

## **How should the union engage new members in the public service?**

There are many ways how the union can engage new members. Let's consider some of them.

### **1. Reaching them while they are new**

A good way for unions to increase their members is to reach out to new hires as soon as they join the public service. Ideally, it can be done during their training period and it increases their chances of becoming active members. When orientation session is scheduled for new employees union local can request a time slot to be dedicated to introduction to the union. During it union reps can welcome them onboard and speak about the union, introduce the union and its objectives to new members, ask their contacts and fill union member cards.

### **2. Advertising the benefits of a union**

Union activists should promote the union, explain the reason why it works, why it is needed and important, and how it improves members' lives and bring positive changes in working conditions. Many options can be used such as: celebrating victories, testimonials from members on union social media or website, videos about union benefits or even funny union mascot video, engagement of members who are great at networking to reach out to non-active members and share the benefits of being an active part of the union.

### **3. Encouraging active member participation**

When members display solidarity, friendship, and collective efforts, it is likely that they also attract others to join in. After they join the union, they too, could be a part of a larger group and find acceptance and feel collective power.

For this local union can organize casual coffee meets and lunch session with members for learning opportunities and open conversations. They may or may not talk about the union but can deepen their bond over other topics. Union leaders can organize lunch & learn sessions, encourage members to meet and discuss challenges they face at the workplace. Union activists can also contribute to social committees and leverage festive occasions to celebrate together. It is also important to maintain good relations with non-members so they can feel welcomed.

### **4. Encouraging leadership and active participation within the union**

Unions can be large, and the top leadership may not necessarily be able to reach out to every single member. However, for the union to be successful, it is crucial that the voice of every member is heard; otherwise members who feel neglected might disengage and refuse to participate in the union.

Focusing on member engagement and retention is as important as adding new members. To do so, union activists can start by identifying proactive members within your union who exert certain influence among their peers and are well respected. Union can train these members to further the cause of the union and reach out to their circle, identify grievances and work with the leadership team to resolve issues.

It is important to find new union activists and to encourage their participation in local union meeting and elections, offer them to become new union stewards, run for local union executive positions.

## **5. Using the power of technology**

Today unions need to use technology for making their work easier, more effective, and reach to more members and other parties. Various technology can be used, for example, social media (e.g., local union Facebook page), e-mail newsletters, local database of knowledge with cases and grievances reporting, registering questions and complaints, official web sites with information sharing, virtual meetings with software like Google Meet, text messages for mobilization efforts, setting up auto responders, electronic reminders, communication software.

## **6. Engaging with the community**

Engaging with the community can be essential to attract new members to unions today. Union activists can not only reach out to workers for union-related discussions but also reach out to them as people. This makes them feel valued as individuals, not just as another vote in union bank. Sharing festive greetings, wishing them on their special days, sharing information about their rights, circulate positive messages – there are many ways to achieve this.

## **7. Unions can also act as robust political force**

Union movement is known force to protect member rights and create positive changes for all Canadians. In the world history we can see numerous cases how union fights lead to positive changes for everyone. Political representation helps unions to pressure parties to propose policies that benefit workers at a large scale.

In general, the most important goal is to listen to members and then work on the issues that matter to them. Addressing members' concerns will always be one of the best ways to connect with them. Function as an authentic democracy and make everyone's voice heard. When people feel heard, they are more likely to participate.