



**Welcome to the
Saskatchewan Government and
General Employees' Union!**

SGEU

New member orientation outline

- About unions and SGEU
- SGEU structure
- Stewards and how they can help
- Collective agreements
- Getting involved with SGEU

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About unions and SGEU

What is SGEU?

SGEU is a home-grown, made-in-Saskatchewan union that represents over 20,000 government and general employees who live and work in communities across the province.



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What is a Union?

- Labour unions are organizations that collectively represent and advocate for our rights at work.
- Unions are democratic organizations formed by workers.
- All members have input into union decisions and actions.
- Union members elect leaders.



Unions are powerful!

- We negotiate better working conditions.
- We help ensure fair treatment in the workplace.
- We represent you if you have problems at work.
- We work toward economic prosperity, social justice and equality in our communities.

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Our union is nothing without you!



Members are what makes the union strong.

Every member has a role to play in building the union and keeping it strong.

About SGEU

- SGEU has three offices in Saskatchewan - in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.
- SGEU's leaders are members of our union who were elected by their fellow union members to serve in various positions in the union.
- SGEU has a rich and proud history of more than 100 years serving working people and communities across Saskatchewan.

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Benefits of being a union member...

- Higher wages.
- Research conducted by several organizations found that unionized workers in Saskatchewan earn more than non-unionized workers.



Benefits of being a union member...

- Better benefits.
- Unions negotiate things like:
 - paid sick leave and vacation leave
 - health insurance for prescription drug coverage, optical and dental plans, and pension plans



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Benefits of being a union member...

- Better working conditions.
- Unions can help ensure:
 - regular work hours
 - employment security
 - occupational health and safety protections
 - employee training



Better together

- Belonging to a union gives you a stronger voice at your workplace and in the community.
- The union gives you a collective voice, so you never have to stand alone. There is power in working together with your fellow members.

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SGEU is a team

- Being a union member means you are never alone.
- Your union is there to stand up for you and your rights in the workplace.
- You have the support of your fellow union members, union leaders, union staff and all the resources your union has at its disposal.

How can a union help you?

- Negotiate with your employer to set wage rates and working conditions for you and your co-workers.
- Solve problems in the workplace related to your rights, safety and dignity.
- Protect you and co-workers from unfair treatment at work.
- Provide you with opportunities to make decisions about contract negotiations, union policy and union leadership.
- Allow you to participate in union activities and taken on leadership roles in the union.
- Encourage you to learn and receive training in many different areas.

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SGEU Structure

SGEU structure and operations

SGEU's basic structure has sectors:

- Public service
- Crown corporations
- Education
- Health
- Community Services



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SGEU structure and operations

The sectors are broken down into smaller groups called bargaining units that include individual workplaces or groupings of similar workplaces.

Each sector has its own executive, adopts bylaws for governing the sector, provides a report to the annual convention and deals with all matters of interest to its members.



How does SGEU operate?

The union's constitution, sector bylaws, and policy manual lay out the structure, mandate, and responsibilities that govern the operation of the union and each of its parts.

These documents can be found at www.sgeu.org.



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Our union's structure is broken down into smaller groups that help run different aspects of the organization.

Some of these groups include:

- Annual convention
- Provincial Council
- Table officers (Administration Committee)
- Standing committees
- SGEU staff



**SGEU President
Tracey Sauer**
(elected in 2021)

Photo by: Troy Fleece Regina Leader-Post

How are decisions made in the union?

Annual Convention

- Convention is the supreme decision-making body of the union and meets annually. Convention has the power to amend the union's constitution and to change the rate of union dues.
- Members in each sector elect delegates to attend the convention.
- The president, first vice-president, as well as several other leaders in the union are elected by delegates at convention.

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How are decisions made in the union?

Provincial Council

- This is the union's decision-making body that manages the affairs of the union in between annual conventions.
- Representatives are elected from across the union to sit on provincial council to make decisions on behalf of members.
- This body develops policies for good order and governance of the union as well as policies relating to contract bargaining and negotiations.

Table officers

The union's table officers form an Administration Committee which meets as required and has the authority to act on the behalf of the union in between Provincial Council meetings.

The table officers include:

- President (elected at convention)
- First vice-president (elected at convention)
- Sector vice-presidents (one from each sector, elected at the sector annual meetings)
- National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) vice-president (elected at convention to serve as SGEU's representative)
- Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) vice-president (elected at convention to serve as SGEU's representative)
- Indigenous vice-president (elected at convention)

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Standing committees

SGEU has several committees that help to oversee the work of the union.

Members are elected to serve on these committees.

Currently, the union's standing committees include:

- Administration Committee
- Anti-Privatization Committee
- Education and Publicity Committee (E&P)
- Fostering Acceptance of Indigenous Rights Committee (FAIR)
- Health and Welfare Trust Committee
- Human Rights/Equity Committee (HR&E)
- Long Term Disability Supervisory Committee (LTD)
- Membership Constitution and Legislation Committee (MC&L)
- Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OH&S)
- Provincial Council Appeals Committee
- Provincial Grievance Appeal Committee
- Women's Committee

Details about each committee are included in the SGEU Constitution and Policy Manual, available at www.sgeu.org/about-us/sgeu-governing-documents

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How is SGEU funded?

- SGEU is funded entirely by our members.
- Everyone who belongs to SGEU contributes a small portion of their wages to fund the union.
- The money is used to provide a wide range of services to the members and for general union operations.

Union dues are used for:

- **Negotiating** contracts that improve working conditions and provide benefits to members.
- **Education** and training for members.
- **Financial** awards, scholarships and bursaries.
- **Communicating** with members in various ways to ensure you have the most up-to-date information.
- **Organizing** new workplaces to grow the union and make it even stronger.
- **Supporting** the work of the union's committees.
- **Launching** campaigns to improve conditions in workplaces and communities, either alone or in solidarity with other unions and labour organizations.
- **Hiring** professional staff to:
 - provide a variety of services to members
 - support and represent you in your workplace
- And much more!

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Stewards and how they can help

What is a steward?

A steward is a union member elected by their fellow co-workers to support members in the workplace.



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A steward can...

- Help members who have questions in the workplace.
- Give advice about how to deal with challenges you may face in the workplace.
- File a grievance.
- Provide assistance to you if the employer isn't following your collective agreement.
- Attend disciplinary meetings with you and your supervisor.

Stewards also...

- Answer members' questions and provide information about your collective agreement.
- Help members learn about education and training opportunities, and union events and activities.
- Encourage members to get involved and become more knowledgeable about the union.
- Are always there for you!

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When should I contact a steward?

- If you want to get more involved in the union.
- If you want to know about training opportunities or union events and activities.
- If you run into problems at your workplace.
 - This is especially important if your supervisor asks you to attend a meeting that might lead to discipline. A steward will attend that meeting with you and will give you advice about how to handle the situation.

Whether you have questions, need advice or require clarification of your collective agreement your steward can help.

Dealing with problems in the workplace

The workplace can be complicated. Sometimes you have questions about a decision made by your employer. Other times, you believe your manager or supervisor has not followed your collective agreement.

You might want advice (for example, how to ask your supervisor to reconsider your request for time off). Sometimes may you feel like you have been mistreated by your supervisor.

And, one day, maybe your employer asks you to come to a meeting (i.e. work-related issues).

THIS IS WHEN YOUR STEWARD CAN HELP!



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A note on harassment:

If you feel you have been treated with disrespect or experienced harassment, it's important to speak up about the incident.

Dealing with harassment between co-workers is the responsibility of the employer. The employer has an obligation to provide a harassment-free workplace and deal with the situation so that your workplace is safe and healthy.

If the employer does not deal with an issue of harassment, or if you are being harassed by your employer, please keep detailed records including date and time of incidents, the offender, and any witnesses, and contact your steward for assistance.



What if I can't reach my steward?

- If you are not able to find a steward at your workplace, call the SGEU office nearest you and someone will assist you.
- Remember: you have a legal right to request union representation during meetings with your supervisors and managers.

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Collective agreements

What is a collective agreement?

A Collective Agreement is a binding contract. Both the employer and the union are bound by law to abide by the terms and conditions of the collective agreement. It defines working conditions and sets the rights and responsibilities of the employer and the workers.

Your Collective Agreement includes:

- Hours of work
- Wages
- Vacation leave
- Sick leave
- Grievance (complaint) procedures
- Disciplinary process
- And much more



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Why is it important?

- It is important to read and know your Collective Agreement.
- Remember - your agreement is unique to your workplace and may be different than the agreements at other workplaces.

Bargaining collective agreements

- The Bargaining Committee for each bargaining unit is elected by that bargaining unit (through a process approved by that bargaining unit).
- All members in your workplace have input into the work of the Bargaining Committee.
- In the early stages of the bargaining process, members are asked to provide their ideas about issues important to them and changes they would like to see.
- The Bargaining Committee (or Negotiating Committee) negotiates your collective agreement on behalf of the members at your workplace.
- The Bargaining Committee periodically updates members about the status of negotiations.

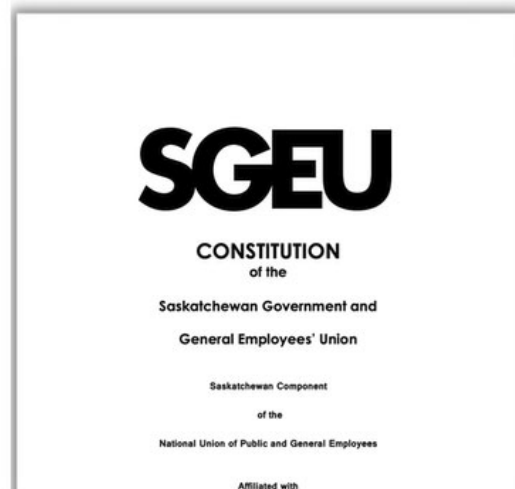
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Bargaining collective agreements

- After your Bargaining Committee has completed the negotiation process to amend your collective agreement, they will present the changes to all members.
- Then, a vote is held. All members in that workplace (or Bargaining Unit) have the right to vote on whether to accept or reject the new agreement.
- If the majority of members vote to accept the new agreement, it is ratified and becomes the new “contract” for the workplace.
- If a majority of members vote to reject the new agreement, the Bargaining Committee returns to the bargaining table with the employer until another agreement is reached.

Bargaining collective agreements

- It is important to note that should an agreement not be reached, the process for resolution is outlined in The Saskatchewan Employment Act and the SGEU Constitution.



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Know your rights

Your rights at work are protected in three main ways:

1

Your collective agreement



2

Provincial legislation such as Saskatchewan Employment Standards and Occupational Health & Safety Regulations

3

Federal legislation, regulations and statutes



Getting involved
with SGEU

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Your rights as a member of SGEU:

- You have the right to have your concerns heard in a fair and respectful manner.
- You have the right to fair union representation.
- You have the right to see the union's budget and financial report.



Your rights as a member of SGEU:

- You have the right to **express** your opinions to the union and have them heard and respected.
- You have the right to **receive** information about union activities, events, etc.
- You have the right to **participate** in union education provided by SGEU.
- You have the right to **vote** in a fair and democratic process to decide who will fill leadership roles in the union.

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SGEU members also have responsibilities

- **Know** the name and contact information of your steward and other union leaders such as the vice-president of your sector, the chair of your bargaining unit or local.
- **Read** your collective agreement, seeking assistance from your steward if necessary.
- **Become** familiar with the steps to follow in case you encounter problems in the workplace.
- **Know** how to access SGEU's governing documents: the SGEU constitution and policy manual. (Find at: www.sgeu.org)

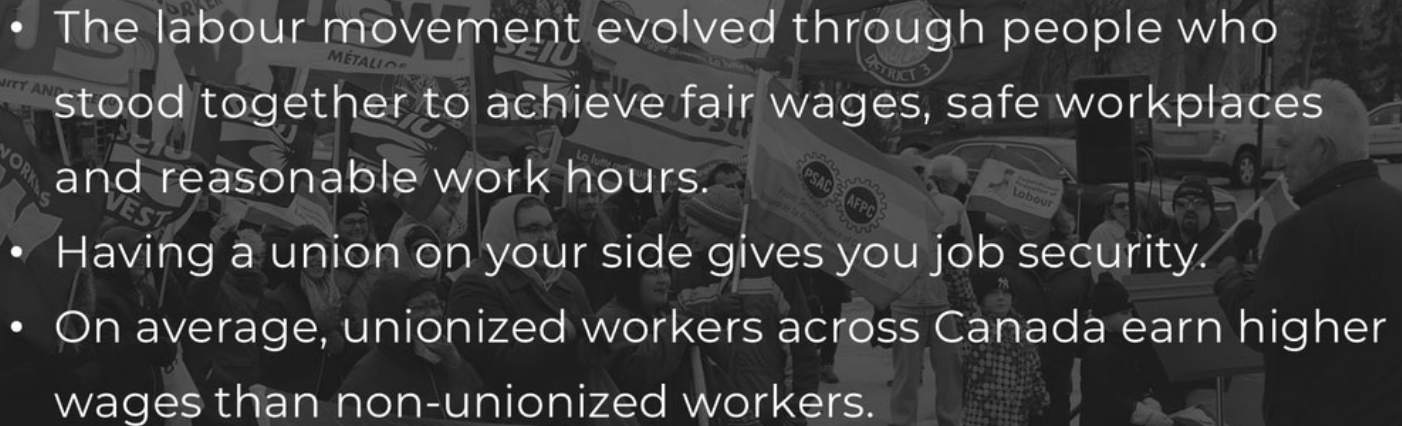
As a member of SGEU, you are responsible to:

- Keep yourself updated about union actions, events and activities.
- Participate in your local meetings and union activities - and encourage others to do so.
- Follow SGEU policies and procedures during union meetings, activities and events.
- Visit our website regularly for more news and updates about the union. (www.sgeu.org)



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Remember the Union Advantage

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- The labour movement evolved through people who stood together to achieve fair wages, safe workplaces and reasonable work hours.
 - Having a union on your side gives you job security.
 - On average, unionized workers across Canada earn higher wages than non-unionized workers.

The Union Advantage

- Unionized workers across Saskatchewan earn on average 20% (\$5.51/hour) more than non-union workers.
- Women who are union members earn on average 29% (\$7.06/hour) more than non-union women.
- Young workers (age 15-24) who are union members earn on average 47% (\$7.74/hour) more than non-union youth.
- Temporary workers in unionized workplaces earn on average 34% (\$7.12/hour) more than non-union workplaces.

Source: Canadian Labour Congress, 2020.

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How you can get involved in SGEU:

- Attend your union meetings and keep yourself updated.
- Stay informed by reading information sent to you by the union via email, mail and other ways.
- Share the information you learn with other members.



How you can get involved in SGEU:

- Follow us on social media - like and share our posts so others can see them too.
- Participate in union elections by voting or running for a position.
- Know your union representatives at your workplace (stewards and local leaders).



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How you can get involved in SGEU:

Read and understand your collective agreement and the union's constitution, policies and bylaws.

Connect with us if you have suggestions or questions. Contact the elected leaders in your sector, bargaining unit or local, or contact the SGEU office nearest you.



Keep in touch and learn more:

 www.sgeu.org

 @SGEU.SK

 @SGEU

 @SGEUUnion

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