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# UNITED STEELWORKERS

Canadian National Office  
Legal Department

## Articling Student Program

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### UNITED STEELWORKERS IN CANADA

United Steelworkers (USW) is an international trade union with some 225,000 members in Canada, employed in all sectors of the economy and in all jurisdictions.

USW's Canadian National Office provides a wide range of services to staff and local unions: strategic campaigns, health and safety, political action, organizing, education, promotion of equity issues, research, communications and legal services.

### ADVICE AND ADVOCACY FOR THE UNION

United Steelworkers employs an in-house department of six labour lawyers, dedicated to providing advice to, and advocacy for, the union in all areas of law. The Legal Department is part of the Canadian National Office, which is located in Toronto. For over 30 years, the Legal Department has employed an articling student.

## THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Currently, the Legal Department consists of six lawyers and two support staff.

- **Robert Healey** is the head of the Legal Department. He was called to the Bar in 1990 and joined the Legal Department in 1992.
- **Cathy Braker** articulated with the Legal Department and has remained with the Legal Department since she was called to the Bar in 1999.
- **Shaheen Hirani** articulated with the Legal Department and was called to the Bar in 1998. She returned to the Department in 2002 after having worked as in-house counsel for two other unions.
- **Rob Champagne** articulated with the Legal Department and has remained following his call to the Bar in 2002.
- **Katrina Peddle** articulated with the Legal Department and has remained following her call to the Bar in 2013.
- **Debra Burton** was called to the Bar of British Columbia in 2001 and worked for union-side labour law firms before joining the Legal Department in 2015. She works out of the Union's District 3 office in Burnaby, B.C.
- **Daniela Borchardt** has served as a Legal Assistant in the Legal Department since 2012.
- **Stephanie Buongiorno** has served as a Legal Assistant in the Legal Department since 2015.

## THE WORK OF THE USW LEGAL DEPARTMENT

The Legal Department is the front line for responding to any legal issue that arises in the life of the Union, from coast to coast to coast:

- Litigation before administrative tribunals, including:
  - grievance arbitration boards
  - provincial and federal labour relations tribunals
  - human rights tribunals
  - employment standards tribunals
  - financial services tribunals
  - social benefits tribunals
  - occupational health and safety appeal tribunals
  - workers' compensation tribunals
  - international labour rights agencies
- Litigation before all levels of court, dealing with civil, criminal, insolvency and appellate matters, including applications for injunctions, picket line charges and applications for judicial review.
- Advising staff appearing before grievance arbitration boards and other administrative tribunals.
- Providing strategic and legal advice to staff in collective bargaining negotiations, including drafting collective agreement language and providing representation in first contract arbitration applications.
- Preparation of submissions to government on law reform in areas such as labour relations, employment standards and human rights.
- Presentation of educational seminars for staff and local union officers on a variety of subjects related to the filing, investigation, mediation and arbitration of grievances, human rights, bankruptcy and insolvency, and updates on leading cases and amendments to labour legislation.

## THE ROLE OF THE ARTICLING STUDENT

The articling student is an integral part of the Legal Department. Duties include:

- Intake of inquiries and requests from servicing staff
- Interviewing witnesses
- Legal research
- Drafting opinion letters, pleadings and other submissions
- Attendance with lawyers at mediations and hearings
- Depending on the student's interests, attendance as counsel at mediations and hearings
- Independent carriage of files
- Formulating positions and drafting submissions on public policy matters, such as law reform
- Preparation of materials for educational seminars and assisting in the delivery of seminars

## THE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

With six lawyers, the Legal Department is a close-knit group. Lawyers work co-operatively and routinely consult on files. The working environment is highly collegial and non-hierarchical. Students enjoy a true "open door" policy, by which they can contact any of the lawyers at any time.

In addition, each year, one lawyer is assigned as the articling student's mentor in order to ensure that the student has a point of first contact for general questions, for assistance with particular assignments, and to monitor the student's workload for quantity and variety. As well, the mentor provides the student with on-going feedback about their work and a more formal mid-term evaluation.

## HIREBACK AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

In choosing where to complete their articles, many students quite properly consider the possibility of future employment as a lawyer.

Like all law offices which serve unions, including private firms, the Legal Department cannot guarantee that an articling student will be hired back as a lawyer.

However, the Legal Department has a long history of hiring lawyers from among former articling students. Currently, four of our six lawyers articulated here.

As well, all students who articulated for the Legal Department and who wished to pursue a career in union-side labour law have been able to do so. The Legal Department has always made every effort to assist its former articling students in finding work.

## WAGES AND BENEFITS

USW provides articling students with a salary and benefits comparable to other union-side law offices, as well as payment of fees for the lawyer licensing process.

Listed below is a selection of our articling students along with a summary of their careers after they articulated with us.

**1986-1987 – Paula Turtle** After articling, Paula worked as counsel to USW, becoming the head of the Legal Department in 1997. Following her retirement in 2013, she served as general counsel to the Canadian Association of University Teachers. She is now a Vice-Chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as well as an arbitrator/mediator.

**1994-1995 – Heather Alden** Following her articles, Heather worked as the first general counsel to the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 113. She is now Director of Legal Services at the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF).

**1995-1996 – David Doorey** Upon the completion of his articles, David practiced with a union-side labour firm in B.C. He returned to the USW in 1998 and practiced with us until 2001. He is now a professor of Work Law at York University.

**1998-1999 – Colleen Barrett** Colleen is working as a Senior Policy Advisor for the Ontario Ministry of Labour.

**1999-2000 – Travis Kearns** Immediately following his articles, Travis was hired by a union-side labour law firm. He is currently the Director of Field Services at the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

**2002-2003 – Laura Hartsliet** Laura was hired back to work in the Legal Department on a contract. She then went to work at the Ontario Office of the Worker Advisor. She is now an adjudicator at the Landlord and Tenant Board of Ontario.

**2004-2005 – Kirsten Agrell** After articling, Kirsten was hired to work in the Legal Department on a contract for a year. She is presently in-house counsel to the Operating Engineers (IUOE).

**2006-2007 – Heather Ann McConnell** Following her articles, Heather Ann was hired as in-house counsel to UNITE HERE. She is now counsel at a union-side labour law firm.

**2007-2008 – John No** John practices law in the Workers' Rights division of Parkdale Community Legal Services.

**2008-2009 – Michael Urminsky** Prior to the conclusion of his articles, Michael was hired by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), where he presently works in Ottawa.

**2009-2010 – Lesley Gilchrist** Lesley is working as a grievance officer with the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union.

**2013-2014 – Cody Hedman** Cody is currently counsel with the Hospital Employees' Union in Burnaby, B.C.

**2014-2015 – Saneliso Moyo** After articling, Saneliso was hired back to work in the Legal Department on a contract. She is presently counsel at a union-side labour law firm.

**2015-2016 – Lisa Leinveer** After articling, Lisa was hired to work as counsel at a union-side labour law firm. She now practices in the area of mental health and human rights law.

**2016-2017 – Jason Huang** Jason is presently counsel at a union-side labour law firm.

**2017-2018 – Amy Brubacher** Amy is an employment lawyer at the Community Legal Clinic of York Region.

If you would like more information, contact the USW Legal Department at 416-487-1571.

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