

Grievance Representation Training – The Basics of Being a Steward

By: Matthew Freeland

Recently stewards and executive members of Local 00014 attended Grievance Representation Training in Kitchener to learn the basics of handling a grievance. Myself with executive members Clarkson Newport, Lisa Denvir and stewards Bob Hoo, Chris Ralph, Ingrid Ritums and Shirley Molinaro all attended. We had the chance to learn about what a grievance is, what types of grievances there are, how to file a grievance, how a grievance is presented, at what levels it's presented as well as interpreting the collective agreement. We also had the chance to meet and get to know some of our UTE brothers and sisters from other locals including the Windsor, Kitchener, Toronto and Winnipeg areas.

I think what stood out the most for me coming out of the training were two items. First is that I didn't realize how many different types of grievances there are, and how many levels a grievance can go through before there's a resolution. The second was the timeframes for filing grievances (in most cases 25 working days). However I was glad to see that before a grievance is even filed, we as stewards (and executive members) should be attempting to resolve issues with the employer informally before filing a grievance. In the training we learned that there are 8 different types of grievances:

- Staff Relations Grievance – The most common grievance, usually involves things such as work reviews, performance reviews and management decisions not restricted by the collective agreement.
- Collective Agreement/Arbital Award Grievances - These involve alleged misinterpretation or misapplication of a collective agreement or an arbitral award.
- Disciplinary Grievance – These involve grievances against discipline a UTE member has received such as a suspension with/without pay or oral/written reprimands.
- Termination of Employment and Demotion Grievances – When a member is terminated or demoted in their position with CRA.
- Classification and Work Description Grievances – When a member is doing a job and it's classified at one level (SP-04 for example) but the job duties associated with the position should dictate that it be classified at a higher level (SP-05 for example). Or when a member believes that the work description of the job they do is not accurate.
- CRA Policy Grievances – Grievances filed specifically regarding misapplication or misinterpretation of CRA policies such as the Bilingualism Bonus Policy, Relocation Policy or Travel Policy.
- Group Grievance – When the PSAC files a grievance on behalf of employees in the bargaining unit who feel aggrieved by the interpretation or application of a collective agreement or an arbitral award.
- Policy Grievance – When the PSAC file a grievance in respect of the interpretation or application of the collective agreement as it relates to either of the parties or to a bargaining unit generally.

As well, we learned that depending on the type of grievance there's anywhere from 1 to 4 levels (as well as adjudication in some cases) that the grievance can go through. I also found it very interesting that in some cases a grievance will not be pursued as it could negatively affect our members. As an example, if a person files a Classification and Work Description grievance, their job classification could end up moving down, not up. Therefore UTE/PSAC may not pursue the grievance.

Although I haven't been approached by any members at this point about filing a grievance, after having the training, I'm feeling confident that I could help a member through the process.