



› March 19 & 20<sup>th</sup>/2026

VICTORIA INN HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE  
1808 Wellington Ave., Winnipeg, MB

PLENARY PRESENTATION

› **THURSDAY MARCH 19, 2026 9:00am - 10:15am**

## Skills for Difficult Conversations: Effective Strategies and Practical Tips

The work of Union representatives is demanding, and navigating difficult conversations is a core part of the role. In this keynote session, an experienced panel will share insights and strategies for engaging in challenging discussions—whether with members, management, or fellow union leaders. The session will reinforce best practices and provide practical strategies and tips for handling both routine difficult conversations and unique, high-intensity situations.

**Moderator:** Kristen Worbanski, Myers LLP  
**Keynote Speaker:** David Falk, Partner, Facilitated Solutions

PLENARY PRESENTATION

› **FRIDAY MARCH 20, 2026 9:00am - 10:15am**

## Essential Services Fundamentals: How Does It Look A Year In?

This session will provide an update on the constitutional right to strike and the limits on that right. With a year's experience under the 2024 amendments to The Labour Relations Act, we will discuss anti-scab legislation and the essential services that must be continued during a strike. Practical advice will be offered on how to negotiate an essential services agreement, and the Registrar of the Manitoba Labour Board will join us to speak to the Board's processes in relation to essential services.

**Presenters:** Susan Dawes, Myers LLP  
**Panelists:** Antonio Barraza Luna, CUPE National Representative  
Raymond MacIsaac, Registrar, Manitoba Labour Board



## SESSION PRESENTATIONS

THURSDAY MARCH 19, 2026

10:30am - 12:00pm

## Session A

**A1/WCB Claims and Appeals**

Shannon Carson, Myers LLP, Jodi Plenert, Myers LLP,  
David Popke, MGEU, WCB Specialist

This session is designed to provide attendees with an overview of the WCB claim process. Topics covered will include general principles of workers' compensation, available benefits, return to work and accommodation, and the appeal process.

**A2/Organizing Do's and Don'ts**

Susan Dawes, Myers LLP, Victoria Hodge, Myers LLP

This interactive panel will discuss the practical and legal realities of an organizing campaign, including: access to employees and employer property during the campaign; the certification process from start to finish; the proposed bargaining unit; employer rights to communicate during a campaign; unfair labour practices during organizing; and discretionary certifications. Bring your questions!

**A3/Dealing with Difficult Grievors**

Greg Bartel, Myers LLP, Mike Segstro, Myers LLP

Unreasonable demands, unrealistic expectations, "doing their own research". Every union has difficult members who know more than you do – just ask them! This panel offers practical thoughts on managing those members (and their expectations) throughout the course of both their employment and yours! The panel also discusses strategies to have proper evidence in place to defend against an inevitable DFR.

**A4/Ask a Labour Lawyer**

Paul McKenna, Myers LLP, Trevor Ray, Myers LLP,  
Paul McDonald, MGEU

This session puts the panel on the hot seat by giving attendees the opportunity to ask the labour law questions on their minds. The panelists will answer questions about organizing, bargaining, collective agreements, discipline, management rights, workers' rights, employment – related statutes, and "almost" anything else you are wondering about. Please note this session is not intended to address specific fact situations and is intended for general information only.

## SESSION PRESENTATIONS

THURSDAY MARCH 19, 2026

1:15pm - 2:45pm

## Session B

**B1/Workplace Safety and Health Update**

Shannon Carson, Myers LLP, Amanda Cheys, Myers LLP

This session will provide an update on legislative changes and recent caselaw pertaining to workplace safety and health. We will also discuss strategies to consider in advancing workplace safety and health issues.

**B2/Off-Duty Conduct**

Greg Bartel, Myers LLP, Victoria Hodge, Myers LLP

Where does an employer's authority end and an employee's personal life begin? The starting point is that what employees do on their own time is none of the employer's business, and off-duty conduct cannot justify discipline unless there is a clear, demonstrable connection to the workplace. This session will examine the legal limits on employer authority, challenge overreach in disciplining workers for off-duty activities, and define the line between legitimate workplace concerns and an employee's right to privacy.

**B3/Medical Privacy**

Paul McKenna, Myers LLP, Michael Merner, Myers LLP

The protection of an employee's personal medical information continues to be a controversial subject in the workplace. This session will explore issues of medical privacy including: Can employers require medical notes for absences and proof of fitness to return to work, and if so, how much personal medical information are they allowed to request? Can an employer require employees to submit to independent medical exams? What are employees required to provide if seeking accommodation for a medical condition? How do we protect the privacy of medical information?

**B4/Unions 101**

Joel Deeley, Myers LLP, Jodi Plenert, Myers LLP

Unions 101 is an introductory session designed for persons new to the workings of Unions. The topics discussed will be of general application to all Unions, including the roles and responsibilities of Union Representatives and Shop Stewards. The speakers will also discuss some of the more contentious issues that seem to occur in most workplaces. Participants are welcome at all times to ask questions about areas of concern they may have experienced in dealing with management on a daily basis.

## SESSION PRESENTATIONS

THURSDAY MARCH 19, 2026 3:00pm - 4:30pm

## Session C

**C1/Discipline Fundamentals**

Jeff Smorang, Myers LLP, Amanda Cheys, Myers LLP

This panel will discuss the disciplinary process from start to finish, beginning with the initial investigation meeting and proceeding through to arbitration. The panel will address issues including: the investigation process, right to union representation, grounds for imposing discipline, principles of progressive discipline, steps to take at the early stages to mitigate the penalty and factors arbitrators consider when being asked to reduce a penalty.

**C2/Family Status Accommodation**

Joel Deeley, Myers LLP, Clair Cerilli, Myers LLP

Family status is a protected ground in Canada. It has been interpreted to include both childcare and eldercare responsibilities. Much of the case law centres on scheduling and shift work, where parents seek accommodation to meet their caregiving obligations. Yet, the legal test for establishing discrimination on this basis remains unsettled in Manitoba and, in fact, varies across jurisdictions. This session will guide you through the legal tests currently applied across Canada, highlighting their differences and practical implications and how you can support members who are seeking accommodation based on this protected ground. It will also walk you through recent caselaw where discrimination was established, and, where it was not.

**C3/Unions 101 (Repeat of B4)**

Greg Bartel, Myers LLP, Jodi Plenert, Myers LLP

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**C4/Ask a Labour Lawyer (Repeat of A4)**

Paul McKenna, Myers LLP, Trevor Ray, Myers LLP,

Paul McDonald, MGEU

This session puts the panel on the hot seat by giving attendees the opportunity to ask the labour law questions on their minds. The panelists will answer questions about organizing, bargaining, collective agreements, discipline, management rights, workers' rights, employment – related statutes, and "almost" anything else you are wondering about. Please note this session is not intended to address specific fact situations and is intended for general information only.



## SESSION PRESENTATIONS

FRIDAY MARCH 20, 2026 10:30am - 12:00pm

## Session D

**D1/Union Communication Beyond the Hearing Room**

Shannon Carson, Myers LLP, Jeff Smorang, Myers LLP,  
 Mike Sutherland, Manitoba Nurses Union,  
 Brandi Johnson, Manitoba Nurses Union

This session will focus on legal issues and strategy pertaining to union advocacy and representation outside of arbitrations and the labour board, and in the public sphere.

**D2/Social Media and the Workplace**

Kristen Worbanski, Myers LLP, Clair Cerilli, Myers LLP

The use of social media and related online forums for communicating and expressing views has exploded, and given rise to many contentious issues within the workplace for employees and Unions. We will consider and provide a case law update on the implications for employees of the blurred line between public and private communications on social media, including whether there is a reasonable expectation of privacy in respect of social media posts, the extent to which an employer can impose discipline for what employees say on social media platforms, and examples of social media conduct giving rise to discipline in both employment and professional regulatory contexts.

**D3/Drug and Alcohol Testing in the Workplace**

Trevor Ray, Myers LLP, Mike Segstro, Myers LLP

Drug and alcohol testing policies have become more common in all workplaces. In this session, the panel discusses how to evaluate whether an employer's drug and alcohol policy is reasonable: Are all drug and alcohol testing policies permitted? How wide-reaching can they be? What effect does the actual workplace have in determining the reasonableness of a policy? Particular forms of testing discussed will include pre-employment or site access testing, reasonable cause testing, and post-incident testing.

**D4/Interest Arbitration**

Joel Deeley, Myers LLP, Michael Merner, Myers LLP

The panel will explain interest arbitration, its principles, advantages and disadvantages. We will discuss the role of interest arbitration as an alternative to strikes. Finally, we will examine how the basic principles of interest arbitration can be used effectively during a first contract hearing pursuant to The Labour Relations Act of Manitoba.



*Proceeds from the Mel Myers Labour Conference will go to Rise Above.*

Myers LLP  
 T 204.942.0501 | F 204.956.0625  
 MYERSFIRM.COM

Suite 724-240 Graham Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3C 0J7

 **Myers LLP**  
 Barristers & Solicitors