



Outsider Voice of the Tutor

January 26th, 2012

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2012 – Bargaining a new Collective Agreement

Our current collective agreement is set to end June 30th, 2012. At the annual general meeting a new bargaining team was elected. The members of this team are

Yessy Byl – Chair
 Mark Dimirsky
 Virginia Gillese
 Ernie Jacobson
 Douglas Knight
 Ronnie Joy Leah
 Robert Wiznura

**Athabasca University Board of Governors
 (AUBG)
 &
 The Canadian Union of Public Employees
 CUPE Local 3911**

The bargaining team has met to prepare a survey for the membership to identify areas you feel are important to take into bargaining.

Watch your email for a link to the bargaining survey. Take time to make your opinions count!

Being Dragged into the Virtual Universe: How to Make it Work for You. – Rob Wiznura

The simple fact is that the virtual desktop is a reality that we all have to accommodate. The question is how to make it work for the individual tutor. I would like to address briefly the why of the desktop (for the university has been less than clear) and some suggestions on how to make it functional and what, so far, you need to be wary of.

First, the university didn't just come up with the idea out of the blue or because they

thought it would help us (not likely) or it would be a cool way to monitor us. The situation has been imposed on them by the government: specifically the auditor general. If you recall, the auditor general was deeply unimpressed by the privacy standards of the university. Moreover, these issues have not been hypothetical: real breaches have occurred, laptops stolen, and so on. While the solution has been, for the most part, imposed on

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Editor: Dr, Robert Wiznura

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us, we should acknowledge the legitimate reasons for it.

Second, the virtual desktop can be slow. Once I completed my training, I found it frustrating waiting for the desktop to emerge on my computer and, more maddening, Microsoft Word has a lag time when I type and save. These things are annoying. On the other hand, access to my e-mail, Newton and university documents tends to be faster. I suggest that tutors note when things are “happening” that are annoying and inform the IT people. If enough people complain, they will have to improve the system.

Third, sometimes the system freezes. Don't freak out, but do be annoyed. Simply press the “disconnect” and then reconnect and all should be well. Do save frequently, for if it freezes on you, you may lose changes already made: I have. Every time you have this happen, I suggest two things: notify the IT people AND write a note in Newton (or in

Moodle when Newton is retired). We can't be expected to work if the system prevents us, and service standards will have to adjust if these problems continue. A record protects all tutors.

Fourth, utilize AUsync. This is by far the best feature of the whole system. I transferred files dating back to 2007 in a few minutes. The files are now safely stored on *their* system and only I can access them. I will repeat



that last statement: only I, the tutor, can access any file I transfer over to the virtual system. This eliminates the worry about keeping files for one year after the student has completed the course (which I find impossible to track with continual intake). If an issue arises or an old student has a question or wants a reference, the

files are there. Moreover, you can organize them in the same folders as you would have on your own computer and transfer them as such. Let me clarify:

I have an English 255 folder in my computer and on the virtual system. Whenever I press “AUsync” when I am on the virtual desktop, anything in the English 255 folder in my computer is transferred to the one in the virtual system. Then, I can go back and delete the file from my computer. No longer do I need to have student files cluttering up my system.

A caveat: DO NOT put your own work on the virtual desktop. Why? Even if I am the only one able to access my files (unless I were foolishly to give out my password to some overbearing coordinator), files on the virtual system are property of the university. This may not matter to you, but if there were an issue of copyright, I want to own my own work outright.

Reflections on the CUPE National Convention – Ronnie Joy Leah

Reflections on the CUPE National Convention **by Ronnie Joy Leah, CUPE 3911 Executive**

It was exciting, educational and energizing to attend the CUPE National Convention in Vancouver. Ernie's report provides an excellent overview of the Convention. I want to focus on a few specific issues with which I was personally involved at Convention.

Child care and family care at Convention

Free on-site child care is available at CUPE national conventions. However, it's important to note that delegates must apply in advance for such services. Providing childcare at conventions and other CUPE meetings has been a crucial step in supporting the full participation of women in union activities. We took another step forward at this year's convention in passing a motion to provide reimbursement for at-home child care and family care expenses of delegates; family care includes care for aging parents and dependents with disabilities. This removes another barrier to union involvement and ensures that union events are more accessible to members with family care responsibilities. This resolution was supported by the National Women's Committee, the Child Care Working Group, the Young Workers Committee and the Persons with Disabilities Working Group.

Equity Caucus

I attended an historic meeting of the Equity Caucus held on Monday, the first day of Convention. This was a major achievement for "intersectionality" on equality issues as it was the first time that all the equality groups in CUPE came together at Convention to build support for each other's concerns. Equality groups in CUPE National include: Women's Committee, Rainbow Committee (racialized workers), Aboriginal Council, Pink Triangle Committee (LGBTI members), Persons with Disabilities. Speakers addressed a number of important resolutions.

[Click here to read the rest of Ronnie's report.](#)

Labour Trivia

Which Labour songwriter coined the phrase "Pie in the Sky" (originally sung to the spiritual "Sweet Bye and Bye")

- a. Pete Seeger
- b. Ralph Chaplin
- c. Haywire Mac
- d. Joe Hill
- e. Woody Guthrie

Email your answers to CUPE3911@gmail.com

A draw will be made from the correct entries for a Tim Horton's gift card.

Opinion Piece

Government Holding Secret Meetings to Change Alberta Labour

Code – Dougal MacDonald

The Alberta government is currently conducting a secret review of the Alberta Labour Relations Code based on a document written by a group of construction companies calling itself the Construction Competitiveness Coalition. The document dated June 2011 is called "Improving Alberta's Competitive Position through Improved Labour Relations Legislation Affecting the Construction Industry." The coalition includes some of Alberta's "leading construction contractors, owners and construction associations", including PCL, Peter Kiewit, Ledcor, the Merit Contractors Association, and the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada. (Note: The full text of the 17-page report can be found by googling the title or by going to the Alberta Federation of Labour website.)

These employers are demanding big changes to the Alberta Labour Code intended to restrict further the right of workers to organize and engage in effective action to defend their rights. Although the demands centre on the construction industry and unions representing the building trades, they would affect workers in every sector of the economy. For example, one demand is to give oil sands projects a "special status," exempting them from having to adhere to any collective

agreements. Another demand is a virtual ban on picket lines. It is clear that these employers consider workers to be only a "cost" of production and not the producers of added-value. The brief states, "Labour costs...constitute the greatest risk element to a potential investor in terms of costs and completion schedules."

The members of the Construction Competitiveness Coalition and other employers need to recognize that all workers in Alberta should have a Canadian standard of living, be paid commensurate with the work they perform, and, as the producers of wealth, have a say in their own affairs and the affairs of the province. Labour laws should be seen as a way to sort out the conflicting interests of the workers and the owners, not as a way for the employers to increase their profits by seizing an ever-increasing share of the added-value that the workers produce. Now is the time to demand that in labour law and in everything else, Alberta needs a new direction that will ensure that the people benefit and that the rights of all workers are upheld.

RSP Payment –

Your collective agreement provides that a payment of 2% of your total annual pay will be paid by January 15th as a pension payment. Please check you January pay stubs to ensure that you have received this payment.

See all the information at:

http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/isp/pub/factsheets/ISPB-348-11-10_E.pdf

Changes to the Canada Pension Plan – excerpt from Service Canada Website

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) is changing to better reflect how Canadians choose to live, work, and retire. The Government of Canada is adapting the CPP to ensure it remains fair and sustainable, and that it responds to the evolving needs of Canada's aging population and to changes in the economy and labour market.



The changes, which the Government will gradually introduce from 2011 to 2016, will give you more options so that you can make decisions that are right for you as you make the transition from work to retirement.

- Your monthly CPP retirement pension amount will increase by a larger percentage if you take it after age 65.
- Your monthly CPP retirement pension amount will decrease by a larger percentage if you take it before age 65.
- If you are under 65 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension, you and your employer will have to make CPP contributions. These contributions will increase your CPP retirement benefits.
- If you are age 65 to 70 and you work while receiving your CPP retirement pension, you can choose to make CPP contributions. These contributions will increase your CPP retirement benefits.
- The number of years of low or zero earnings that are automatically dropped from the calculation of your CPP pension will increase.
- You will be able to begin receiving your CPP retirement pension without any work interruption.

See all the information at:

http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/isp/pub/factsheets/ISPB-348-11-10_E.pdf

Upcoming Events

CUPE Meeting	February 11
Bargaining Conference	February 4-5
CUPE Ab Convention	March 21-23
Lancaster Conference	March 28 - 29
CUPE Weeklong School	May 6 - 11

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