

Report of the USW Task Force

on

Increasing Accessibility at Union Events

USW's 2019 National Policy Conference passed resolution H-19, Increasing Accessibility of Union Events, that called on our union to establish a task force with representatives from each district to review best practices and make recommendations to the directors to ensure that members are able to participate in union events. (See Appendix A for the resolution's full text).

Process and Scope

In November 2019, National Director Ken Neumann named Maude Raïche (D5), Jackie Edwards (D6), Dayna Sykes (D3), and Adriane Paavo (CNO) to the task force, which began its work at meetings in December 2019 and early March 2020.

In keeping with the resolution, the task force defined its scope of inquiry broadly. While resolution H-19 named barriers related to family status, gender, race, language, and ability, it did not limit examination to these alone. And often, these factors interact to block access to union events. Therefore, we define:

- "Union events" to include but not be limited to meetings, conferences, and educational courses
- "Access" to include access to opportunities to participate, learn, speak out and be visible at union events

While the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the task force's work, it also highlighted the need to expand the scope of inquiry to include online events and accessibility of technology and information.

Structure of this Report

The existence and impact of barriers—such as family status, gender, race, language, ability, and others—in our society are well known. This report will not, therefore, re-explain and re-argue the need for their removal. But exactly because such barriers are so persistent, there are many good practices in place within the labour movement and civil society that we can identify and adopt.

Best Practices for Policies that Promote Accessibility

From our review, the USW appears to be one of the only international unions in Canada which still limits eligibility for union office on the basis of number of meetings attended. This bases worthiness on only one metric of union involvement. It does not take into consideration how many courses you attend, how much volunteer work you do in the community, how much time you spend each day talking union to other members, etc.

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The USW Constitution has a limited definition of legitimate reasons for missing meetings, and as a result, discriminates on the basis of family status, gender, religion and ability. Members are not presently able to miss a meeting without penalty if:

- They are on maternity leave
- They have unavoidable responsibilities to provide care for children and other dependent adults
- The meeting location or processes do not accommodate a mobility or other limitation
- The meeting date or time conflicts with a religious practice

The Constitution's definition creates a barrier for parents/legal guardians of young children, family members with disabilities, and elders; for women, who still bear a disproportionate responsibility for family-care work; for members living with disabilities; and for members whose religious observances prevent attendance on specific days/times.

Furthermore, within Canada, it is becoming increasingly common for unions to treat child/family care expenses incurred while attending union functions in the same way they do travel and hotel expenses: members who incur them are reimbursed. In late 2020, members from local unions which contribute to the USW Family & Community Education Fund can apply for and receive reimbursement for child/family care expenses. Some individual local unions (at least 11 to our knowledge; see Appendix B) have amended their bylaws or created policies to cover child/family care expenses. And it has long been the practice that national, and some district, events offer no-cost on-site childcare.

But a substantial percentage of USW members have no collective support when they incur these expenses in order to take part in authorized union business, a formidable barrier that targets those with lower incomes and/or care responsibilities for children or dependent adults.

Solutions:

- Amend the USW Constitution to remove discriminatory barriers to fulfilling the meeting-attendance quota (suggested changes in Appendix B) or even to remove the quota altogether
- Expand the practice of reimbursing members' costs of child/family care while attending authorized union events through a sustained effort to share, in union publications and online, examples of current USW local bylaws providing for same
- Inform ourselves of key religious dates in major faiths in addition to Christianity. Avoid scheduling union events on those dates

Best Practices for Organizing Accessible Meetings and Events

The ideal, simply stated, is to remove all obstacles to participation in every aspect of the event, whether those are obstacles due to disability or limitation (mobility, visual, auditory, intellectual or other); family status or other identity characteristic; language ability; or place of residence. The latter is a barrier in a number of ways, including whether members have access to a good internet connection to take part in online events or find information.

Solutions:

- Apply the proposed accessibility checklist (See Appendix C) to the planning of all district and national union events, and encourage local unions to apply the proposed checklist for their events
 - Better yet, involve staff and/or members from affected groups in event planning
- Ensure that registration forms (including registrations which are handled informally, such as over the telephone) ask individual registrants to indicate any language, dietary, mobility or other accessibility needs
- Maintain the practice of ensuring that at least all national union events and materials are offered in French and English, and encourage other union bodies to provide materials and interpretation in other languages as meets the needs of members
- Amend the USW Constitution to permit expanded use of online meetings by local unions
- Support campaigns that seek to address unequal access to technology, to computer literacy, and to good internet connection
- Offer training to members to increase their familiarity with technology (See Appendix D) and consider how to ensure equipment cost is not a barrier by, among other things, lending laptop computers to participants in online courses or providing members with access to computers in local-union and sub-district offices

Best Practices for Accessible Information about our Union

Participation in union activities has a prerequisite: knowing what activities exist and feeling encouraged or entitled to take part. If we want members to attend our online or in-person events, we need to make sure that they can find out as much as possible about our union. In addition to how easy it is for members to find information, we must also think about how easy it is for them to consume it.

When it comes to finding information about the USW, members face an uphill battle. Foundational documents, like the Constitution, are not available online. Instead, it's necessary to know who to ask in order to get a paper copy. Other key publications, like directors' newsmagazines, have a limited mailing list, with no clear process for a member to request inclusion.

When it comes to consuming union information, our union could conduct a systematic accessibility review of our documents and other information to ensure easier access by members with visual or literacy challenges. While such reviews can be highly technical, accessibility-rights organizations have recommendations for print size, font choice, background colour usage, and document format for ease of opening and reading on assistive devices or "read aloud" features. Using such standards not only benefits individual members; having union information easily accessible and available helps ensure that USW's membership is better informed, mobilized and engaged. It makes our union stronger.

Solutions:

- Make available on www.usw.ca key documents including the USW Constitution, By-Laws for Local Unions, By-Laws for Amalgamated Local Unions, and elections manuals for local and international elections
- Create a review team of staff from the Communications, New Media, and Health, Safety and Environment departments to investigate and develop technical standards for union documents to enhance readability and accessibility of all documents—virtual and otherwise—produced by the CNO and district offices

Conclusion

We are grateful to the local unions who proposed Resolution H19, and to the delegates who voted in favour. Their effort has given us the opportunity to reflect on these important questions. We have not come up with all the answers, but hope to have proposed some useful actions that will benefit all Steelworkers and our union as an organization.

As a final reflection, we want to recognize that many of these same barriers—based on ability, family status, and language—can also make it hard for people to find employment in the first place and, furthermore, can prevent them from being seen as able or competent to take part in the life of our union. Increasing accessibility of union events is the work of our hearts, as well as of our hands. Increasing accessibility is building solidarity.

Appendix A

H19 INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF UNION EVENTS

(Composite covering H10 and H11)

WHEREAS United Steelworkers members are diverse and, depending on their family or other statuses, may face barriers to participating in union events; and

WHEREAS gender, racial, language, ability and other diversities should be taken into account at all levels of union activities; and

WHEREAS the United Steelworkers recognizes and supports the greater role of our members in balancing work and family; and

WHEREAS the United Steelworkers should make every effort to proactively plan to make all conferences, courses and activities as accessible as possible for all our members.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Union reaffirms its commitment to providing equity caucuses at all conferences;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the National Director in conjunction with the District Directors will establish a Task Force on accessibility with representatives from each District to review best practices in order to ensure that members are able to participate in Union events; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Task Force shall make recommendations to the National Director and all District Directors with respect to improving access, including, but not limited to:

- Child care;
- Elder care; and
- Support for differently-abled individuals;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the Task Force on accessibility will make its recommendations to the National Director and all District Directors for their consideration within the next 12 months.

H19 ACCROÎTRE L'ACCESSIBILITÉ AUX ACTIVITÉS SYNDICALES

(Mixte remplaçant H10 et H11)

ATTENDU QUE le syndicat compte une grande diversité de membres qui, selon leur état familial ou d'autres situations, peuvent se heurter à des obstacles pour participer aux activités syndicales;

ATTENDU QUE toutes les activités syndicales devraient tenir compte du genre, de la race, de la langue, des capacités et des autres facteurs de diversité des membres;

ATTENDU QUE le Syndicat des Métallos reconnaît et appuie le rôle accru de nos membres en matière de conciliation travail-famille;

ATTENDU QUE le Syndicat des Métallos devrait au préalable faire en sorte que tous ses membres aient accès autant que possible à tous ses congrès, conférences, cours et activités.

PAR CONSÉQUENT, QU'IL SOIT RÉSOLU QUE le Syndicat des Métallos confirme son engagement à tenir des caucus sur l'équité lors de ses conférences;

QU'IL SOIT EN OUTRE RÉSOLU que le directeur canadien, conjointement avec les directeurs de district, mette sur pied un groupe de travail sur l'accessibilité comprenant des représentants de chaque district pour voir quelles sont les meilleures façons de faire pour s'assurer que les membres puissent participer aux activités syndicales;

QU'IL SOIT EN OUTRE RÉSOLU que le groupe de travail fasse des recommandations au directeur national et aux directeurs de district pour l'amélioration de l'accessibilité, incluant, mais sans limiter :

- Frais de garde pour enfants;
- Frais de garde et de soins aux aînés, et
- Soins aux personnes avec des besoins spéciaux;

QU'IL SOIT ENFIN RÉSOLU QUE le groupe de travail sur l'accessibilité fasse ses recommandations à l'attention du directeur national et tous les directeurs de district d'ici les 12 prochains mois;

Appendix B

Constitutional change to remove barriers to fulfilling meeting-attendance quota

1. Amend Section 7(c) of Article VI Conventions (page 36, lines 12-25) and Section 10 of Article VII Local Unions (page 44, lines 16-21) to include “caring for a child or other dependant, child birth, maternity or parental leave, lack of accessibility of meeting location, religious observance” as permissible reasons for missing a regular local union meeting, in order to be eligible to run to be a local officer or convention delegate.
2. Make the same amendment to Section 5 (c) of Article 4 Election of Officers of By-Laws for Local Unions and By-Laws for Amalgamated Local Unions (page 12 in By-Laws for Local Unions and page 17 in By-Laws for Amalgamated Local Unions).
3. Amend Section 8 of Article VII Local Unions (pages 41-42, lines 31 and 1-4) to include “child birth, maternity or parental leave, lack of accessibility of meeting location, religious observance, sickness which confines, jury duty” as grounds for being able to receive an absentee ballot to cast a ballot in elections.

USW Local Unions with Child/Family Care Expense Coverage

(as of November 28, 2019)

1 USW Local 1998 (University of Toronto) Bylaws Section 6(b)

When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or course, the local will pay up to a maximum of \$75.00 per child per day provided receipts are submitted confirming the expense. Child care costs that would normally occur had the delegate been at his/her workplace or child care provided by a spouse or companion will not be reimbursed. Any request for child care other than those covered by this bylaw must be submitted in advance to the Executive Committee for their approval.

2 TWU USW 1944 Financial Policy 5.07

That members on official Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU), United Steelworkers Local Union 1944 sanctioned business, Unit general or executive meetings or to attend Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU), United Steelworkers Local Union 1944 approved labour courses, be reimbursed for additional costs incurred for child care. The additional costs shall be determined by the differences between normal working day costs and the actual costs incurred. Any exceptional child care expenses shall require prior approval of the Secretary-Treasurer.

3 USW 1-405 Practice

The local will pay child care costs, with a receipt, for any days on union business that the member's children require child care but for which the member is not receiving lost wages. If the member is being paid lost-time wages, the local does not reimburse as child care is seen as a normal cost for them if they had been at work.

4 USW 1-207 Bylaw 5

When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or approved Union business, the Local Union will pay up to a maximum of fifty dollars (\$50.00) per child per day, with appropriate receipts for Child Care costs. Such costs that would normally occur had the member been at his/her workplace or the child care were provided by a spouse, companion or the child's other parent will not be reimbursed. Any requests for child care other than those covered by this section must be submitted in advance to the Local Union Executive Board for their approval.

5 Local 9393 (Orillia) Bylaw

Any member that required daycare will be allowed \$50 per day for member attending courses and special meetings with the local union is given a receipt of such expense.

6 Local 9705 Bylaw

Child care

When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or approved Union business, the Local Union will pay up to a maximum of fifty dollars (\$50.00) per child per day, with appropriate receipts for Child Care costs. Such costs that would normally occur had the member been at his/her workplace or the child care were provided by a spouse, companion or the child's other parent will not be reimbursed. Any requests for child care other than those covered by this section must be submitted in advance to the Local Union Executive Board for their approval.

Dependent/Family care

Members are entitled to reimbursement, up to a maximum of fifty dollar (\$50.0) of reasonable receipted costs of dependant/family care provided by someone other than her/his partner/spouse as a result of authorized absences from home arising from the conduct of union business. Such allowance is not intended to reimburse the member for dependant/family expenses he/she would have normally incurred as a result of employment except where the absence exceeds the normal work day or week. Claims

under the above policy, along with receipts, shall be included with the member's lost-time and expense voucher.

7 Local 1-2017 Policy

Babysitting

The Local Union shall provide childcare services for Members attending the Local Union Annual Meeting and the Annual Banquet. As well, childcare services will be provided for the Plant Committee and Safety Committee Seminars.

The Child Care services shall cover the hours of the meetings and be provided in Prince George.

The Local Union shall reimburse up to two people from a Plant Committee for the reasonable cost of childcare while attending third step grievance meetings.

Reimbursement shall be subject to pre-approval of the Business Agent and Financial Secretary.

8 Local 2009 Bylaw

When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention or conference, the Local Union will pay up to a maximum of Sixty Dollars (\$60.00) per child per day, with appropriate receipts or confirmation of the expense, for Child care costs. Such costs that would normally occur had the member been at his/her workplace or the child care were provided by a spouse or companion will not be reimbursed. Any request for childcare other than those covered by this section must be submitted in advance to the Local Union Executive Board for their approval.

9 Local 9042 Bylaw 5.05(d)

Elected or appointed delegates to conventions, conferences or educational seminars who require child care must use the childcare facilities provided at the convention, conference or educational seminar and the Local will pay the cost of such facilities.

When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or educational seminar where no provisions for child care have been made by the organizers of the event, then the Local will pay up to the maximum of fifty (\$50.00) dollars per child per day provided receipts are submitted confirming the expense.

Childcare costs that would normally occur had the member been at his/her place of employment or if the childcare was provided by a spouse or companion will not be reimbursed. Any requests for childcare other than those covered by this bylaw must be submitted in advance to the Executive Committee for their approval.

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10 Local 3 Bylaw 5.05(d) [same wording as Local 9042]

Elected or appointed delegates to conventions, conferences or educational seminars who require child care must use the childcare facilities provided at the convention, conference or educational seminar and the Local will pay the cost of such facilities. When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or educational seminar where no provisions for child care have been made by the organizers of the event, then the Local will pay up to the maximum of fifty (\$50.00) dollars per child per day provided receipts are submitted confirming the expense. Childcare costs that would normally occur had the member been at his/her place of employment or if the childcare was provided by a spouse or companion will not be reimbursed. Any requests for childcare other than those covered by this bylaw must be submitted in advance to the Executive Committee for their approval.

11 Local 9393 Bylaw

Any member that requires daycare will be allowed \$50 (fifty) Dollars per day for any member attending courses and special meetings when the Local Union is given a receipt of such expense.

Appendix C

Accessibility Checklists for Union Events at the District/National and Local Union Levels and for Online Union Events

Accessibility Checklist for District/National Union Events

To ensure that USW district and national events are accessible to members who live with mobility, visual, auditory, dietary, intellectual or other restrictions and/or who have child/family care responsibilities, apply these guidelines to the selection of event venues and to the organizing of union events.

Planning

- Provide any contractors with a copy of these accessibility guidelines and clearly communicate that USW expects cooperation to achieve the guidelines wherever possible
- Involve staff or members with disabilities and who are trans* and gender-variant in the early stages of event planning
- Amend registration forms to ask what specific accommodations people need in order to take part in the event. This will include child/family care, mobility, visual, auditory, dietary and a blank “other” section where attendees can write in additional needs.
- Assign at least one USW staff person to be the event’s accessibility contact. The accessibility contact works with attendees to ensure their accommodations needs are met to the best of our ability, also acting as a liaison at the event between attendees requiring accommodation and the facility staff.
- Provide the USW accessibility contact and a counterpart at the event facility with details of the accommodation needs submitted with registration forms. These two staff people will ensure that each attendee requiring accommodation knows the details of how their needs will be met (i.e., the member who requires kosher meals is informed in advance of where to find their specific meal).
- Schedule an on-site visit before reserving the venue
- Ensure that the venue itself and the area in which it is located are free of risks of physical violence to attendees and their families
- Check that emergency evacuation procedures are in place for all individuals, including people with disabilities and seniors
- Take steps to provide on-site child care and off-site child/family care reimbursement, and make the event child/family-friendly

- In addition to language interpreters and standard AV service providers, also consider booking an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter; arranging for real-time captioning in the official languages of the event; and having individual sound amplification devices available for use in the same way that attendees can receive translation devices
- Ensure that the agenda includes equity-group caucuses at times which don't conflict with other significant event activities or with specific caucuses themselves (i.e., all caucuses should not be scheduled to occur simultaneously, as attendees may belong to more than one equity-seeking group)
- Schedule alcohol-free social events and spaces for attendees who do not or cannot consume alcohol

Entrances, exits, pathways, hallways, corridors

- Clearly marked
- Turning space with a six-foot diameter
- Minimum 39 inches wide
- Free of any impediments or tripping hazards
- Preferably no lip or a maximum lip of one-half inch beveled
- Smooth, level surfaces with no stairs
- Avoid slopes where possible (no more than 5% slope)
- Well-marked paths at entrances with information about accessibility throughout the trail or path (for example, identify any interruptions of the accessible surface, such as steps, steep slopes, and so on)

Doors

- Ensure automatic door openers are activated (otherwise, wedge the door open if allowed by fire regulations)

Elevators

- Minimum 36-inch opening
- Large enough to accommodate a person with motorized wheelchair or scooter, and an attendant or assistance dog

Lighting

- Avoid dark or dimly lit venues
- Ensure adequate lighting in parking areas, hallways, washrooms, and other locations frequented by attendees

- Avoid use of strobe lighting (it can trigger seizures in those with epilepsy)

Ventilation

- Ensure ventilation of fresh outside air so people with chemical sensitivities are more comfortable
- Be aware of any ongoing construction or remodeling that could impact the circulation of air-borne allergens such as dust, paint fumes

Acoustics

- Consider the impact of ambient noise for people who are hard of hearing

Surfaces

- Ensure walking surfaces are level and free of tripping hazards or obstructions
- Safest options include: concrete, asphalt, compacted crushed granite or limestone, linoleum, and tight-weave carpets without underlay
 - Grass is not accessible when wet
 - Wood chips, bark mulch, and drain rock are not accessible surfaces
- Avoid slopes where possible (no more than 5% slope)

Washrooms

- Scent-free soap and flowers
- Signage asking attendees to not use scented products
- Washrooms and change rooms are trans* inclusive
- At least one washroom large enough to accommodate a person with a motorized wheelchair and their attendant
- At least one single-user washroom with signage to reflect universal, functions-based designation
- For outdoor events, provide wheelchair-accessible portable toilets and ensure that people using motorized or manual wheelchairs can get to them on accessible surfaces

Stages

- Stage entrance must be level, gently sloping, ramped, or have a lift
- Ramp slopes no more than 5% grade
- Provide a stand-alone microphone (wireless or with an adjustable stand) for people who need to sit or use mobility devices

- Podiums are at least one metre away from the stage edge, to prevent accidents and falls for speakers who are blind or partially sighted, who may not be able to see the end of the stage
- Lecterns can adjust to different heights for people who need to sit or use mobility devices, or use two lecterns with different heights

Pathways

- Pathways to displays, stages, speaker's podium should be minimum 39 inches wide, and include turning circle space with a diameter of 6 feet
- Pathway slopes no more than 5% slope
- Consider tripping hazards, obstacles, stairs, curbs, and bumps that would prevent people using wheelchairs, walkers, or canes from navigating the pathway

Parking and pick-up/drop-off

- Minimum 2% of total parking available should be accessible and at least 4 spaces more than anticipated
- Spaces should be at least 8.5 feet wide with adjacent side and rear access of at least 6.6 feet wide
- Two accessible parking spaces may share a common access aisle

Signage

- Clearly and visibly signed accessible entrances, parking, washrooms, public phones, transit points, and other conveniences
- Install standard universal signage in single-user washrooms, change booths, and other spaces
- Translate existing signage with multiple languages to increase understanding and avoiding confusion among users
- Avoid using gender symbols of bodies and focus on function symbols
- Use high contrast colours – light text on dark background or dark text on light background
- Use a text size of at least 14 point and sans serif font, such as Arial
- Provide signage in three formats if possible – tactile graphics, tactile lettering, and Braille
- Place signage at eye level for people seated in mobility devices (1.2 meters from the floor, based on the City of Toronto standard)

- Ensure signage does not block sidewalks or create a tripping hazard

Promotion

- Communicate your event broadly using multiple methods
- Website is clear and accessible
- Use a text size of at least 14 point and sans serif font, such as Arial
- Include contact information (phone, email, TTY) on all materials so attendees can request assistance, and specify how far in advance the request needs to be made, or any additional information or questions.
- Include information on accessibility features, such as ASL interpreters, real-time captioning, dietary accommodation, non-toxic materials and accessible entrances and parking, as well as a map on how to get to the event with pick-up/drop-off locations
- Ask attendees to not wear scented products

Seating

- Avoid designating a single area “for wheelchair use” – this segregates and stigmatizes individuals using wheelchairs, prevents them from having the same choices as other attendees, and prevents them from being seated with friends and colleagues
- Provide sufficient places with no seats for people in wheelchairs or scooters to use. If possible, scatter these throughout the venue
- Where seats are movable, provide areas by the aisles with no chairs so people with mobility aids can maneuver into these spaces
- Ensure aisles between seating rows are wide enough for people using mobility aids – a minimum 36 inches of clear space
- Provide seats near the front of the room for people with visual or hearing needs with clear access to ASL interpreters and speakers
- Ensure there are chairs directly in front of the real-time captioning screen for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Ensure venue chairs will be suitable to a wide range of body shapes and sizes

Tables

- Provide sufficient space between tables for people using mobility devices and assistance dogs to go between

- Ensure the space between occupied chairs from adjacent tables is at minimum 36 inches
- Have one chair missing from each table for people using mobility aids

Counters and reception desks

- Ensure desks are 29 to 34 inches from the floor, to ensure people using mobility aids can access the desks

On-site assistance

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters – reserve space on stage and microphone for interpreters when speaking for a deaf person
- Real-time captioning in at least English and French – provide a large screen in front of room and seats provided in the front for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Provide interpreters and real-time captioning with prior information on program content and length, copies of speaker notes, and PowerPoint presentations, titles, and any technical language or unique features
- Arrange escorts to the stage for attendees who are blind or partially sighted. Escorts should communicate where the edge of the stage is and stay with the attendees to escort them to and from the stage
- Offer high-quality language translation in English and French, and consider offering it in other key languages

Displays and exhibits

- Consider the height so they are accessible to people using wheelchairs or scooters

Food and beverage

- Accommodate food sensitivities and dietary needs based on cultural and religious requirements
- Communicate dietary accommodations to caterers, and ensure they follow through
- Label accommodated meals
- Consider serving accommodated meals first in case a correction is needed, however, be mindful that all attendees want to enjoy their meals at the same time
- If food is served buffet-style, ensure that food ingredients are well labelled or that staff and volunteers know the ingredients

- Offer non-plastic containers and bendable straws
- Clearly label ingredients
- Provide water, and provide help pouring
- Avoid sharp objects such as toothpicks
- If there are drink tickets, have ones available for non-alcoholic drinks as well

Event materials, presentations, and attendees

- Use non-toxic materials, such as unscented markers and non-plastic name badges
- Use high-contrast colours – light text on dark background or dark text on light background
- Use a text size of at least 14 point and sans serif font, such as Arial
- Offer materials and agendas in advance, in digital, large print or Braille formats if requested
- Consider using captions and audio descriptions for videos
- Ask speakers and presenters to identify themselves by name each time they speak and verbally describe any visual content in their presentations
- Ask speakers and attendees how they want to be referred to – by name or pronoun. Pronouns may be either feminine (she, her, hers), masculine (he, him, his) or gender-neutral (they, them, theirs)
- Welcome participants using gender-neutral terms (such as “people” or “folks”, not “ladies and gentlemen” or “guys”)

Assistance dogs

- Designate an outdoor toilet space
- Provide a waste bin
- Provide water bowls

Accessibility Checklist for Local Union Events (including education courses)

- Is the building physically accessible? This includes the meeting space, washrooms, coffee-break and dining areas.
- Have you provided options for members with child/family care needs? This could include providing on-site care, reimbursing the members’ expenses, or helping them access reimbursement from the FCEF, if your local contributes.

- Is there a gender-neutral washroom?
- Have you asked if members need specific accommodations on the registration form or meeting confirmation? Here is an example of what can be added to forms or asked by telephone or email:

I will need the following accommodations in order to participate:

- Assistive listening device
- Captioning
- Reserved front row seat
- Large print
- Advance copy of slides to be projected
- Wheelchair access
- Wheelchair access to working tables throughout room
- Scent-free
- Lactation room
- Diet Restrictions. List: _____
- Other: _____

Accessibility of Virtual Union Events

Virtual meetings are accessible in ways that face-to-face meetings are not: no stairs, no uncomfortable chairs, no faulty sound systems. But they aren't the perfect solution to union meetings, because they have a whole new range of barriers to accessibility. And this means we have to think of new solutions.

- Not all members have equal access to the internet or own up-to-date computer equipment, including printers
 - Solution: Choose a meeting platform that allows members to join events by telephone. Make sure to check the settings and select a Canadian telephone number
 - Solution: Choose a meeting platform with few and simple settings, one that is robust but uses the least signal strength
 - Solution: Provide members with information on how to view the meeting on their smart TV, as an option if they don't have a computer
 - Solution: Don't rely on e-mail to send out documents to be used at meetings. Mail hard copies to members' home addresses
- Not all members are comfortable reading documents if literacy is an issue, if English or French isn't their mother tongue, or other reasons
 - Solution: Ensure that documents are written in clear language. Keep them short and to the point. Send only as many documents as necessary

- Family obligations can prevent some members from joining virtual events.
 - Solution: Event times should be chosen to avoid busy family times, meal times and times when other members of the household need access to the internet for work or school
- Not all members are comfortable using new computer programs
 - Solution: In the advance notice for the virtual meeting, encourage members to test out the log-in procedure early, to notice any problems
 - Solution: Designate a local member who is tech-savvy to receive calls or messages for help logging into the meeting

Appendix D

USW workshops on holding online local-union meetings

Designs are available in English and French from the Education Department of the Canadian National Office or from the District Education Coordinators.