

# ANSWERING IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

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As a union representative and activist, you're likely to hear some positive and negative comments about unions by some of your co-workers. You need to have the facts at hand to respond to these comments or questions. Here are some of the questions you will frequently encounter as a union representative, and some facts that will help you frame your responses to them:

## **Why am I required to join the union?**

You're not. Membership in UNA is voluntary under Alberta law. The union is obligated to represent you, and you are obligated to pay union dues because you benefit from union representation.

## **Why do I have to pay union dues?**

Union dues are how we contribute to the operation of the union that represents us in our jobs. At UNA, dues are 1.5 per cent of our gross income. Even those who choose not to join UNA, as is their right, must pay dues because Canadian courts have recognized we all benefit from union membership. Non-member duespayers, however, may not vote in union elections or participate in union activities. Whether or not you are a member, the law says your union is legally obligated to represent you in employment matters.

## **What does the union do for me?**

UNA provides many services for the duespayers it represents, including those who are not members. It negotiates collective agreements that regulate your salaries, benefits, schedules and other working conditions. It provides fair dispute resolution through grievance and arbitration procedures, protects your rights in the workplace, offers educational opportunities, and has professional staff to assist with this technical work.

These professionals are there to represent you in disciplinary hearings of professional bodies, with disability claims, WCB hearings, pension appeals, and Employment Insurance appeals. UNA staff can also assist with hearings before the Labour Relations Board, Human Rights Commission, Protection of Persons in Care hearings, and the courts regarding employment matters.

## **What should I do if I need UNA's help?**

Speak with your workplace union representative or contact UNA directly. If you are involved in a serious incident and are called by your Employer's lawyer, you should contact UNA immediately and ask to speak with your Labour Relations Officer. You can also contact the Canadian Nurses Protective Society. RPNs can contact the CRPNA. You should co-operate with your Employer, but be careful not to disclose confidential or privileged information to anyone else.

## **How can I get involved?**

Your UNA Local is the best place to get involved. Not only are Local meetings and events a great way to meet other UNA members, share concerns, and hear success stories, but Local meetings are key decision-making places. Locals elect delegates to send to Provincial AGM and Demand Setting and Reporting meetings for negotiations. The Local also has the ability to bring bargaining priorities forward to the negotiations committee. Whether you have a concern on your unit, a larger concern about something in (or not in) your collective agreement, want to be in the loop in your Local, or want to be an advocate, get involved in your UNA Local.