build on their skills in investigating and responding to members' concerns in a timely fashion.

Length: 20A (2 days) 20 B (2 days) and 20 C (2 days)

Pre-requisites: Leadership Development 10 and 11

Leadership Development 30 – Third Level Steward Training

In LD30, participants will continue exploring problem solving techniques and contract enforcement processes. They will have an opportunity to participate in collective bargaining, negotiation and arbitration practices.

Length: 4 days

Pre-requisites: Leadership Development 10, 11, and 20ABC

Leadership Development 62 – Ombudsman Training

This course equips participants with the information and skills needed to act effectively in the ombudsman role at SGEU events. The training is designed to strengthen participants' judgement in dealing with conflict situations and promoting a thoughtful and respectful climate for discussion, and teaches other skills necessary to build solidarity among union members.

Length: 3 days

Pre-requisites: None. Open to all SGEU members.

Leadership Development 70 – Unionism on Turtle Island

In LD70, participants explore many of the connections between Indigenous and labour struggles in Canada. Through this course, we identify our capacity as union members to work together with Indigenous peoples on common goals.

Length: 4 days

Pre-requisites: Leadership Development 10 and 11. Open to SGEU elected representatives only.

Online Training

Through a variety of online courses, SGEU members can learn how to support their coworkers in the workplace, run effective meetings or develop new insights on union and labour issues. Currently SGEU has online courses on new member orientation, role of a chairperson, parliamentary procedures, duty to accommodate and long term disability. These courses are informative, interactive learning opportunities and most take approximately one hour to complete. The online course offerings will continue to grow because it's an opportunity for important information to be shared with members in a timely and accessible manner.



New Member Orientation (LD5)

This session is perfect for Stewards who conduct orientation with new members. It introduces members to the benefits of being a part of SGEU, teaches the history of unions including an interactive timeline of activism in Canada, shows how SGEU is structured, how union dues are spent, and teaches participants about collective agreements, health and safety in the workplace, how to deal with workplace problems and how to become more active in the union. Each section is independent, so the participant can complete one section at a time or choose a path.

Parliamentary Procedure

This course teaches Bourinot's Rules, which is the standard set of procedural rules used at all SGEU meetings, to ensure meetings run effectively, appropriately and democratically. Members learn the key rules that must be followed in order to participate in and flow proceedings, including how to move motions, recruit others to second those motions, and vote for them.

Role of the Chairperson

Participants in this course learn the roles and responsibilities of a committee chairperson along with required skills and duties that need to be carried out in order to ensure a committee functions properly. The material includes tips to encourage full participation of committee members, how to stay focused on discussing relevant matters and ways to ensure effective decisions are made and carried out.

Duty to Accommodate

Participants learn about rules and responsibilities around the modification of job duties due to disability. This could mean the reassignment of an employee in cases where an employee is unable to meet the requirements of employment due to an injury or illness, or based on factors such as gender, family status, or religion.

Long Term Disability

SGEU has its own income protection plan for members unable to work due to illness or injury. In this course, participants learn about eligibility criteria, benefit amounts, how benefits are paid, plan structure, appeal process and vocational rehabilitation and return to work services.

Scholarships and Bursaries for Members and Their Dependents

SGEU is committed to supporting its members and their dependents in the pursuit of lifelong learning. Our scholarships and bursaries directory lists more than \$65,000 in scholarships and bursaries for post-secondary education including labour studies. Please visit our website for more details about the available awards and how to apply.

SGEU's Long Term Disability (LTD) Plan for Members

SGEU has its own LTD plan, which we are proud to say is the best in the province. Our plan ensures that our members are provided with income protection and/or services in case they are disabled by illness or injury.

Details about the plan can be found on the SGEU website (www.sgeu.org). Highlights of the plan include:

- Exceeds industry standards
- Provides 3 years own occupation
- Benefits equal 80 per cent of net pre-disability salary
- Cost of Living applied January 1st annually
- Benefits are non-taxable
- 3-step appeal process at no cost to the member
- In-house advocacy provided at no cost to the member for CPP, WCB, SGI claims/appeals
- Employee Assistance Program included



SGEU and YOU! Getting Involved in the Union

SGEU works for you but it also works because of you! The involvement, determination and unity of our members makes SGEU strong and it helps make membership worthwhile.

SGEU values every member. We want you to feel welcome in the union and at our events. We want to provide good service to members in their workplace. And, we want to focus on the issues that are important to you.

To do that, we need your input and your involvement.

Sometimes, members aren't sure how to get involved. Or some members might not have time in their busy lives to give much attention to the union. But, there are many ways to stay connected and to contribute.

Here are just some of the ways you can be involved in your union:

- Attend your Local union meetings, keep yourself updated.
- Stay informed by reading information sent to you by the union via email, Canada Post or in other ways.

You and Your Union

- When your Local, Sector or Bargaining Committee asks for your input or opinions, take a few minutes to respond.
- Convey the information you learn to other members.
- Follow us on social media, like and share our posts for others to see.
- Participate in the union's elections — by voting or running for a position — and encourage other members to do so.
- Know your union representatives at your workplace (i.e. Stewards and Local leaders).
- If you have suggestions or questions, connect with your Sector or Local elected leaders or contact the union office. We are always happy to hear from our members.
- Read and understand your collective agreement and the union's constitution, policies and bylaws.
- Attend union meetings and activities or volunteer to help. Bring your family or friends — there are often a lot of fun, family-friendly opportunities for everyone at our rallies or holiday and social events.
- Encourage your coworkers to get involved.
- Check out SGEU's union merchandise that includes everything from shirts and hats to coffee mugs and key chains.
- Find ways to stand up for and promote your union — be proud to be a member of SGEU!

How to Find Out About SGEU Activities and Events

- Website
 - Visit our website regularly at 🏠 www.sgeu.org.
- Social Media
 - Follow us on our social media accounts
Facebook 📺 @sgeu.sk / Twitter 🐦 @sgeu / Instagram 📷 @sgeunion
- Newsletters
 - Several of our Sectors distribute newsletters (online or printed) or other publications, containing information specific to their members.
 - SGEU publishes an online newsletter called Union Matters which is distributed to members via email and gets posted on the union website and through our social media platforms.
- Keep Your Contact Information Current
 - We can't provide you with up-to-date information or breaking news about events or important things like bargaining updates if we don't have your current contact information.
- Please be sure we have your cell phone number and personal email address, and update your contact information when necessary.
 - You can make changes or add details to your contact information by emailing MIS@sgeu.org.



Frequently Asked Questions

What are Stewards?

SGEU Stewards are the union's representatives who not only handle grievances, but also build unity and promote involvement among members in the workplace.

Stewards are the first people to speak to when workers have questions, concerns or need representation in the workplace. Although Stewards are not expected to solve every problem instantly and completely, they help by providing coworkers with useful information.

What is duty to accommodate?

Employers, service providers and others have a duty to make reasonable efforts to assist people who could otherwise be denied opportunities because of gender, disability, religion, or other illegal grounds of discrimination. This is called the "duty to accommodate."

Accommodation is required unless it would cause an undue hardship for the employer. For example, employers may have to adjust working conditions or provide technical aids so people with disabilities can participate in the workplace.

The *Saskatchewan Employment Act* defines accommodation as: "modifying the duties or reassigning the employee". This duty applies to all characteristics identified in the *Act* including: disabilities, family status, pregnancy, ancestry, and religion. Granting a leave of absence to recover from injury or illness, allowing a gradual return to work, altering work conditions, approving a transfer to another job, rearranging shifts, or bundling meaningful job duties in order to allow the employee to continue working. It may mean adjusting start/finish times to accommodate family issues.

What is the SGEU statement of equality?

Your union is committed to equality and providing a harassment-free environment during all union activities. As such, the union developed a statement of equality, which is read aloud at the start of each SGEU meeting, event and function, and which all members are expected to abide by.

The statement of equality is as follows:

All SGEU meetings and events will be held in an environment free of harassment and/or discrimination. SGEU has a zero tolerance for any harassing and/or discriminatory actions, behaviours and comments.

Harassment is any behaviour that undermines the dignity, self-esteem or security of an individual, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile or offensive environment.

Our union will not tolerate any forms of harassment and/or discrimination which violate any person's or class of person's right to be treated with dignity and respect. Such action by a member may result in immediate expulsion from the meeting or event by the Chair or Ombudsman.

What is the SGEU Ombudsman?

The SGEU Ombudsman is a member of the union who is trained to deal with informal complaints of harassment during SGEU meetings, conferences, annual general meetings, proposal gathering meetings, ratification votes, Provincial Council and Conventions. The Ombudsman is expected to promote respectful behavior and encourage full participation during SGEU events.

The Ombudsman is designated to work closely with the Chair at every SGEU event, and acts in accordance with the SGEU Constitution and Policies.

The Ombudsman may investigate and gather information on member complaints. Based on the information gathered, they determine how to respond and what to recommend. If the case is particularly complicated and they can't resolve the matter themselves, the Ombudsman makes recommendations to the Membership Constitution & Legislation (MC&L) Committee. This is the body tasked with investigating complaints within SGEU.

It is important to remember that the Ombudsman keeps all information confidential and works directly with the person or persons who think someone has been unfair to them.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I find out more about SGEU?

SGEU is a large organization, whose structure can sometimes seem complicated. The longer you are active and the more questions you ask, the more familiar you will become with your union.

Our website www.sgeu.org contains detailed information and is a good source of information about SGEU.

The online New Member Orientation material and a number of SGEU training courses, such as Leadership Development 10 and Leadership Development 20, provide information about the structure and operation of the union. The Steward Manual handbook and Steward Pocket Calendar are other resources. The union Constitution and Policy Manual, which are available on the SGEU website, are also good sources of information.

What is the SGEU scholarship and bursary process?

The SGEU Education team manages the bursary program and are the only ones who see the full applications. When the applications are received by the office, they are assigned a number (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.). The first two pages of the application are removed to protect the identity of the applicant. The rest of the application package, including the essay, is vetted to ensure there are no self-identifying marks. Once this process is complete the vetted applications are forwarded to the bursary selection committee for their review — they do not know the applicants' names or the relationship of the applicant (i.e. whether a member or a dependent).

The bursary committee reviews the anonymous applications and awards points on the essay portion of each application and also uses a point system for a variety of factors such as income, equity, whether the applicant has dependents (and if so, how many dependents) and whether the applicant is going to a private or public institution. The bursary committee returns the graded applications to the SGEU education office. The graded applications are matched with their original numbered top portions. Those applications receiving the highest points are awarded the scholarships and bursaries.

SGEU believes that this process is the most equitable way of handling the many applications we receive annually. If you have applied and have not received an award, we encourage you to continue pursuing bursaries or scholarships through the SGEU Education department.

Does SGEU offer any education programs for members?

SGEU has a number of programs both online and in-person. Through our website, you can access our online training courses on new member orientation, parliamentary procedures, role of a chairperson, duty to accommodate and others. We are working on new courses to add to our online program — please visit our website www.sgeu.org to learn more.

We have leadership development courses specifically designed for Stewards. These courses are offered to facilitate the work of the Stewards in the workplace.

Who runs the union?

The union is run by its members. When you become a member of SGEU, you have the right to run for an elected position or elect representatives to be the leaders of your union. You also elect the members of the Bargaining Committee who represent you in negotiating a new Collective Agreement at the bargaining table with management.

What is a job classification?

Your job classification describes the specific work you do in your position at the workplace. Your wages are linked to your job classification. Classification procedures vary from contract to contract. You can get specific information on your job classification by consulting your collective agreement or by contacting human resources, your employer or your Steward.

I believe my job is incorrectly classified; is there anything I can do?

You can ask for a classification review. The review will be performed by the employer or a joint committee, depending on your collective agreement. If you are not satisfied with the re-classification decision, you may appeal

Frequently Asked Questions

the outcome. Please be aware that the classification procedures vary from contract to contract. Check your Collective Agreement to know your classification rights. If you require further support in understanding your contract or help in requesting a classification review, contact your Steward.

What does seniority mean, how does it work and what is it used for?

Seniority broadly means length of service with an employer or the amount of time an individual has served in a job or worked for an organization. Seniority clauses and requirements are defined in your collective agreement. The seniority entitlement calculation, seniority roster and seniority appeal process are also described in your agreement. If you need help in understanding the seniority section of your collective agreement, contact your Steward.

What does the union do?

The primary job of the union is to serve its members by negotiating, interpreting, and enforcing a Collective Agreement that establishes working conditions, wages and other benefits for all workers under its jurisdiction. The union also protects workers' rights by representing them to resolve day-to-day problems on the job such as discipline, violations of seniority, harassment, discrimination, or other management abuse. Additionally, the union addresses other workplace concerns such as safety and health issues.

How can I find out what's going on in the union?

You can stay informed by attending union Local meetings and participating in the activities of your Local. Your Steward and Local union officers can answer questions you may have about specific union programs and policies. Additionally, you can stay informed about union activities by regularly checking the SGEU website and following SGEU on social media. Be sure to read newsletters, emails, texts and mail sent to you by your union. And, ensure the union has accurate contact information for you, including your mailing address, cell phone number and personal email address.

There are certain terms used by workers, union members, employers, the government and others when speaking about unions, the labour movement and the workplace. As with many things, we're not always familiar with the terminology that is used. Some of the most common terms include:

Arbitration

A method of settling disputes outside of the legal court system, through the intervention of an impartial third party, either an individual or a board/panel. If both sides agree to be bound by the arbitrator's decision, it is called binding arbitration. Arbitration is often used to settle major grievances and contract interpretation disputes.

Arbitrator

An impartial person usually chosen by both the employer and union and sometimes appointed by government. An arbitrator is a professional that works to increase communication between two sides of a dispute to help resolve a dispute between the parties.

Bargaining Agent

The union designated by the provincial Labour Relations Board as the exclusive representative of all employees in a Bargaining Unit for the purposes of collective bargaining.

Bargaining Unit

Group of employees united together by the provincial Labour Relations Board, for representation by a union for the purpose of collective bargaining and covered by the same collective agreement.

Bylaws

These are the set of rules that apply to all union members as well as the union's governing bodies, standing committees, Sectors, Locals and other union entities. The bylaws are created and voted on by members of the union.

CLC

The Canadian Labour Congress is the largest labour organization in Canada and represents more than three million workers by bringing together dozens of unions, federations of labour and labour councils under its umbrella. SGEU is affiliated with the CLC.

Check-off

The practice where the employer automatically deducts the required union dues from an employee's wages and remits these funds to the union.

Collective Agreement (also called Collective Bargaining Agreement or Contract)

A legally-binding written contract, arrived at through the process of negotiations, which covers such things as the employee's wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment. This written agreement between the Union and the Employer is for a definite period of time, defines the rights of employees and the processes for resolving disputes or handling issues that arise during the term of the agreement.

Collective Bargaining (also called Negotiations)

A process where the Union and Employer make offers and counter-offers back and forth regarding their employment relationship, for the purpose of reaching a mutually acceptable collective agreement and the execution of a written document that is binding for both the Employer and the Union.

Disability

An impairment that affects a person's life activities and may be present from birth or occur any time during life. It may emerge from cognitive development, intellectual, mental, physical or sensory factors or a combination of these. Disability has also been defined as any severe and prolonged condition that inhibits a person from performing routine daily activities.

Discipline

Discipline is the action taken by an employer against the employee for any wrongdoing or misconduct at work, and can range from a simple verbal warning to a written warning, temporary suspension or even dismissal. The discipline is generally intended to help correct an employee's behavior.

Discharge / Dismissal

The act of removing or terminating someone from their job. If an employer does not have just cause to terminate you from your job, you may be able to file a grievance asking to be reinstated. You may also be able to file a grievance if you are terminated due to misconduct or work performance.

Discrimination

Treating a person or persons differently, negatively or adversely because they belong to a certain group or have certain characteristics. Discrimination on the basis of religion, creed, marital status, family status, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, color, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, race or perceived race, receipt of public assistance and gender identity is against the law.

Duty of Fair Representation

The union's legal duty to represent every employee in a Bargaining Unit equally, in good faith and without discrimination. Representation must not be arbitrary or in bad faith. If a union fails to properly represent its member, a member can file a complaint against the union with the provincial Labour Relations Board.

Duty to Accommodate

As defined by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, employers, service providers and others have a duty to make reasonable efforts to assist people who could otherwise be denied opportunities because of disability, religion or other grounds of discrimination. The employer and service provider have

an obligation to adjust rules or practices for enabling members to participate fully. It might include alternative arrangements be made to ensure the full participation. If the employer can prove that such accommodation is too costly or creates health or safety risks for others in the workplace, then it is called undue hardship and the employer is not obligated to provide the accommodation.

Employment Equity

Ensuring equitable representation of groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, racialized people and people with disabilities in the workplace, through hiring, promotion, wages and other aspects of employment. Employment equity activities seek to eliminate barriers that create discriminatory practices and deny access to jobs to members of a designated group, and to address past discriminatory practices.

Employment Standards

Set by the provincial government, these are the minimum standards that an employer must provide to an employee, and apply to all workers whether they belong to a union or not. Employers can exceed the standards but cannot offer their employees less than what is guaranteed by the *Saskatchewan Employment Act*. These standards usually refer to minimum wages, maximum hours of work, vacation and statutory holiday provisions and other working conditions. One of the benefits of belonging to a union is that the union can improve these basic provisions through the collective bargaining process which is not applicable to non-unionized workplaces.

Grievance

Written complaint against the employer by one or more employees or a union concerning an alleged breach of the collective agreement or an alleged injustice. The collective agreement usually defines the procedure for handling grievances. A grievance is usually filed on your behalf by your Steward or the union.

Grievance Procedure

Your collective agreement usually outlines a fair, step-by-step process which sets timelines and procedures for resolving grievances. It is very important to file a grievance as soon as possible because your right to file a grievance expires after the defined time limit set out in your collective agreement. A Steward or the union will file a grievance on your behalf and help you understand more about the process. If you believe you have been wrongfully treated at work because of a breach of the collective agreement or federal or provincial labour legislation, contact your Steward immediately.

Grievor

A union member who is the victim of an alleged unjust decision or action by the employer, based on the collective agreement and federal and provincial laws, can file a grievance and is referred to as the grievor.

Harassment

Harassment is any unwelcome or unwanted action by any person against another. It can be a verbal or physical action, either a single incident or on a repeated basis, which intimidates, humiliates, insults, degrades or threatens the victim.

Using real or perceived power to intimidate, insult, abuse, devalue or humiliate someone through such things as name-calling, jokes, graffiti, insults, threats, rude treatment, or written, verbal or physical abuse. It can happen once or repeatedly, and is prohibited by human rights laws. Personal harassment (harassment not based on a prohibited ground for discrimination) is also covered by some collective agreements, provincial legislation and workplace policies.

Indigenous Peoples

A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. In Canada, this refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Insubordination

In the workplace, insubordination refers to the willful refusal by an employee to carry out an instruction given by their supervisor or manager. If proven, insubordination creates the grounds for discipline or discharge of an employee. To be classified as insubordination, certain factors must be involved, including: an order was given by a supervisor, it was clearly communicated to the employee, the person giving the order was someone in a position of authority and the employee refused to obey without having an acceptable legal reason.

Just Cause

The basic principle underlying most disciplinary procedures is that management must have just cause, or an objectively valid reason, for imposing discipline or terminating an employee. The burden of proof is on the employer; the employer must be able to prove they have just cause for disciplining or firing an employee in order for it to be upheld.

Labour Relations Board

A quasi-judicial board established under provincial legislation to administer labour law, including certification of trade unions as bargaining agents, investigation of unfair labour practices and other functions prescribed under the legislation.

Language

The words used in a collective agreement to define the rights and obligations to which the union and the employer have agreed. Sometimes the union and the employer do not agree on the meaning of the words. The grievance procedure can be used to resolve such disputes, including seeking adjudication/arbitration to decide what the language means.

Lay-off

A worker's temporary, prolonged or final separation from employment due to financial reasons or a shortage of work.

Lockout

A labour dispute in which the employer refuses to allow employees to work or closes its establishment in order to force a settlement on the employer's terms. This sometimes happens when an employer tries to punish workers for refusing to accept a bad offer in collective bargaining.

NUPGE

National Union of Public and General Employees is a national union representing approximately 400,000 members. SGEU is affiliated with NUPGE.

Occupational Illness

Illnesses caused by health hazards in the workplace. These conditions result from exposure to a chemical or biological substance, a physical agent (an energy source such as noise) or other stressors (such as harassment and work demands) capable of causing harm. The time that it takes an illness to develop after exposure to a health hazard is called the "latency period"

Pay Equity

The principle that there should be equal levels of pay/remuneration for all workers who perform work of equal value. Pay equity requires that female-dominated groups be paid at the same level as male-dominated groups for work that is judged to be of equal value. A methodology is used to identify wage gaps, and the salary for women doing that work in question is raised to that of the men.

Probationary Period

The probationary period for any employee is a span of time during which a new or existing employee receives extra supervision and coaching, either to learn new work or to improve their performance. The probation period is specified in the collective agreement. Usually, all employees except term employees have to serve an initial probation period before being appointed to permanent status. The probation can be extended if the employee is not able to meet the expectations for the position by the end of the initial probationary

period. Upon the successful completion of the initial probationary period, an employee will be afforded the appropriate seniority and employment security rights of a permanent employee. The employer can terminate workers without just cause during the probationary period.

Progressive Discipline

Progressive discipline refers to the process used to discipline an employee and includes a number of steps the employer must follow, as described in your collective agreement. The process is intended to correct the behavior by applying progressively more severe disciplinary action if the behaviour does not change. In general, the process starts with a verbal warning, a disciplinary letter could follow, then a suspension from work and possibly ending in dismissal. However, in the instance of serious misconduct, the employer may bypass earlier steps and immediately apply a more harsh form of discipline. If the employer does not follow the steps involved in the progressive discipline process, or cannot justify why certain steps were bypassed, you should speak to your union Steward about filing a grievance.

Prohibited Grounds

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of a number of factors that are referred to as prohibited grounds. These include race or perceived race, creed, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, disability, age, nationality, ancestry, place of origin, or receipt of welfare. Visit www.saskatchewanhumanrights.ca for more information.

Ratification Vote

The process of voting for or against accepting a proposed new collective agreement or contract. Each member of the affected Bargaining Unit is eligible to vote. The employer representatives also vote on whether their side agrees to accept the new agreement. The new contract can only be signed and become effective following the ratification of both parties. If either side turns down the agreement, the bargaining committees go back to the bargaining table to engage in further negotiations.

Seniority

A term that describes an employee's status compared to other employees, mainly used to determine the order in which they will be considered for promotion, transfer, lay-off, vacation entitlement, etc. Most collective bargaining agreements calculate seniority by total length of service with the employer.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment that humiliates, intimidates or otherwise harms the victim. It includes verbal, physical or visual acts, either one time or repeated. Other forms of sexual harassment could involve sexual remarks, jokes with sexual overtones, sexual advances, display of offensive pictures or photographs, threats, leering, physical contact like touching, patting, sexual or physical assault, etc. For any type of harassment, impact upon the victim has to be considered rather than the intent of the harasser.

SFL

Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is an umbrella federation of over 35 unions representing over 100,000 members. SGEU is affiliated with the SFL.

Solidarity

The fundamental principle of trade-unionism best exemplified by the slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all." In practice this means that all members of the union-movement agree to help one another in their struggles for fair wages, safe workplaces, better benefits and human rights. Solidarity extends beyond the union-movement to other groups struggling for human rights and social justice.

Steward (also called Union Steward or Shop Steward)

A union Steward is a Bargaining Unit member elected by a group of fellow members or appointed by union officials to perform union representation duties at the workplace. If any member has concerns about their rights at work or feels the collective agreement has not been followed, they should first contact their Steward. The Steward is also responsible for educating members on union policies and activities and getting members involved in the union.

Strike

A stoppage of work or refusal to work (or continue to work) by employees, meant to show union solidarity and put pressure on the employer to take their concerns seriously during a labour dispute. A strike is usually the last stage of collective bargaining when all other means have failed.

Strikebreaker (also called Scab)

A person who continues to work or who accepts employment to replace workers who are on strike.

Strike Mandate

Achieved through a vote of all members of the Bargaining Unit, a strike mandate is an important tool for successful bargaining, and means the members have given their elected bargaining committee the authority to call a strike or initiate other job action if necessary. An affirmative strike mandate sends a clear message to the employer that the union's members stand behind their bargaining committee and the proposals put forward by the union. A strike mandate does not necessarily mean that there will be a strike, however, it gives the bargaining committee the authority to do so when and if they deem it is necessary.

Term

The negotiated length of the collective agreement, during which time it will remain enforced. The term is defined in the respective collective agreement.

Unfair Labour Practice

Actions or activities of an employer or a union that are prohibited by the *Saskatchewan Employment Act*. For example, the union might complain that the employer is discriminating against the chair or Steward of the union Local. Or the employer might complain that the union is staging a strike without proper authority. Labour laws provide processes for filing unfair labour practice complaints with the provincial labour relations board.

Union Busting

Efforts by the employer (or lawyers and professional consultants hired by the employer) to make workers lose faith in, quit or refuse to join unions.

Without Prejudice

A statement (e.g. "We withdraw the grievance, without prejudice.") used to clarify that current action will not affect future rights and actions, even when the facts are the same.



Member's Name: _____

Member's Local: _____

Member's Sector: _____

Union Steward: _____

Local Chair: _____

Sector Vice-President: _____

Other Contacts: _____



December 2019