

Busting the myths about unions

Time to distinguish fact from fiction. Any time there is talk of joining a union, a lot of rumours and myths break out — we'd like to provide you with the real story.

MYTH	FACT
The union just wants your dues money.	You'll hear this a lot from many employers. But it's really up to you to take a look and decide for yourselves. Every serious organization — churches, clubs, sporting leagues, and related associations — require funding, and unions are no different. Union dues pay for the costs of having an organization — contract negotiations, grievances and arbitrations, training for members, legal fees, and much more so you, the worker, will never have to “go it alone”. Remember, union dues are also tax deductible.
The union will make you go on strike.	97% of labour contracts are negotiated without a strike. Strikes are a rare last resort in contract negotiations — no union wants a strike. A strike only happens when a majority of workers vote to one.
Unions make demands that just aren't reasonable	A couple things to remember here. First of all, the union is you and your co-workers, so you get a say in setting the demands you want. Second, this is a bargaining process aimed at getting you the best deal possible, and once you set a demand that's when the process of give-and-take starts. Finally, don't forget — you work hard and you need to be compensated fairly.
If you form a union, you risk losing the benefits and pay raises you already have.	It is illegal for an employer to freeze or cut previously scheduled raises to discourage you from forming a union. Once you're organized, you'll lock in current wages and benefits and then negotiate from there. All of you will get an opportunity to review your proposed contract before you vote to approve it. Obviously, you're not likely to approve a contract that cuts your wages or benefits.
A union is a third party that will come between us.	It's just the opposite. The union is... you! And your co-workers. When you get down to the heart of things, unions are democratic, member-run organizations. When you form a union, you work together to govern your own organization and every contract will be reviewed and approved by a majority of the employees where you work.
With a union, you won't be allowed to talk to your supervisor - you'll have to go through the union.	Most unions have found that having a union strengthens communication between employees and supervisors. Direct relationships with immediate supervisors continue and you can negotiate to retain good policies and procedures already in place. The advantage of joining together in a union is that you're able to make your voices heard at the upper levels of management, where key decisions are made.
Unions should be a thing of the past — they're not needed any more	Well that line goes back as far as 1886, when the Toronto Globe used it in an editorial. Let's see, since then, unions have fought for and gained: pension plans, medical plans, disability protection, minimum wages... health and safety programs, education programs, pay equity, the 40-hour work week... and so much more. Without unions, the balance of power shifts dramatically to the desires and decisions of the employer.