



Introduction

Hi, my name is your name and I'm the your position with CUPE local 229. CUPE local 229 is a union and over the next 30-60 minutes I'll be sharing with you some information about what it means to be a member of a union, what a union is, what a union does, how our local works and who you can contact if you ever have a job related problem or questions.

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Congratulation on accepting your job offer to work at Queen's University. As a new employee you are now a member of CUPE, which is the largest union in Canada with over 700,000 members. Our local is 800+ members strong , and we touch on all aspects of student life here at Queen's University. Our members work in positions such as Caretakers, Food Service Workers, Trades, Grounds and even Parking By-Law Officers just to name a few.



Q: Does anyone know what CUPE stands for?

A: CUPE stands for Canadian Union of Public Employees

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So, now that you're part of CUPE 229 union, you may be wondering what exactly is a union? At its most basic, a union is you and your co-workers. By joining a union, you and your co-workers are organizing into a structure that can speak to your employer with a single, unified voice. Together we are stronger!

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A union serves three important roles. Firstly, a union negotiates with the employer on behalf of all members. As one united voice, a union can have more influence over an employer. Some of the things a union negotiates are things like wages, working conditions, benefits, pensions.

Secondly, a union is responsible for protecting what it negotiates. A union does this by ensuring the employer follows the collective agreement which is a legal agreement between the employer and the union membership that outlines everything from vacation days, wages, benefits and even how seniority works or how overtime is to be distributed to the members.

Thirdly, a union empowers each member through a democratic process. All members are encouraged to get involved by attending meetings, running for office, being part of a committee and by voting on issues and topics that they feel are important.

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Members are at the heart of a union. Everything starts with our membership. We then have an executive board who are elected members and who take care of the day-to-day operations of the local. We also have several committees which are headed by a member who is a chair. We have an education committee that is responsible for organizing courses and trainings for members. We have a health & safety committee that is responsible for ensuring that our members are protected and that the employer is following proper health and safety legislation. We have a social committee that organizes several events throughout the year for members and their families as well as retirees. We also have a union management committee that meets with the employer monthly to discuss issues that may arise and work together on how to make things better. Our negotiating committee is responsible for negotiating with the employer for better wages, working conditions and other provisions in our collective agreement. Lastly, we have a grievance committee which is responsible for ensuring all grievances are dealt with timely.

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Your first point of contact for any work related issues is your Steward. Stewards are specially trained members who are there to help, defend and inform you of your rights and responsibilities in the workplace and under the collective agreement. If you have a question or if you have any concerns, you should reach out to a Steward and they will be able to help you. Stewards are also the people who can guide you through what is known as the grievance process, if you feel that a part of the collective agreement has been violated by the employer the process used to remedy that is called the grievance process.

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So how can you get involved? It is easy. To get involved you simply have to do three simple things. First, you'll want to sign the new member application form. Secondly, you'll want to sign your new membership card (you'll need this card to vote or attend meetings). Thirdly, attend our next member's meeting and meet other members who are making a difference in the workplace.