

SUMMARY OF THEMES DISCUSSED - JUNE 15, 2022

CONTENTS

Union Education, Outreach & Mobilization	1
Member Engagement, Public Relations, and Social Justice.....	4
Bargaining – the Bigger Picture	5
Additional Discussion Points	6

Electives under discussion during this strategic planning session

- Building Leadership and Capacity at the Local level (June 14)
- **Union Education, Outreach and Mobilization (June 15)**
- **Member Engagement, Public Relations and Social Justice (June 15)**
- **Bargaining – the Bigger Picture (June 15)**
- Representation – Stewards and Staff (June 16)
- YEU's Political Positions; Activism and how we get there (June 16)
- Open Space – bring your union building topics for discussion (June 14 & 16)

On June 17, each of these topics will be reviewed with an eye to establish the Union's priorities, a sense of timelines and who should be responsible and who should be accountable for these action items.

The following summary reflects the discussions from June 15.

UNION EDUCATION, OUTREACH & MOBILIZATION

Following a presentation by labour organizer and activist Farris Sobhani, an Educator with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, participants reflected on gaps and challenges in union education, outreach & mobilization. They also shared thoughts on what changes they would like to see, actions they can take, and actions they would like their local or mother union to take.

Jamboard link for raw notes from the session: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/1XGZUDCmRrNqkle1-ZjsGAyqLTjnngtwDT36Kx5WhPow/edit?usp=sharing>

Gaps and Challenges in union education, outreach & mobilization
Members are afraid to rock the boat and ask for more for fear of being “greedy”
New immigrants and those on work permits are afraid to put their jobs at risk; they don’t know about the labour laws that protect them
Young workers don’t realize their benefits were fought for by unions
People who’ve had “good” bosses have never had to think about certain worker protections, and do not appreciate the importance of these tools
Workers are used to pushing down feelings at work. Agitation brings unpleasant things to the surface. Small-town mentality: don't want to create conflict within community
People hate meetings! Need to rethink what member engagement is beyond meeting attendance
High turnover among staff is a challenge. Silver lining could be that when people move to the Yukon they are looking to make new connections. An opportunity to reach out and build solidarity.
The confidentiality of the grievance process can perpetuate bad behaviour by bosses

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
"Union is a verb" — reignite the idea that being in a union is something you actively participate in	<p>Adjust how we speak about the union. If you tell workers the union is a service they pay for, they won't feel connected to it. The union is the workers.</p> <p>Put workers in the driver's seat. Signing a contract isn't the end goal. Aim to deal with the root problems in capitalist system.</p> <p>Agitation: look for questions you can ask to get people to talk about the things that are upsetting them at work</p> <p>Rather than filing a grievance, collective action may be an effective option (when issues are widely felt). Both may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Encourage union renewal and building strength to balance power in the workplace between employer and employees. The old militant unions were much more powerful, than today's unions.</p> <p>Unions are the workers in them. They are workers taking collective action on the worksite. Provide tools and support for locals to take direct collective action.</p>
Seek out and nurture emerging leaders and activists	<p>Social mapping: people more likely to get involved if the person who asks them is someone they like, respect and listen to. Seek out natural leaders and influencers who others look up to.</p> <p>Think small: who is active on the work site? What are people already doing? Can we create opportunities to talk about union issues more often?</p>	Provide training for local organizer roles

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
	<p>Create local organizer roles (with training) and encourage ad hoc volunteers. "Reach out and grab someone"</p> <p>"you can get more done via your union than you can on Twitter" - need to convince younger workers unions matter through action</p> <p>Some immigrant workers bring union experience from their home countries. Reach out to them and extend ownership/autonomy of their union and their role in it here.</p>	
Community cohesion is "gasoline for solidarity"	<p>Social events</p> <p>People need connection; we can provide a sense of belonging</p> <p>"Conversation" can be more powerful than "communication" (two-way, driven by empathy)</p>	<p>Facilitate, encourage, and support collaboration and partnership among locals and community groups to co-host social events and training opportunities</p>

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC RELATIONS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Following a presentation by Canadian Labour Congress social change activist, digital campaigner and organizer Laurie Antonin, participants reflected during a plenary group session on gaps and challenges in member engagement, public relations, and social justice. They also shared thoughts on what changes they would like to see, actions they can take, and actions they would like their local or mother union to take.

Jamboard link for raw notes from the session: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/1m4koRTOgcSvynwvwc-1LU7q11tjliAlolXtrV6ZBJ4o/edit?usp=sharing>

Gaps and Challenges in member engagement, public relations, and social justice
The labour movement has an image problem (negative associations, popular culture / movies presents a reinforces a warped image; people often do not identify with the union even when they belong to one, and see mainly the shop steward / negotiator role)
To change that image, unions need to be where people are, show up in ways people don't expect (things that hit close to home), and boldly campaign for people to be part of the change
Gathering in person is powerful but has been challenging due to the pandemic and work-from-home policies
The union should do more to seek out allies in the community, and to partner with other unions/locals
Prepare for resistance (so that it doesn't derail activities)
Retired union members could be engaged as volunteers/organizers

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
Look for opportunities to show caring and build unity beyond the bargaining table. The union is not only where people work but also has a broader role in how they live.	Create allies by reaching out to multicultural, special interest groups, and others with similar interests/concerns	Build community partnerships. Example: Long-term care is a big concern, because of staff shortages and our aging population. Who better to partner with than the Golden Age Society, who would also want appropriately staffed care homes to advocate for this?
Proactively reach out to new members	When new people are hired, plan site visits to meet with new & existing members	Database tag identifies new members in YEU system, could be doing more to send personalized / timely info, welcome and ask them to sign union cards
Build an ecosystem of engagement	Host local meet & greets, training events, etc. Use online activities to expand reach, and in-person events to cement relationships	Identify "winning" issues (things that affect a large number of people in their daily lives, whether or not they are union members) where it makes sense for the union to advocate for change

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
	<p>Maintain links with retired members and invite them to volunteer / participate in events</p> <p>Create camaraderie in the workplace; the union should feel like a community</p> <p>Communicate simple ideas/asks in plain language</p> <p>Encourage people to share their personal stories related to campaign issues</p>	<p>Provide support to locals to plan activities with “ladder of engagement” framework</p> <p>Provide support for online organizing that drives offline action</p> <p>Design campaigns to build and activate databases/lists. Build tools that make it easy to take action on an issue.</p> <p>Facilitate digital literacy training</p> <p>Strategic segmentation: certain activities are more relevant to some stakeholders than other. Map these into a 3- or 5-year plan.</p> <p>Instead of asking “how can I help” offer concrete assistance (“can I make you a poster?”)</p> <p>Coordinate advertising opportunities to communicate awareness of YEU, the value it brings to the community and workers and their families lives.</p>

BARGAINING – THE BIGGER PICTURE

Following a presentation by Erna Post, Negotiator for the Public Service Alliance of Canada, participants reflected during a plenary group session on gaps and challenges in bargaining. They also shared thoughts on what changes they would like to see, actions they can take, and actions they would like their local or mother union to take.

Jamboard link for raw notes from the session:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1DLdETQgFDQCKezcXCE2N3KbKaVTw95UG_QxUoUoTtog/edit?usp=sharing

Gaps and Challenges in bargaining
Bargaining issues today go beyond just wages and benefits and now include things like decolonization, diversity & inclusion, respectful workplace policies, health & safety, and impacts of digitization of work and the gig economy, mental health leave, and sick days.
Bargaining today is more contentious: people are more stressed, and economic/pandemic impacts affect what is possible to put on the table. Supply chain and capacity issues, tough economic times, inflation, the war in Ukraine and more all have an impact.
Short-term initiatives such as temporary wage incentives can be harmful because they don't change wage structure, benefits, or pensions

Gaps and Challenges in bargaining
Wage compression is a concern (when employers offer new hires better wages than more senior employees because of the difficulty with recruitment due to the labour shortage these days)
Wages are not keeping up with inflation, and this is a serious concern for all workers
Pandemic has provided an excuse for privatization and other changes that are against workers' interests (Putting People First https://yukon.ca/en/putting-people-first)

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
The Big Quit results in positive changes for workers. Labour shortage creates leverage that workers can use to demand better.	Create opportunities for face-to-face conversations in the workplace to engage workers and get them talking about the issues they struggle with.	Communicate that the labour shortage means it's more important than ever to show workers value and respect. Workers are in the driver's seat, because they have more employment options than before. Seriously consider whether a strike or other collective action may be necessary to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation.
Resist privatization that would harm delivery of essential services like health care and/or negatively impact workers in affected jobs	Support YEU Monetary Bargaining Proposals as submitted to the employer: and Non Monetary Bargaining Proposals as submitted to the employer.	Communicate the risks of <i>Putting People First</i> to union members and the general public. The Report implementation is part of Yukong Government plans, but unclear what they are looking at implementing, when or how – seems to be a work in progress in Government. Union can be proactive in researching and deconstructing initiatives that sound positive but are harmful to workers and potentially health care service recipients.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION POINTS

Some of the other points raised can be considered more during the next sessions and topical discussions.

- **Constructive conflict:** “I appreciate the frustration that people brought to the table. A lot of what we do is based in controversy and conflict. Conflict is a tool, it's how we use it that's important. We're not stuck on the unhealthy side of conflict. We have an opportunity to embrace change and use healthy conflict to drive us forward.”
- **Community organizing:** Rally members to participate in community projects (ie flood relief, hardship fund, community BBQs etc). T-shirts or buttons to identify union members so that people know the union was there to help. Highlight the Union as a source of good work for the community.