

FROM THE “Did You Know?” E-MAIL SERIES PROVIDED BY THE NOVA SCOTIA UNION OF PUBLIC & PRIVATE EMPLOYEES

NSUPE’s Structure and your Union Dues

You already know that NSUPE is different from (we don’t want to brag too much by saying “better than”) other unions. One of the key differences is NSUPE’s structure.

In NSUPE, NSUPE itself is the certified bargaining agent for the members of all the Locals. It’s the overall union, as opposed to the Local, that is responsible for ensuring that members are properly represented. In many other unions, each Local holds its own certification and the Local itself is responsible for ensuring members are properly represented.

What this structure means is that in NSUPE, all the union dues of every member go into a single pot and then NSUPE pays for each Local’s needs – everything from strikes, business agent/lawyers, arbitrations, and organizing to printing, executive expenses and meeting spaces. In other unions, dues are often split (not necessarily evenly) between the Local and the parent union, and then the Local is responsible for many of its own costs. That means in some cases that small and even medium-sized Locals may not have enough money to pay for an arbitration or have a lawyer assist with negotiations or have its representatives attend union conventions. In NSUPE, no matter what size Local you’re in, you receive the same services.

What’s the downside to NSUPE’s structure? Actually, we don’t see it as a downside, but rather as a safeguard: a Local that wants to operate or spend money differently than in the past has to convince the other Locals that it’s the right thing to do. This is done through NSUPE’s Executive Council, the body made up of representatives from every Local that oversees the union.

If a NSUPE Local wants to have its own money to spend on things that the overall union doesn’t pay for, then the Local membership can vote to pay a little extra in dues to have its own funds. For example, our Local 14 members at the Halifax Regional Library voted to pay an extra 0.02% in dues on each pay to have a social fund to pay for gifts for members if one of them is sick, gets married, has a baby, etc., and to pay for functions such as sport tournaments or holiday parties.

Except where a Local votes for its own dues assessment, all your dues go into one big pot and all the Union’s and Locals’ expenses are paid out of that pot. In NSUPE, it really is all for one and one for all!

NOTE: The Did You Know? series is general information only. For advice specific to your workplace or personal circumstances, please contact a union representative. Comments are welcome at nsupe@ns.sympatico.ca. For back issues of Did You Know, look under “News” on the NSUPE website: www.nsupe.ca.