



# Outsider

## Voice of the Tutor

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The CUPE newsletter is published monthly by CUPE Local 3911. We welcome your submissions, letters and comments. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of CUPE Local 3911

Editor: Dr, Robert Woznura

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### Don't suffer in silence: Don't be the Stoic – Rob Woznura

While the writings of Seneca and Epictetus may be uplifting and inspiring as we confront things we cannot change (like earthquakes, floods, hail and tornadoes), there is no need to get carried away and apply their philosophy to our employer! Together, we constitute the *most* important asset of Athabasca University. We are the ones who facilitate most of the learning with students. If you see a problem, let's work to fix it. Remember, a coordinator is not a tornado (but might contain as much wind), nor is a shift in technology the equivalent of an earthquake. The virtual desktop and the upcoming tutor evaluation season are great examples: don't suffer in silence. Come to a meeting or contact us. We can't fix problems if we don't hear about them.

Reach out to your union with your questions, frustrations, and concerns. Don't face the world alone.

And if you are an out of province tutor, a person who truly is alone in the world, with no representation at the university, feel free to contact us and talk.

### Working Past 71 – Benefits for seniors – Jackie Routh

For many of us, benefits are an important part of our employment package. Costs for extended health, dental, drugs, vision benefits and travel can be very costly. Currently, Athabasca University's plan with Alberta Blue Cross ceases to cover individuals as of their 71<sup>st</sup> birthday, even though they are still actively employed. However unfair this situation is, neither is it atypical with such plans. We will be taking this issue to the bargaining table,

but, even there, the most we could extend coverage would be to age 75 and that would exclude travel insurance.

However, Blue Cross does have plans available to seniors to enhance the Alberta Seniors Benefits. These include 4 Seniors Plus plans which range from basic to comprehensive packages based on your individual needs.

You should make sure to review your benefits coverage annually to ensure that you have the

best level of benefits for your lifestyle.

Additional information on Alberta seniors' benefits can be found at:

<http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/> and information on Blue Cross Seniors' Plus plans can be found at:

[https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/ip\\_senior1.html](https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/ip_senior1.html)



*"You shouldn't have told the employees to 'work smarter.'  
They all went and joined a union."*

## And the winner is.....



The winner of the labour trivia quiz from January's newsletter is Lori Beresford!

Congratulations to Lori for knowing that Joe Hill was the Labour songwriter who coined the phrase "Pie in the Sky" (originally sung to the spiritual "Sweet Bye and Bye")

## Reflections on the CUPE National Convention – Glynnis Lieb

It was my pleasure to attend the 2011 Bi-annual CUPE Convention in Vancouver, BC, as one of three delegates from Local 3911. Thank you to Ernie Jacobson for preparing a report on our behalf. I will briefly summarize my personal experience to accompany his report.

This was my first union convention and I am relatively new to the Executive (starting my second year as the Recording Secretary). My goal in attending was to further educate myself about the purposes and roles that unions play in the workplace but also in social activism. Additionally, I wanted to learn more about CUPE, specifically. To both ends, I can emphatically state that this experience was invaluable.

### Logistics

One of the first things that stood out for me was how well organized this event was and how well the 2400 attendees were accommodated. The hotel and conference center were very impressive and the space was more than adequate for our needs. The event organizers did an excellent job of making people feel welcome, keeping the event organized and managing the attendees.

I was also impressed about how well attendees' personal needs were attended to. There was onsite childcare (which I had not anticipated), personal language translation devices, as well as accommodations for mobility, hearing, and visually impaired persons.

### Speakers

I was enthralled and, on multiple occasions, moved by the caliber of speakers and the information they shared. Stephen Lewis (the Stephen Lewis Foundation) spoke passionately about the roots of the current economic strife, the growing anti-union sentiment, and the reasons why we need unions now more than ever. Maude Barlow, Clarke Walker, and MP Olivia Chow echoed those sentiments and spoke to the increasingly stark division between 99 and 1%. They also addressed current actions and priorities of the Harper government and how PC priorities could impact working Canadians who are not part of "big business."

[For the full article click here](#)

## Feeling Under the Weather? - Know your rights – Jackie Routh

Each year you earn 20 days of sick leave. This can be accumulated for 3 years to a total of 60 days!

What this means is that if you are unable to work due to illness, you will be granted sick leave on the following basis:

For the first calendar week of illness, you will be paid sick leave for your scheduled days of work. Pay per day for tutors, markers and academic experts will be calculated as the employee's total earnings in a work day. A scheduled day is defined as "the day(s) on which an employee is scheduled for availability for contact with students. This shall also include any regularly scheduled class or meeting with students."

Markers and academic experts will be paid for sick leave only if the marking or academic expert work that would have been assigned to the employee must be assigned to another individual

For the period of illness extending beyond one calendar week, you will be entitled to sick pay based upon your work days. Pay per day for employees will be calculated as the employee's total earnings in a work day.

A work day is calculated as "that number of hours worked divided by 62, for which the employee received earnings in the last 3 months. "Hours worked" shall be based upon the number of blocks (number of blocks times pay per block divided by hourly rate of pay)

plus any overload assigned, all paid hours including but not restricted to deemed time/hours for premium pay, all marking, travel, course preparation and any other pay required to be paid by the employer to the employee whether on an ongoing or temporary basis. The calculation for an employee's "work day" shall be based upon the previous three months earnings, exclusive of any leaves without pay or vacation, and at the employee's hourly rate of pay.

While this may seem a lot to absorb in a short article, know that we have negotiated sick leave and that such a thing exists. If and when you do get sick, do not hesitate to contact us for guidance.

### You are Invited!

Come out and meet your fellow tutors. Coffee, doughnuts, and more to make your Saturday morning special!

Our next meeting is Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:30 a.m. Watch your email for the agenda.



## I just want to say ...

### **Public Service Workers Are an Asset, Not a Cost** – Dougal MacDonald

The paper "Public Sector Wage Growth in Alberta" authored by Ken Boessenkool (Note 1) and Ben Eisen and published in January 2012 by the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary is a deliberate attack on public service workers and public services, disguised as an "academic study". The paper, highly publicized in the media, blames Alberta's "large deficits" on "rising public sector salaries." Inaccurate and misleading information is presented about the wages and benefits of workers in the public service and then repeated. No real inquiry is conducted into the issue; the authors declare it is up to public service workers to prove that the paper's conclusions are wrong, which makes the public service workers guilty until proven innocent.

The authors present the false argument that increased spending on social programs, including on wages, benefits, and pensions of public sector workers, will negatively impact the economy. Actually, it is the energy monopolies who are grabbing an increasing share of the wealth created by the working people; corporate taxes make up barely 11% of Alberta's revenues. The authors also ignore that the assault on public services and public sector workers in the 1990s, which they praise, prolonged the economic crisis and made peoples' lives much more difficult. The truth is that when investments are made in social programs, this puts revenue back into the economy and humanizes the natural and social environment. Public sector workers are an asset to the society, not a cost to be cut. They help raise the level of the whole society by providing and defending the quality public

services that people in Alberta have a right to. And, like all workers, public sector workers also have a right to determine their own wages and working conditions.

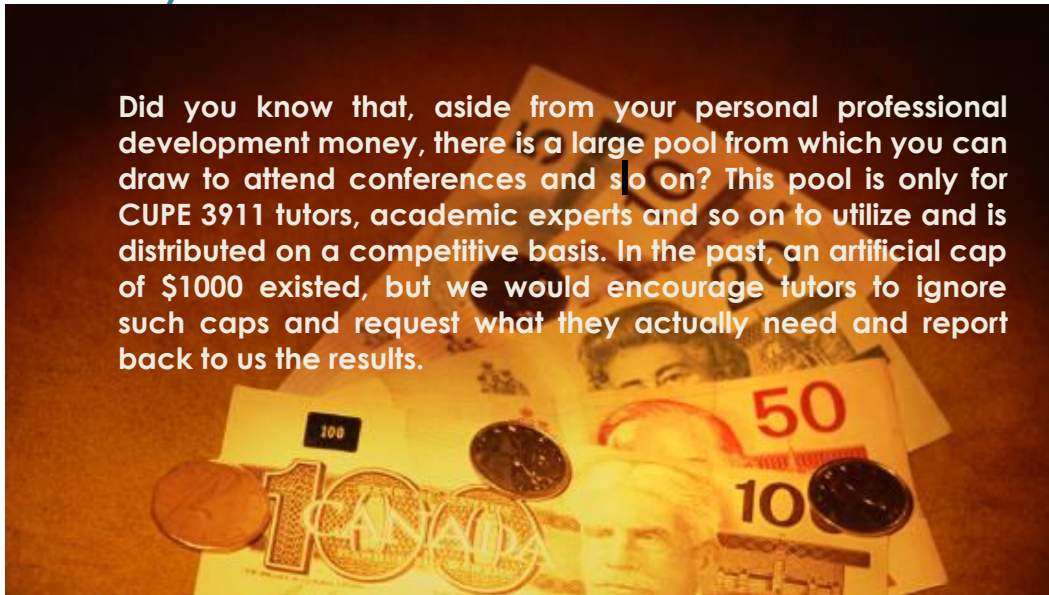
Boessenkool and Eisen's view is that to be an Albertan means to fend for yourself, to live by the Law of the Jungle. There is nothing modern about such an outlook, which goes against the very notion of society and against the striving of working people for empowerment and control over the direction of the society. An important aspect of that fight is control over public services and not permitting them to be grabbed up by private interests. When social programs are privatized, the revenues are not invested back in communities but are taken out of the economy and pocketed by the private owners. Privatization, which is what the authors advocate as a "solution", is an attack on public services, as well as on the dignity and security of public sector workers and their right to a Canadian standard of living. What is needed in Alberta to meet the people's ever-increasing needs for health care, education, culture, and other necessities of life is not less investment in social programs but much more.

**Note 1:** Ken Boessenkool, currently BC Premier Christy Clark's Chief of Staff, has been a Harper policy advisor, a Tory election strategist, an advisor to Alberta finance ministers, and a lobbyist for Northern Gateway Pipeline builder Enbridge Inc. and Taser International. He is currently Chairperson of the Conservative Alberta Blue Committee, which aims as one of its first two principles to cut investments in social programs by billions of dollars.



## PD Money – Rob Wiznura

Did you know that, aside from your personal professional development money, there is a large pool from which you can draw to attend conferences and so on? This pool is only for CUPE 3911 tutors, academic experts and so on to utilize and is distributed on a competitive basis. In the past, an artificial cap of \$1000 existed, but we would encourage tutors to ignore such caps and request what they actually need and report back to us the results.



## Upcoming Events

<b>Good Friday</b>	<b>April 6</b>
<b>CUPE Meeting</b>	<b>April 21</b>
<b>CUPE Weeklong School</b>	<b>May 6 - 11</b>

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