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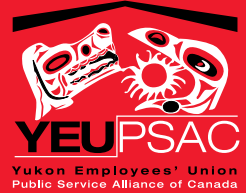


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Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1C9



YEU NEWS

All About YEU – Your Union January 2009



Posted on www.yeu.ca Jan. 26

Agreement conflicts, pension issues, legal questions, quality of care Rural hospital transfer 'plan' questioned

The Yukon government is entering into a management agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation (YHC) to transfer control of the Watson Lake Hospital to the corporation.

This move has been met with skepticism by many, and fierce opposition by others. Concern among the employees at the hospital and health centre is widespread. The community itself appears divided on the issue.

The plan was developed without consultation with the employees. Once the move was announced, nursing staff at the Watson Lake Hospital took proactive action by preparing a thoughtful, well researched alternative to the move entitled *Our Vision for Excellent Health Care in Watson Lake*.

YEU sent an open letter to Premier Fentie on January 14, and a petition opposing the move began circulating the community. On Monday, January 19, government and YHC officials finally held

meetings in Watson Lake to respond to the controversy.

A closed meeting was held with hospital staff, and in the evening a public meeting took place in the Civic Centre. Public Service Commissioner Pat Daws, Health & Social Services Deputy Minister Stuart Whitley, and YHC representatives Craig Tuton (Chair) and Joe MacGillivray (CEO) attended to explain the plan. The Yukon Employees' Union was represented by President Butterworth and 1st Vice President Loralee Kesler.

The union welcomed the opportunity to discuss the matter, and hopes that the door will now be open to improved communication. However, the answers and explanations provided, while helpful, fell well short of addressing the wide-ranging concerns. In terms of the union's primary mandate – protection of its members and maintenance of their rights – most issues remain unresolved.

Hospital Chair Tuton brushed

aside concerns about the difficult issues relating to existing collective agreements. He does not believe that the move into a different collective *continued on page 2*

More bureaucracy for Workers' Advocate Office?

It was a bad idea 15 months ago – and the government knew it. Yet now it's back.

After abandoning its plan to add a management position to oversee the operation of the Workers' Advocate Office, the Yukon government has again advertised for a manager.

The position would supervise the Workers' Advocate (a position identified in the *Workers' Compensation Act*), and remove responsibilities established by legislation.

It creates an unnecessary level of bureaucracy – one that removes

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Watson Lake hospital transfer

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agreement will be a concern, and offered assurances to the employees that their benefits and job security will be protected. YEU suspects he may not have been fully briefed on the collective agreement considerations, or the legal issues in play.

The transfer would result in significant collective agreement conflicts because 3 separate agreements are in place with two unions. More issues will arise because terms of employment are governed by different legislation.

Nurses working at the Watson Lake facility are employed under terms of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*; nurses at the Whitehorse General Hospital by the *Canada Labour Code*.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation has suggested to the employees that workers affected by the transfer would “have the best of all agreements”. This is reassuring, of course. But it carries potential difficulties if different pay and benefit levels are established for positions providing similar services.

The Public Service Commission considers this action to be a ‘sale’ of the Watson Lake Hospital to YHC, although it has been repeatedly described as a ‘transfer’ by YHC and the government.

The choice of words is more than a question of semantics. The government would prefer that the provisions of the *Public Service Transfer Agreement* did not apply. Our information suggests that

those provisions are indeed applicable. The government would need to terminate the employees so the Yukon Hospital Corporation could rehire them. This action is prohibited under terms of the existing collective agreements.

In reality, the move is an attempt to contract out Watson Lake Hospital services to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The Yukon Employees’ Union is seeking guidance from PSAC in Ottawa on the legal ramifications of the proposal. YEU has also requested that the current collective agreement’s negotiator review the situation. Finally, the union is carefully evaluating the impact the move would have on the employee’s pensions.

One of the questions troubling union members is the implementation period. Mr. Tuton explained that while the transfer would take place immediately, a one-year evaluation period would allow for ongoing review. The transfer would not become permanent until the end of this period, leaving the employees in a year-long limbo.

The union has been told that a “Letter of Intent” was signed between the government and the Yukon Hospital Corporation on January 15. The letter allows YHC to begin an evaluation of the transfer, and hire a project manager to oversee the Watson Lake Hospital during the transition.

Mr. Tuton advised that the firm Kobayashi & Zedda has been hired to evaluate the function of a new acute care hospital, examine the services it could reasonably con-

tain, and determine the number of beds appropriate within a facility of that size.

The decision to carry out an evaluation *after* the transfer is brought into effect is unfortunate, because it directly contradicts the recommendation of the *Yukon Health Care Review*. It is curious that of the 40 recommendations contained in that review, only the Watson Lake Hospital was singled out for action.

YEU welcomes another Local

Workers at Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services have joined YEU and PSAC.

YEU President Laurie Butterworth welcomed the new members. “Our union is delighted to have the employees of Many Rivers join our component. As the largest labour union in the territory, we offer them strength, support, advice and training opportunities. We are indeed fortunate to gain access to the knowledge, experience and vision of Many River’s employees.”

Many Rivers formed in 1969, with a staff of one. They now work in 12 Yukon communities. The 28 new members employed there provide individual and group counselling, support groups and workshops.

Negotiations leading to a collective agreement will take place in the near future. The Canada Industrial Relations Board issued the certificate on January 14.

YEU from the President



I hope all our members and families had a peaceful and joyful Christmas, and welcome everyone to 2009.

YEU's new year opened on a very positive note with the certification of our newest Local, Many Rivers Counselling and Support Services. I'm very pleased to have these new members come aboard, and I look forward to a long and fruitful association.

The new year also brought some unwelcome news from the Yukon government employer. As a result, we begin 2009 with two initiatives intended to protect our member's rights and maintain the current high level of service quality they provide to the community.

Watson Lake Hospital Transfer

I travelled to Watson Lake with 1st Vice President Kesler on January 19 and 20 to meet with staff at the Watson Lake Hospital. As described in our story earlier, representatives of the YHC and the Yukon government were in attendance to present their plans for

the facility and staff. I'm pleased that our members finally had the opportunity to speak directly with the decision-makers. We will continue to monitor the situation.

On a disappointing note, the petition circulating Watson Lake had to be withdrawn due to the actions of a few individuals. These people interfered with the community's democratic rights by destroying signed copies of the petition because they themselves did not agree with its message. In an effort to reduce community tension, we will keep the remaining signed copies until such time as a decision is reached whether or not to proceed again with its circulation.

Workers Advocate Office

I'm perplexed as to why, fifteen months after scrapping the idea of placing a new level of bureaucracy above the Workers' Advocate position, the Department of Justice would again begin recruitment.

The independence of the office is essential to prevent political interference in their efforts to support workers. Further discussions with government representatives are taking place.

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the current direct relationship between Workers' Advocate and the Deputy Minister.

The first time this idea was brought forward, YEU pointed out that the proposed new position would damage the independence of the office, and reduce workers' ability to find help and support when needed with the Yukon Workers' Compensation, Health and Safety Board.

YEU also maintains that the proposed change would likely be in violation of the *Workers' Compensation Act*. This interpretation is supported by "Prospects for the Future" – a report commissioned by the Department of Justice in December, 2006. The report notes that any changes to the reporting relationships at the Workers' Advocate Office "would likely require statutory amendment".

The report goes further, by arguing that the independence of the office must be maintained. It states that, "This independence is vital if its role is to be able to provide, and to be seen as providing, independent expert advice to injured workers".

The Yukon government abandoned their plan to change the Workers' Advocate structure in September, 2007, after concerns about the idea became public.

YEU once again urges the government to abandon their attempt to hamstring a strong and effective Workers' Advocate office.

Hey YEUth!

Did you know that at PSAC, 'youth' are defined as 30 years old or younger?

Did you know that at YEU, 'youth' are defined as 35 years old or younger?

Looks like **35 is the new 30!**

Take advantage of it. There are many opportunities for you to get involved.

Just call, email or look for the PSAC and YEU Youth Committees on Facebook.

The **PSAC North Regional Youth Committee** is developing bargaining proposals for upcoming negotiations.

The **YEU Youth Committee** is _____ (fill in the blank and let's get started!)

Jutta Hopkins-Lecheminant
YEU Youth Director

YEUP training opportunities

TUB. Talking Union Basics Course

February 20 and 21, 2009
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

The T.U.B. course is invaluable for Shop Stewards, **but all members are encouraged to become better informed.**

This course covers:

- knowing your rights;
- protecting your rights;
- exercising your rights; and
- improving your rights

by introducing you to your Collective Agreement, teaching problem-solving techniques through the grievance process, and by explaining the structure of PSAC and the collective bargaining process. **A Union is only as strong as its members. Find out how you fit in!**

NOTE: The T.U.B. course is a prerequisite for all PSAC in-residence courses.

The PSAC encourages members from all equity groups to apply. Please advise this

office of any special needs, in advance, so arrangements can be made.

Registration deadline Monday, February 2, 2009.

To register or for further information regarding the course, reimbursement of loss of salary, travel expenses or family care, call Nancy Debreceni or Shawna Dalley at 867-667-2331 (Toll free: 1-888-YEU-2331), or e-mail debrecn@psac.com or dalley@psac.com



National, Aboriginal, Inuit, Métis Network

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR UNION, OUR RIGHTS

An Introduction to the PSAC for Aboriginal Members

February 27 and 28, 2009
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

This course is open to all aboriginal members of the PSAC.

Objectives: By the end of this course participants will be able to:

- understand the role of union(s) in advancing Aboriginal rights in our workplaces, our union and our communities;
- examine structure, resources and decision-making in the PSAC;
- explore ways that participants can become more active in the PSAC through their national, regional and local structures/bodies;
- articulate and take steps towards developing an action plan to address Aboriginal rights issues in our workplaces, union and communities.

Aboriginal members interested in this training are asked to contact Nancy Debreceni at the Whitehorse Regional Office @ 667-2331 or 1-888-938-2331 or fax application to 633-5347.

Deadline to apply is February 9, 2009.



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Mon-Thurs 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Fridays 8:30 am – 12:00 pm

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Please notify YEU about address and name changes. Call or fax Linda Bidrman – or email lbidrman@yeu.ca.

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YEUCalendar

YEU Monthly Executive Meeting

2nd Thurs., 6:30-9:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y010 Monthly Meeting

2nd Wed., 5:00-7:00 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y017 Monthly Meeting

4th Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y023 Monthly Meeting

1st Thurs., Noon

Local Y025 Monthly Meeting

3rd Wed., 7:30 p.m., YEU Hall

Local Y026 Monthly Meeting

3rd Thurs., 7:00 p.m., Dawson City

PSAC Regional Access Committee

3rd Thurs., 5:15 p.m., YEU Hall

Aboriginal Peoples Committee

1st Fri., Noon

Racially Visible Committee

1st Wed., 5:00-7:00 p.m.

PSAC Regional Women's Committee

1st Mon., Noon

Pride Committee

2nd Tues., Noon