

TELEPHONE PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

This policy discusses the responsibilities associated with the Labour Relations Board's telephone system. It discusses:

- telephone etiquette;
- the telephone system;
- incoming call;
- types of inquiries;
- outgoing call; and
- conference calls.

The Receptionist is primarily responsible for the Board's telephone system. The Board receives many inquiries from the public. Below are some telephone guidelines a receptionist should follow.

TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

- Answer the phone by the second ring.
- Answer the phone with "Good morning (or afternoon), Labour Relations Board." There is a great deal of confusion among the public about the Labour Relations Board and who we are. The public often refers to us as "Labour Standards" and confuses us with the Employment Standards Branch.
- Messages are important. Keep them neat, get the caller's name, association, number (including area code) and, perhaps, file numbers and reasons for calling. See Messages below.
- Don't keep callers on hold for extended periods. Get back to them and ask if they still want to hold, or would like to leave a message instead.
- Avoid telling callers they "must" do something or "have to call employment standards." People prefer suggestions to orders. Try saying "The agency that is set up to help you is called Employment Standards—I suggest you give them a call at 427-3731."

THE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Screening Calls:

Most staff prefer to know who is calling before they take the call. This allows them time to locate appropriate files on the case at hand. For the Chair, Vice-Chairs, Director, Managers, and Legal Counsel, get the caller's name, and if possible, what file or matter they are involved in. Try and make the caller feel you are being helpful, not that the person they want is trying to avoid their call. Screening calls for officers or administration staff is not necessary.

Messages

When taking a message, write down the name of the caller, their organization's name, the phone number (including area code), the city or town they are calling from, and, perhaps, file numbers and reasons for calling. Write all messages clearly. Confirm the spelling of names that are unfamiliar.

INCOMING CALLS

The Board receives calls from the general public, clients, counsel, and parties. Refer callers seeking a particular staff member to that person. Many people do not know who they want and often have called the wrong office.

Always refer calls from the media to the Executive Director or Manager of Settlement.

The task of the person answering their initial call is to find out what help the person seeks, and direct them to the right place. The challenge is to do this accurately and quickly—accurately so the caller does not have to be redirected again—quickly, so the caller does not give you their whole story, only to find out you cannot help them.

Many calls are non-union related inquiries from persons wishing to speak to the Employment Standards Branch. When a caller asks to speak to “someone” in the office, but does not have a name or process file ask them:

- If it is a non union-related matter or a union-related matter.
- What, very generally, they want help with. Explain that you ask this to make sure that they have the right place. If they do, they can give more detail later.

If the office they need becomes obvious, for example, Employment Insurance, Apprenticeship, etc., refer the caller to the appropriate office. If not, but it relates to employment conditions, decide between referring them to a Board officer, or the Employment Standards Branch.

If the inquiry has nothing to do with unions or a unionized workplace, refer them to the [Employment Standards](#) branch in Edmonton at 427-3731. Outside of Edmonton, direct callers to 310-0000 and then dial 780-427-3731 at the prompt. Their hours of operation are 8:15 am to 4:30 p.m. Advise the caller that they will get a recording. Ask the caller if they are using a touch-tone phone.

- If so, advise the caller that when the recording starts, press 0. This places the caller on hold for the next available operator.
- If not, advise the caller to stay on the line until the next available operator answers.

If the call is union related, always ask them if they have spoken to their shop steward or union representative at their union headquarters.

If they have not, tell them to contact their union representative before referring them to a Board Officer. (The Board normally only gets involved if they are unhappy with how their union representative is representing them.) See: [[Duty of Fair Representation, Chapter 33\(f\)](#) and [Internal Trade Union Affairs, Chapter 33\(g\)](#)]. Occasionally, they will insist upon talking to a Board officer even when they have not talked to their union. In this case, transfer the call to an officer and let the officer know that you have a general information call.

Some callers are not sure if they are unionized. They may not know which union represents them. If they are not sure whether they are unionized, ask them if their pay stub shows union dues deducted. If they do not know, advise the caller to check it. They can also determine whether they are unionized by asking a fellow employee or their personnel department at work. If they are not unionized, give them Employment Standards' number so they can call them directly.

TYPES OF INQUIRIES

Should a person request information from the Board about a process file, transfer that call to the officer handling the file. Give calls that require general information to the Board officers, and those seeking legal information to Legal Counsel. Listed below are some examples of inquiries and what you can do to help the caller:

Our Address and Fax Number

Should a person wish to write or fax to the Labour Relations Board:

#501, 10808 - 99 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0G5

#308, 1212 31st Avenue N.E.
Calgary, Alberta
T2E 7S8

FAX: (780) 422-0970

FAX: (780) 297-5884

Requests for the Labour Relations Code

The Board has numerous copies of the [Labour Relations Code](#) available. You can find them in the back office in Edmonton and at the front credenza in the Calgary office. Should a caller request a copy of the [Public Service Employee Relations Act](#), the caller should call the Queen's Printer.

Edmonton Bookstore
Main Floor, Park Plaza
10611 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5K 2P7
Phone: (780) 427-4952
Fax: (780) 452-0668

Calgary Bookstore
John J. Bowlen Building
602, 620 - 7th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2P 0Y8
Phone: (403) 297-6251
Fax: (403) 297-8450

Legislation is also available online at www.gov.ab.ca/qp .

Guide to the Labour Relations Code:

The Board provides Guides free of charge. Ask the caller how many they would like and ask them if they would like to pick them up, or have them mailed. The Board does not pay courier charges for delivering Guides but the caller can send their own courier.

Copies of Board Decisions:

Should someone wish to receive a copy(s) of Board decisions, direct them to the Labour Library. Recent decisions not yet published as part of the ALRB Reports are available on our website.

Requests for a Job

Workers looking for a job mistakenly think the Board is the Labourers Union, or an employment agency or union hall that refers workers to specific jobs. Refer such callers to the Construction and General Workers Union (i.e., the labourers union) at 426-6630 in Edmonton and 287-2090 in Calgary. If they cannot help them, they will likely refer them to a union hall that can.

Whether an Employer has a Good Record of Paying its Employees:

We do not have this information, nor does Employment Standards. Advise the callers to contact the Better Business Bureau for this information.

Abusive/Difficult Callers:

The Board receives many types of calls from workers upset about their jobs or a Board decision. These callers tend to take their frustrations or anger out on the receptionist. The Employment Standards callers are often aggravated when they find out the Labour Relations Board has no jurisdiction to help them. Should you receive such a call, be aware that:

- Board staff are not expected to listen to verbal abuse such as extreme swearing or personal insults. Politely advise the caller that if they continue to use this language, you will hang up. You can also refer the call to an officer, the Director of Settlement or the Manager of Settlement in Calgary to handle.
- Callers may ask for someone who does not work here. Tell them there is no one here by that name. Ask if the employee works at the Employment Standards Branch. Since the Board is often confused with Employment Standards, they may need redirecting.

CONFERENCE CALLS

To set up a conference call, use the RITE operator. Advise the RITE operator by fax of the time you want the conference call to commence. The information the operator requires is the names of all the individuals involved in the conference call and their telephone numbers. Be sure to give the operator the direct number of the Board staff involved in the call.

The RITE operator will set up the conference call and contact you to confirm it. The operator will phone and connect the parties at the time set for the call.

To terminate a conference call, hang up the handset.

It is possible to set up a three-way conference call on the Board's phones without the RITE operator. If you wish to know how to do this, discuss it with the admin staff.