



New Member Toolkit 2022

U of T Staff-Appointed Unit

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April 2022

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Presidents' Welcome

Dear Members:

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the University of Toronto and to **your** union: United Steelworkers Local 1998. We represent about 8,500 workers at the University of Toronto, the University of St. Michael's College, Victoria

University, and University of Toronto Schools (hereafter noted collectively as the "University" and individually as a "Unit"). Our members include full-time, part-time, and casual workers in a wide range of jobs: administrative, technical, residence dons, and (at St. Mike's and Vic) trades, custodial, and food service workers.



Our local is run by and for our members. The members and staff in the Union office are committed to providing you with the information and support you need in many areas of your working life. **This New Member Toolkit will provide some essential information that you can use as a quick reference guide now and in the future.**

We hope to meet you at an upcoming New Member Orientation, lunchtime meeting, or Union special event. We invite you to contact us any time with your questions or concerns and to explore opportunities on how to get involved in **your** union.

In solidarity,

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Tamara Vickery
Vice-President and Staff-
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Working in a Unionized Workplace

You may have been unionized before, or this may be your first time being a member of a union. What does it mean?

In a nutshell, **unions negotiate the contracts which set our wages and working conditions, and then we make sure that the contract is upheld.** We educate our members so that you know your rights and we support and represent you if you have problems in the workplace.

A unionized workplace means:

- ✓ **Transparency** – we have a contract which clearly spells out the terms and conditions of our work.
- ✓ **Fairness** – the rules are the same for everyone covered by the contract.
- ✓ **Representation** – the union has your back if you need support.
- ✓ **Participation** – a union is a democratic, membership-based organization and every member has a right to participate.
- ✓ **Community** – the union is a dynamic organization where you can connect with other members from all over the University and from other Units.

Your union contract means that the terms and conditions of your work are transparent and fair to all. Your wages, working conditions, benefits and rights are spelled out clearly. By having the rules written down, employees can tell when management is not following the rules and the union can help them. Contracts also include procedures to be followed in settling disputes.

You can find an electronic version of your contract [on our website](#) and there are some contract FAQs at the end of this toolkit. You should take some time to read through and understand your contract. Your Union Steward or Grievance Officers in the union office can answer your questions about the contract.



Fairness

Unions stand for fairness – the contract applies to everyone in the bargaining unit and it sets out processes for things like hiring practices, pay increases, vacation and overtime.

Apart from our contract, one of our key achievements in ensuring fairness for our members is the **Job Evaluation** system we have negotiated with the University. This gives the union an opportunity to review new positions to ensure they have been placed on the correct pay band and it gives members an opportunity to request a reclassification review if their job changes significantly.

As a new member, the key thing to note is that if you're in a **newly created position**, you will be sent a questionnaire to complete after **six months on the job**. If you do not receive this questionnaire, please let us know.

When you receive this notice, contact the union for help and advice. If your duties are quite different from your job description, the union can explore a reclassification request. If you're not in a new position, but your job changes or is quite different from your job description, you can request a review of your job to see if it should be reclassified.

If you have questions about Job Evaluation, contact the union office at 416-506-9090 or email us at jec@usw1998.ca.



together
FAIRNESS
WORKS

Representation

Stewards

With a union, you don't need to face workplace problems on your own. **Local representatives can help.**

Stewards are volunteers who help you by answering questions about the contract, advising you on workplace situations and representing you in disciplinary meetings or grievances. Because our Local is so large, we also have four full-time Grievance Officers who play the same role and also act as a resource to our Stewards.

You can contact your Union Steward [through our website](#). You can contact any steward on the list for assistance, whether they work in your area or not.

You can also contact the union for **confidential advice and assistance** from a Grievance Officer or other staff.

Let us know if you're interested in volunteering as a Union Steward!

- 416-506-9090
- info@usw1998.ca



Find your steward by
visiting our website:

[usw1998.ca/contact-
us/find-steward](https://usw1998.ca/contact-us/find-steward)

Health and Safety

The Union has a full-time Health and Safety Coordinator (HSC) who is available to answer your questions and address any concerns with regard to health and safety in the workplace. The HSC will also assist with Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claims, return-to-work plans and accommodations for disability or illness.

As a new worker at the University, you are required to complete Worker Health and Safety Awareness Training. The training will include duties and rights of workers, supervisors, employers, and Joint Health and Safety Committee members under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. There will also be instruction on the roles of the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB, as well as common workplace hazards and occupational illness.

You should receive this information from the University's orientation session.

As a worker, you have the following three rights:

Right to Know: As a worker, you have the legal right to know about all hazards and dangers present in your workplace and how they can affect you. The employer has a general duty to provide information, training and supervision needed to safeguard your health and safety.

Right to Participate: All workers have a right to participate in workplace health and safety. You also have a right to report unsafe conditions and practices without fear of reprisal. The best way to participate is as a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). The JHSC is made up of at least equal numbers of worker and employer representatives. JHSC members have the right to inspect the workplace, identify hazards and make recommendations to control the hazards.



Safety matters

Right to Refuse: All workers have the right to refuse unsafe work you believe could endanger you. To refuse unsafe work you must follow certain procedures. If you feel that your work may endanger you, as the initial step, immediately notify your supervisor, who is required to contact a worker member of the JHSC, who will be familiar with the work-refusal procedure and assist you with the process.

Health and Safety Officer

Mark Austin

416-506-9090 ext. 238

mark.austin@usw1998.ca

Member Participation

A union is first and foremost a membership-based organization. **As a member, you have a right to participate in the union’s decision-making.** You have a voice and a vote in what we do. The local’s Executive and Chief Stewards are elected by our members every three years.



We have monthly membership meetings - **General Membership Meetings (GMM)** which are held either over the lunch hour or at 5:00 p.m. We are currently hosting the meetings online via Zoom and meetings are open to all members. These are our business meetings where members make decisions on how we spend our money and what activities and campaigns we may initiate. Meetings also include monthly reports and updates on our finances and activities.

A few times a year, we have a “release time” meeting, where members have the right to leave work early to attend (provided you give your boss notice). These are larger meetings and usually include a social event (BBQ or holiday party), and often interesting speakers.

When we are ready for contract negotiations, a **Negotiating Committee** is elected for each one of our Units. These committees send out surveys to their Unit members to find out what their concerns and priorities are for negotiations with the University. When each Unit’s committee has bargained a new contract with the University, the contract is submitted to the Unit membership for a ratification vote.

There are a number of ways members can participate in union activities:

1. Join a Committee

- Committee of Black, Indigenous, People Of Colour (BIPOC) / Racialized Workers For Anti-Racism
- Communications
- Human Rights
- Health and Safety
- SteelPride
- Women of Steel
- NextGen
- CAT (Communication Action Team)
- If there's an issue that's important to you, you can [contact the Union](#) about initiating a new committee. More info on our website at usw1998.ca/get-involved/committees



2. Education and Training

There are a lot of opportunities for education and training through the union: leadership courses, health and safety, young workers conferences, Union Steward training. If you're chosen to go, the union will cover the costs, including your time off work, so you don't need to use vacation days. Watch the e-newsletter for upcoming opportunities!

3. Submit a Story to the Steeldrum Newsletter

Steeldrum is distributed twice a year via the weekly newsletter in March and October. We always welcome member submissions such as articles, photographs, or artwork, please email: Kristy at kbard@usw1998.ca. Contributions should be related to working at the University, being involved in the union or community activism, or be of general interest to union members.

4. Weekly e-Newsletter

We also communicate regularly with our members, so watch your email for our weekly e-newsletter. Find out what's going on in your union and get involved!

Please contact our office via email (info@usw998.ca) if you are not receiving the weekly newsletter.

5. Stay Connected



[@usw1998](https://twitter.com/usw1998)



facebook.com/groups/uswlocal1998



Members can opt into a text messaging notification subscription service to gain access to news, updates and bargaining information via text messaging.

Using your cell phone, text 1998 to 32323 and follow the instructions.

Note: There is no cost to subscribe to the service, but subscribers are responsible for any messaging fees from their service provider.



[@uswlocal1998](https://www.instagram.com/uswlocal1998)

Community

U of T is a huge institution, and it can be difficult to meet people outside of your department. **The union is a community for workers that provides opportunities for growth, networking and engagement.** It is an excellent place for you to meet people with similar workplace experiences. Networking with them can help you to identify common challenges, share ideas, and identify strategies for improving your work life.

However, union activities aren't just about work. We have **social events, lunch and learns**, and opportunities for **education and professional growth**.

Members can become workshop facilitators, health and safety inspectors and advocates, Union Stewards or conflict resolution mediators. You can develop your event organizing skills, communication techniques, or volunteer coordination experience.

We all share the benefits
from union involvement —
there's a role for everyone
in the union.



Key Contract Terms

Probation

Article 12:03 — Lasts for six months of **active employment** (holidays, vacations, university closures, leaves, etc. don't count). While on probation, members have all the same rights and benefits as a non-probationary employee except they only have **three sick days** while on probation and the University has the ability to terminate them for **less than just cause**. You only need to pass probation once. If you move to another job in the University later, you don't have to redo the six-month probation.

Personal Days

Article 13:12 — We have **four personal days a year** (July–June). They can be taken in full or half-days. They cannot be used to extend vacation or long weekends. Personal days are used for those expected and unexpected things when “life happens” (e.g., caring for a sick family member, taking your parent to a medical appointment, getting a mortgage, seeing a lawyer, observing a religious holiday, moving, dealing with a flooded basement). Ideally, you should request them five days in advance and minimize disruption in the department, but this is not always possible.

Healthcare Appointments

Article 13:14 — When you cannot schedule a health care appointment outside of your regular working hours, you will give as much advance notice as possible and will not lose paid time to attend the appointment. Try to schedule the appointment so it minimizes the disruption to the workday.

Occasional and periodic health care appointments should not be counted as a personal day, a sick day, or a vacation day. They also should not be counted as lieu time (i.e., time you have to make up later or from your overtime bank).

If you have regularly scheduled and frequent health care appointments, you may need to work out a flex time/accommodation arrangement instead. If you have a good relationship with your boss, you can work out something informally. If you don't want to go this route, you should go to Health and Wellbeing. You have the right to have a union rep help you with this.

Overtime and Lieu Time

Articles 24:06–24:09 — Authorized hours worked in excess of 36¼ hours per week will be paid at time-and-a-half. Overtime must be **authorized in writing in advance by your manager**. Departments should have procedures in place for overtime approval in urgent situations when you can't get pre-approval. These should be communicated to you.

Managers are not allowed to ask you to flex your time within the same week (i.e., work late on Monday night and come in late on Tuesday morning). You may ask to flex your time, though.

You may feel pressure to perform unpaid overtime, especially as a new employee, but we encourage you to establish healthy work/life boundaries from the start of your employment.

Alternative Work Arrangements (AWAs)

Members may submit a request for an AWA using the AWA application and guidelines on [HR Service Centre](#). AWAs may include flexible hours, compressed work week, hybrid-remote work settings, or altered work hours, but should not reduce your weekly hours of

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work. We've only recently bargained new language on AWAs and this is a developing area at the University. If members have questions or issues, please contact your [Union Steward](#).

AWA requests do not apply to arrangements that need to be made based on medical or health reasons and members should instead seek appropriate accommodations through Health and Wellbeing.

Raises

Step Progression

Each year, employees in the bargaining unit move up one (1) step on their assigned pay band on the anniversary of their date of hire.

Across-the Board (ATB) Increases

Across the board (ATB) increases are negotiated as part of your collective agreement. This increase is applied to all employees in the unit and is intended to address increases to the cost of living.

The timing and amount of ATBs vary in each contract, but generally they take place on July 1 each year.

Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

It is management's responsibility to provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination. There are formal complaint processes in place to deal with these issues and the University is now working to implement informal processes, such as mediation, training, facilitated discussions, restorative practices, etc. to help address these concerns through alternate measures that members may find more appealing than a formalized complaint process.

We encourage you to reach out to the Union for support and advice should you encounter any of this at the workplace.

Health Care Benefits

Benefits are administered through **Green Shield Canada** and include:

- **Vision** — \$600/person every 24 months for prescription eyeglasses and contact lenses and laser eye surgery. Eye examinations up to \$90 every 24 months (\$120 as of July 1, 2022).
- **Mental Health Care** — Appointments with a psychologist, MSW, or psychotherapist up to \$2,500/year (\$2,700 as of July 1, 2022).
- **Paramedical Coverage** — \$1,000/year (\$1,100 as of July 1, 2022) and includes physiotherapy, registered massage therapy (no prescription required), osteopaths, occupational therapy, chiropractic, naturopathy, homeopathy, and acupuncture (chiropracist, podiatrist, dietician, and nutritionist as of July 1, 2022).
- Continuous glucose monitors for Type 1 Diabetes
- Cochlear implants
- Dental implants
- Wigs for Alopecia
- Gender Affirmation coverage (as of July 1, 2022)
- Some fertility treatments (as of July 1, 2022)
- **Note:** Benefits are pro-rated for part-time members.



Benefits are provided through
Green Shield Canada
1-888-711-1119

Child-Care Benefits

Members with children under age seven can be reimbursed for childcare costs, up to \$10 per half-day or \$20 per full day, to a max of \$2,000 per child, per year (pro-rated if working less than full-time for the entire year). A half-day is now defined as less than six hours. Members apply through [Employee Self Service \(ESS\)](#).

Educational Assistance for Members

Members receive educational assistance for **U of T degree courses, up to and including flex-time PhD programs**. For undergraduate courses, this is capped at three full courses for F/W term and one full course in Summer. For MA and PhD, this is capped at \$3,000 per academic year. Educational assistance is also available for **School of Continuing Studies** courses and job-related courses at external institutions (ensure you get approval for external course coverage before enrolling). The benefit is pro-rated for members working less than full-time. Please see the Collective Agreement for full information on the details and limits to this benefit.

Tuition Waiver for Dependents

Your spouse and dependent children are eligible for tuition waivers for a **first undergraduate degree**. The benefit is pro-rated for members working less than full-time. Please see the Collective

Agreement for full information on the details and limits to this benefit.

Union Perks and Services

Lifeline Foundation

Do You or Your Family Need Help?



Lifeline provides confidential information, referral, and support services to union members and their families. Its purpose is to assist workers and their families to deal with difficult issues in their personal and working lives. Lifeline is a union-based member assistance program. Lifeline was established by the Steelworkers' Toronto Area Council in 1974 as a charitable, not-for-profit organization so that the union, in collaboration with employers who hold collective agreements with the union, could provide a joint union-management employee assistance program for its members. This is a **confidential service**.

For more information about contacting Lifeline, please call Sharon Clarke at 416-977-6888 ext. 25 or email lifeline@bellnet.ca.

USW Dental

Members receive a 15% discount on last year's Ontario Dental Association Fees at our USW dental clinics. The clinics operate on a non-profit basis and provide excellent care.

There are two locations:

33 Cecil Street, Toronto – 416-343-0086

1158 Aerowood Dr., Mississauga – 905-238-1414

Steelworkers Internal Mediation Service (SIMS)

What is SIMS? The Steelworkers Local 1998 Internal Mediation Service. It is a mediation process facilitated by a team of trained mediators to help resolve workplace conflict between union members.

SIMS uses a non-adversarial, interest-based problem-solving approach.

What type of situation does SIMS deal with? The service can help to resolve a variety of conflict situations. For example:

- Workplace conduct (e.g., speaking tone, communication styles)
- Workplace climate (e.g., dignity, respect, workplace culture)
- Negotiating shared space and shared resources
- Social and interpersonal interactions

USW Scholarships

The National Office and District 6 offer various scholarships to members, their children and grandchildren. Deadlines are generally in the spring and early summer.

- National Office Scholarships
usw.ca/members/scholarships
- District Six Scholarships
usw.ca/districts/6/scholarships

Union Savings

Union members can enjoy special rates on a variety of service including home and auto insurance, mortgages and car rentals.

- Union Savings — unionsavings.ca

DON'T FORGET!

As a member of
USW 1998
you can save money on:

INSURANCE
Accident
Critical Illness
Guarantee Issue
Health & Dental
Home & Auto
Term Life
Travel **NEW**

FINANCIAL
Credit Cards
RESPs

CAR RENTALS **NEW**

HOTELS **NEW**

MORTGAGES

MOVERS

REAL ESTATE

Register at unionsavings.ca to take advantage of exclusive discounts from Canada's only not-for profit, union run, members' benefit program, or call 1-800-418-2990.

UnionSavingsCanada
 @UnionSavings



Union Executive

President	John Ankenman
Vice President	Tamara Vickery
Recording Secretary	Mark Austin
Financial Secretary	Zack Sholdra
Treasurer	Richard Waters
Trustee	Andrea Burton (<i>on leave</i>) Nambogga Sewali (<i>during said leave</i>)
Trustee	Fatima Ijaz
Trustee	Nik Redman
Guard	Alex Thomson
Guard	Betty Walters
Guard	TBC

Unit Presidents

Staff-Appointed	Tamara Vickery
Casual	Scott Eldridge
Residence Dons	Jake Pereira
University of St. Michael's College	Steven Craig
University of Toronto Schools	Martin Aiello
Victoria University	John Ankenman

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Text Messaging
Text 1998 to 32323



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