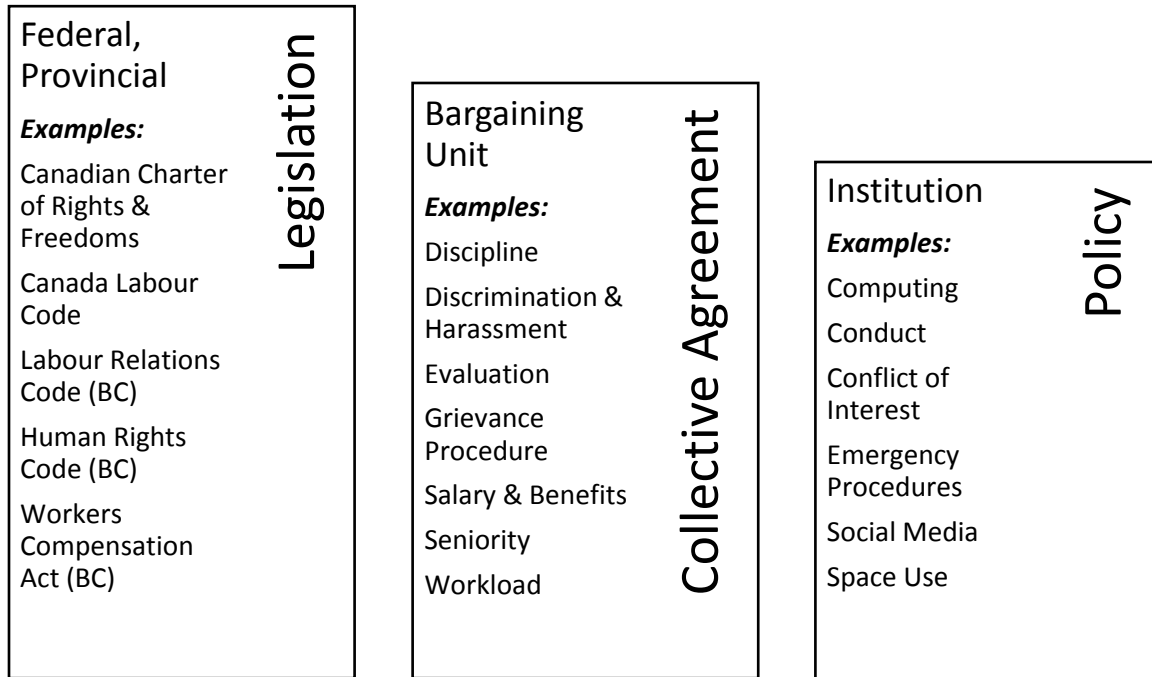


Know Your Rights: Libraries and Labour Resources & Tips

BC Library Conference :: May 10, 2018

Workplace Rights Framework

The following framework demonstrates the various documents where your workplace rights may be identified. They are presented in order of weight or force (i.e., legislation takes precedence over your collective agreement, which takes precedence over local policy).



Workplace Rights Matter Because...

Worker rights and working conditions have an impact on the broader organization – our colleagues and their interactions with one another and with management.



Worker rights and working conditions have an impact on our personal well-being.

The quality of our service is contingent on our ability to carry out our work as whole, healthy, and empowered workers.

Protecting Yourself in the Workplace

Not all of these are necessary in every workplace – until they are. Adopting good practices will help you resolve issues early on, before they become big problems. They may also help you support others in the workplace (such as when you witness an incident).

- **Take notes.** Even if you are in a meeting where minutes are being taken, always take your own notes and make sure the minutes accurately reflect your understanding of what happened in the meeting. Make sure you also record body language, tone, and other non-verbal cues that will help in your recall. Contemporaneous notes can carry a lot of weight.
- **Document verbal directions.** Follow up verbal meetings with a quick email documenting your understanding of what you are being asked to do. Always ask for a response (see next bullet point).
- **Ask for a timely response.** Instead of the open-ended “let me know,” try: “If I haven’t heard from you by [date & time], I will assume you are in agreement and proceed accordingly.” The onus is then on your supervisor or management to respond if they have a different understanding. Make sure the specified timeline is reasonable.
- **Read your position description.** Make sure you understand the duties, responsibilities, and timelines that are expected of you. Don’t assume – ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or about stated expectations that are different from what is in your position description.
- **Read your collective agreement.** At a minimum, read the articles pertaining to your continued employment (e.g., discipline, evaluation), working conditions (e.g., what you are expected to do), under what circumstances you are entitled to union representation, professional development, and benefits. Understanding your rights is fundamental to asserting them.
- **Get to know your steward.** Your union steward is an important resource person for you and your colleagues. They can answer questions about your workplace rights and help you interpret the collective agreement in relation to workplace issues. They can also support you in meetings with your supervisor, and put you in touch with other workplace resources, such as your ombudsperson or conflict resolution officer.

Where to Learn More

Most union organizations offer resources, professional development (your local union may be willing to pay for this), and more related to labour relations and worker rights. They also keep you up to date on labour issues and events.

- Your union web site (e.g, CUPE, FPSE)
- BC Federation of Labour: <http://bcfed.ca/>
- Canadian Labour Congress: <http://canadianlabour.ca/>
- CAUT (for post-secondary): <https://www.caut.ca/>

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