
STEWARDS NOTES

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AUPE Policy 3.3: How to handle a workplace grievance

by Tyler Bedford
Communications Staff

Alberta's largest union is getting larger and as the number of AUPE members grows, so too does the number of grievances and technical challenges being handled by the union. It's important, as union stewards, to have the knowledge needed to properly address these grievances and challenges.

AUPE stewards, union representatives and membership services officers (MSOs) are heavily involved in the grievance process and play a prominent role in quickly resolving complaints. AUPE policies help make certain grievances handled by the union are dealt with in the most professional and effective ways.

A prime example is AUPE Policy 3.3, which is designed to ensure the proper representation of the grievor by the union, proper training for stewards, that the proper flow of information is kept and support is given by AUPE to help union stewards represent members effectively.

The following outlines AUPE Policy 3.3 – Policy on Grievance Handling for Union Stewards and Union Representatives and Membership Services Officers.

(continued next page)

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AUPE Policy 3.3 *continued*

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees boasts some of Canada's very best labour education courses. In accordance with Policy 3.3, AUPE offers its members three levels of training courses specific to union stewards.

Level 2 and 3 union stewards are encouraged to handle grievances at the informal discussion level and the formal levels in conjunction with MSOs. Union representatives are involved at arbitration and beyond.

To avoid improper grievance wording and processing, the steward must consult with the MSO to ensure the grievance has been properly worded. The MSO will request and assign a grievance number to each file,

and then is responsible for the delivery and timelines of the grievance.

All documents you receive as steward must be copied and forwarded immediately to the MSO so the grievance can be dealt with accordingly. It's imperative this process be followed to ensure the duty of fair representation owed by the union to the member is adhered to.

The MSO and union representative will handle the grievance at the final level before arbitration and at the request of the grievor, the steward can stay involved in the process. AUPE will determine if the matter should be submitted to arbitration. If the union decides to do so, proper representation will be provided as necessary.

MSOs and union representatives have been delegated the authority by AUPE's president to extend time limits and waive levels. If you find this is needed in your grievance case, contact your MSO.

It's important union stewards do not exceed their authority as they may be unknowingly exposing themselves or the union to liability. Remember, when in doubt, contact the union.

AUPE POLICY 3.3

FUN FACT

An AUPE union steward may represent any AUPE member who is covered by an AUPE collective agreement whether or not they come from a different local or chapter.

SNAPSHOTS



Members review course material during AUPE's Introduction to Your Union course April 20 at union headquarters in Edmonton.

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STEWARDS PROFILE



Tammy Fleck

LPN, Union Steward since 2008
Local 044/008 Stettler Homecare

Best Advice: Being a steward requires commitment, and it is essential to remain neutral, especially when more than one member is involved. Never be afraid to involve additional stewards! Treat each member equally and fairly. Always follow through and do what you say you are going to do. Most importantly, always maintain confidentiality, and recognize the limitations of your experience.

Why did you become a union steward?

After taking the Introduction to the Union course, I realized that if I was going to serve my brothers and sisters as an executive member of our chapter, it was important that I learn more about the union and what it does for its members, and more on how to protect myself. At the time, the environment where I worked was in great turmoil with changes in management, and I wanted to ensure that our rights were protected.

Is that why you recently took the Union Steward Level 2 course?

Yes, after a few years as a Level 1 steward, I wanted to gain more skills and knowledge, and a greater understanding of workplace issues and grievable situations. There are

no Level 2 stewards on my worksite, and I wanted to expand my role as a steward to better assist co-workers and myself.

What's your biggest challenge as a steward?

Trying to get members to stand up for their issues! I believe that many union members fear repercussions from management, or just dislike conflict and avoid it at all costs, even if they know what is happening is wrong. Sometimes members think that stewards can stand up for them and fix the problems without their involvement! It's hard to convince them sometimes that it just doesn't work that way.

What do you find rewarding?

I really love helping others. I find it very rewarding to stand up for workers' rights and ensure their fair treatment. Being a union steward has helped me grow as a person. I have gained leadership skills and more confidence in public speaking, and I no longer avoid conflict, dealing with issues as they arise, which makes everything go that much smoother.

Are you looking forward to taking a more active role in grievances as a Level 2 steward?

It'll be very interesting to be in a more active role. The management at our worksite usually solves issues quickly and fairly, but it is important that violations are dealt with correctly to protect our members' rights and our contract. I have given a lot of thought to how I will handle grievances, both because of my steward training and also from observing some grievance meetings with members and Membership Services Officers. I will make sure that I have all my facts and witnesses in place, and make sure that everything is well documented from start to finish.

Any last shout-outs to other stewards?

Being a member of AUPE makes me proud! I like that we stand up for political issues and try to change the world around us to be a better place. Let's keep doing that!

SNAPSHOTS



Members participating in AUPE's Occupational Health and Safety Advocate Level 1 course prepare for their lesson at union headquarters Jan. 21 in Edmonton.

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STEWARDS TRAINING



Upcoming courses and training

For more information or to register for a course, please contact your regional office.

Calgary - 1-800-232-7284, press 7

OH&S Advocate Level 2	June 22-23
Union Officer Training	June 8-9
Convention Procedures	June 17

Camrose - 1-800-232-7284, press 4

Introduction to Your Union	June 8
Respect in the Workplace	June 9
Convention Procedures	May 25

Edmonton - 1-800-232-7284, press 1

Introduction to Your Union	June 7
Union Steward Level 1	June 21-22
Union Steward Level 2	May 26-27, June 28-29
OH&S Advocate Level 2	June 15-16
Union Officer Training	May 31 - June 1
Convention Procedures	June 9

Grande Prairie - 1-800-232-7284, press 9

Union Steward Level 1	June 8-9
Union Officer Training	June 15-16

Lethbridge - 1-800-232-7284, press 8

Union Officer Training	June 14-15
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Peace River - 1-800-232-7284, press 2

Union Steward Level 2	June 22-23
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Red Deer - 1-800-232-7284, press 6

OH&S Advocate Level 2	May 25-26
Union Officer Training	June 8-9
Convention Procedures	June 22

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

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The role of the Union Steward is among the most important in the labour movement. Stewards are the front line of defence for union members in the workplace.

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

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

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