

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides guidance to Board staff when drafting correspondence. Other chapters address typographical questions [[Typography, Chapter 13\(b\)](#)] and grammar and spelling [[Grammar and Spelling, Chapter 13\(c\)](#)]. This chapter specifically discusses:

- audience and format of address;
- tone and plain English;
- the general format of Board correspondence; and
- useful phrases and passages.

AUDIENCE & FORMAT OF ADDRESS

When writing, consider the audience. Most parties the Board deals with are fairly sophisticated regarding labour relations. The Board must, however, ensure that its correspondence can be understood by all those who read it. This may require explaining complex terms. The Board's standard letters are written with this in mind.

When writing a letter, the Board does not normally use opening salutations (e.g., Dear Glynn Hunter). Rather, the Board simply commences the opening sentence following the style of cause. When referencing parties in correspondence, the Board uses their full name on first reference and gender-appropriate titles (e.g., Ms., Mr., Dr.) combined with last names throughout the remainder of the letter.

tone & plain English

Board correspondence is written in a formal and detached manner. This approach minimizes confusion on the part of readers about what is (or will be) happening and what (if anything) is expected of them. This approach also eliminates any perception of bias flowing from overly friendly correspondence. For example, rather than a conversational letter, the Board writes rather declaratively:

- **Wrong:** Dear Kelly, Thank you for your letter of December 14th. We've discussed your successorship application and our plan is to ask the parties if they have any objections or concerns by the end of next week.
- **Correct:** <No salutation> This letter acknowledges an application to declare Company A the successor employer to Company B filed by the Union. All parties are directed to file objections, if any, by June 21st, 1997.

The latter version is very clear about what happened and what will happen. There is no indication of any personal relationship between the author and the applicant. All parties are treated equally and directed to action by a specific date.

The Board corresponds in the active voice and uses plain English.

Active Voice

When the subject of the sentence acts, the voice is active. When the subject is acted upon, the voice is passive. Prefer “The Board directs all parties to file objections by June 21st, 1997” to “Objections to the applications should be made by the parties no later than June 21st, 1997.” The former is shorter, clearer and in the active voice.

Plain English

Write all material using the principles of plain language:

- write with the audience in mind;
- use the active voice;
- reduce negatives;
- limit yourself to one idea or piece of information per sentence;
- use short sentences;
- use concrete words;
- explain unfamiliar words; and
- avoid long paragraphs without lists or summaries.

STANDARD LETTERS & DOCUMENTS

The Board has a variety of standard letters that it uses when it receives and processes applications, complaints and references. These letters are located on the G:\ drive in Edmonton and the S:\ drive in Calgary. They include standard letters acknowledging or giving notice of specific events. Board staff adapt these letters as necessary to reflect the circumstances of a specific file.

FORMAT OF CORRESPONDENCE

The Board uses the following format in its correspondence:

- date;
- names of parties;
- style of cause and Board file number;
- opening sentence(s) identifying purpose of the letter and affected parties;
- body of correspondence containing important facts and/or next steps;

- closing sentence identifying to whom questions should be directed and contact information;
and
- signature line.

Note that there is no salutation (e.g., Dear Kerry Smith).

USEFUL PHRASES AND PASSAGES

The Board's standard letters all contain useful examples of stock phrases and passages. Some of the more common ones include:

- listing the style of cause;
- acknowledging application, complaint or reference;
- acknowledging receipt of a letter;
- directing parties to indicate any additional particulars needed;
- directing the parties to file a response;
- outlining the next steps in the process;
- directing the parties to copy correspondence to one another;
- indicating which officer has been assigned a file; and
- alerting an applicant to concerns about application abandonment.

Listing the Style of Cause

The style of cause indicates which application the letter is about and the nature of the application. For example:

RE: An application for certification filed by Union Name affecting Employer Name – Board File No. CR-12345.

The Board does not use geographic references in a style of cause. The Board also normally avoids using section numbers in a style of cause. For example, a DFR complaint would be referred to as “a duty of fair representation complaint filed by...” rather than “A complaint filed under Section 153 of the *Labour Relations Code* ...”. The dash separating the file number from the text is an en dash. See: [[Grammar and Spelling, Chapter 13\(c\)](#)].

Acknowledging an Application

This letter acknowledges receipt of an application, received on May 31, 2002, filed by the Union Name under Section 46 of the [Labour Relations Code](#). The applicant has served a copy of this application upon the respondents.

This application asks the Board to declare that Second Company Name Inc. is the successor employer to First Company Name Inc. The union also asks that the Board declare Second

Company bound by the terms and conditions of the existing Collective Agreement between First Company and Union Name.

Acknowledging Receipt of a Letter

This letter acknowledges receipt of letters from both the Union Name and Second Company Inc. regarding Board File No. GE-01234. Neither party indicates any objection to this application and both parties agree to waive the hearing. Consequently, the Board intends to take this matter before a Chair or Vice-Chair sitting alone for disposition.

Directing Particulars

Particulars are the details, the “who, what, when, where and how”, of the application. They give a thorough and detailed summary of the dispute the Board is being asked to resolve. The particulars do not need to include the evidence intended to prove those facts and events. If any affected party requires additional particulars about the application, please file a written request for more particulars by **9:00 a.m. on Friday, June 7, 2002**. Specify in detail the additional information needed.

Directing Objections

The Board directs the affected parties to file a written response to this application by **9:00 a.m. on Friday, June 14, 2002**. Please include the following information as set out in Information Bulletin #2 and the Rules of Procedure:

- identification of the matter responded to;
- the name, address, telephone number, and fax number of the respondent;
- the name, address, telephone number, and fax number of a contact person for the respondent;
- the respondent's address for service of documents, if different from above;
- an admission of any facts alleged by the applicant that are uncontested; and
- a concise statement of the facts and events the respondent relies upon, where those facts and events are different from the applicant's.

Outlining Next Steps

Once the Board has received the responses from all parties, the officer will set a meeting with all parties to discuss the application with the aim of mediating and settling the matter.

Directing Copies

The parties are responsible to ensure they send copies of all correspondence, except information about their available dates, to all other parties and the Board. You can confirm you have done this by statement in the letter or by noting a “cc to ____” on the letter. The Board encourages you to send copies to the other parties the same way you send them to the Board.

Indicating Officer Responsible

Labour Relations Officer Tannis Brown is assigned to this file. You may contact her at (780) 422-7378 with any questions.

Application Abandonment

The Board directs the applicant to do <whatever> by Month Day, Year. If the applicant does not comply, the Board will consider this application abandoned and, consequently, withdrawn.