

SUMMARY OF THEMES DISCUSSED - JUNE 16, 2022

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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 groups priorities, a sense of timelines and who should be responsible and who should be accountable for these action items.

The following summary report reflects the discussions from June 16, which included a key note by Chris Aylward, PSAC's National President.

REPRESENTATION: STEWARDS AND STAFF

Jamboard link: <https://jamboard.google.com/d/1oKnJZNeqZfVLIQwxwNBIJGhgT3uDMK-iGkRVnfzh1E/edit?usp=sharing>

Gaps and Challenges for steward & staff
The work of stewards is very emotionally stressful and time-consuming. Lack of volunteers means fewer people are available to do this important work, which can quickly lead to burnout. Adding to the stress, stewards feel a lot of frustration when they don't have the power to help someone who has come to them.
Stewards would benefit from more support and recognition
Workers fear becoming more active/visible in union work will negatively affect how they are seen by the employer (hard to prove this is the reason for being passed over for promotion or reassigned)
On the staff side, staff have a heavy workload. When cases are passed from one staff person to the next, things can fall through the cracks. Sometimes this also means workers need to repeat an emotionally charged narrative several times to several different people, which can be uncomfortable.
Negative manager/supervisor attitudes towards union work can increase friction and stress on shop stewards when they have to deal with passive-aggressive or hostile behaviour
It may be reasonable to consider paying stewards who are taking on a high level of union work

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
Better peer-to-peer support for stewards	Facilitate social meetups for stewards Encourage the use of YEU communications tools	Take the steward communications portal off the backburner Promote existing communications tools (roundtables, monthly meetings, lost wages covered if they attend, FB group, website resources)
More mentorship, training and coaching for stewards	Offer an orientation or training for the role before requiring a commitment (so volunteers can get a sense of what is required before they commit) Succession planning support for shop stewards so they know someone is there to take over when they are ready to step back (training for replacement) Clearly communicate responsibilities of volunteer roles and help stewards set boundaries so they don't get overwhelmed	Raise awareness of ways to put pressure on management aside from striking. Develop a toolkit of collective actions stewards can turn to when they are unable to resolve grievances through the usual channels (especially relevant when grievances are shared by many workers) Communicate which issues can be resolved without involving an LRA A new shop steward advisor will be available to assist stewards soon

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
Compensation and recognition for shop stewards	Volunteer appreciation events or other recognition	Pay shop stewards for dedicated local support - for off-hours work (can submit a claim to YEU finance) Help Locals develop connections with stewards so that they stay; reduce burnout; YEU staff support; emotional peer-to-peer support
Educate employers about benefits to them of union work	Reduce acronyms and jargon when speaking about union business (to reduce barriers to understanding)	Develop plain-language key messages locals can use to explain how stewards contribute to a better-functioning workplace / reduce manager workload Develop education tools to explain union rights and dispute resolution processes for supervisors/managers
Break the barrier of fear of reprisal from employers for speaking up or being involved in union work	Persuade employers to be grateful for the issues the stewards are resolving at the floor level. Might help stem fear of reprisal.	
Improve physical infrastructure: more space for staff and where stewards can hold private meetings when there is no suitable space at the work site		Building improvement/expansion
Stronger membership, willing to voice concerns and take action	See if there are volunteers who can help lighten the load on stewards (even if they are not able to take on the full responsibility of the role)	Empowering the members: more training available to rank and file, build union literacy at the work place floor level; Understanding the C.A., assertiveness, H/S rights

YEU'S POLITICAL POSITIONS: ACTIVISM AND HOW WE GET THERE

Jamboard link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1j9nXEKqzU5MAjZCn9mFcJOoYpfC4iroV_zbbtqjUWxl/edit?usp=sharing

Gaps and Challenges
Large membership, and people aren't always aligned on the issues. Some issues very divisive. Members don't want dues to fund campaigns undermining their preferred political party or candidate. Need to represent the spectrum of views held by members.
Some members become upset when the union "gets political"
The union often takes a reactive approach and so there is often not much time to get input from members on campaigns beforehand
Politics can affect employment, especially in small communities
YEU focuses more on workplace issues; PSAC more politically active
Locals less political than YEU, PSAC

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
Ensure political actions are inclusive and non-partisan	<p>Mobilizing the vote is a nonpartisan activity, but can be very powerful</p> <p>Work with YEU to create fun and accessible events (ie documentary film night with popcorn, or a labour songs sing-a-long)</p>	<p>Ensure we keep language relevant to broad audiences, not merely those steeped in union vernacular. Reduce confusions and conflation of political with partisan politics, ideology and public policy, issues identification and solution development</p> <p>Focus on issues rather than "politics"; inform public conversations about public policies; join the conversation pro-actively on key issues YEU is focused on</p> <p>Gain greater clarity from PSAC on "election" actions/budget or non-partisan "report cards", leverage PSAC's developed political positions locally</p> <p>Provide basic education on how politics / elections work in Canada (don't assume people learned it in school)</p>
Experiment more with gaining some member input in public policy positions, advocacy issues	Relay to YEU the issues that are emerging in importance for members	Use surveys and other tools to get a better idea of which issues are most important to members

Change you want to see	Actions I /LOCAL can take	Actions OTHERS / YEU / STAFF should take
and proposing or validating their support for YEU solutions.		
Anti-discrimination, anti-racism and gender equity are major political issues at PSAC now. Leverage that to make advances in Yukon	Encourage employers to take action on these issues	Reconciliation, decolonization should factor into our conversations. Balance activism for the "greater membership/all workers" vs. minority issues that need cultural shift to gain momentum

OTHER ISSUES, CONCERNS, HOPES

At the end of this first day, participants had the opportunity to gather in the plenary to bring any issues, concerns or hopes forward.

Jamboard link:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1h4dagDF_48qRRp3MILXET6Ofu9L5TOeBqmjy7RIJK2o/edit?usp=sharing

Other Issues needing consideration:

- Strat plan will need to be communicated to members in ways that engages them, that makes the plan easy to understand and take action on. Dates/key milestones important to communicate. Many would like a follow-up to check in on how work is proceeding. Perhaps a working group approach.
- Participants in the planning process will be invited to join committees/working groups to implement initiatives (and work to expand the circle of engagement)
- Physical building capacity will be important for YEU to think about in our long-term strategic plan and what leads to that in the next year or
- Hope: Members engagement will increase. People will realize there is no “power” to speak truth to — members hold the power.