



Outsider

Voice of the Tutor

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Our Celebrity Labour Lawyer – Rob Wiznura

For those of you interested in the issue of Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada, you might have caught the following article in the Globe and Mail. One of the people quoted is our own Yessy Byl, who happens to head our bargaining committee. Hopefully the government read the article. . .

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/does-temporary-foreign-workers-program-create-second-class-of-labourers/article2424451/>

Annual General Meeting/Tutor Conference – Rob Wiznura

At the last labour-management committee meeting, we learned that AU will not be offering a Learning Services Conference. On the positive side, they will again help us run a mini-conference in conjunction with our Annual General Meeting. Once again, it's up to us to organize ourselves, and we have struck up a committee and are aiming for October 20th, so keep that date in mind and we will keep you posted on developments. We are trying to integrate the feedback we received from you and hope to make this the MOST USEFUL meeting for tutors EVER. No one should miss it.

Bargaining – Rob Wiznura

(with apologies to Trooper)

Here they come

AU brass in the bright white sports car

Waving at all the tutors

Who do they think they are?

And where did they get that car?

Indeed, we are about to embark on another round of negotiations. We won't play games with you: it looks ugly. On the bright side, a decision against the university concerning pensions looks good on us, but, at the same time, that will make bargaining all the tougher. We'll keep you posted on the developments.

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Editor: Dr. Robert Wiznura

Assessment Time – Rob Wiznura

It is *that* time of year, so we are giving some recommendations to help prepare you for your assessments.

1. **Read the collective agreement**, particularly article 6 and, in some cases, article 23. Unfortunately, the likelihood that your coordinator has read or is remotely familiar with the collective agreement is practically nil. You may need to “educate” your coordinator in order to protect yourself, but try to do so with some sense of aplomb. Avoid arguing. Come to us when a coordinator is misreading, deliberately misunderstanding or downright violating the spirit or letter of the collective agreement. You can access the collective agreement in its entirety on the website. [Click here to see the collective agreement](#)
2. **Write your own assessment before** the coordinator does and submit it to him or her before your consultation. Let’s face it: some coordinators are less than motivated to coordinate tutors. Some coordinators see this whole process as a burden and inconvenience. Make life easier for them and do it for them, more or less. Depending upon your coordinator (and you should be somewhat familiar with which ones this is pertinent), you may wish to identify some “issue” that you have taken steps to solve. Problem-solution: Look, a coordinator is born!
3. Realize that the **purpose of these assessments is twofold**:
 - a. To improve the quality of tutoring by assisting the employee to develop and improve tutoring skills;
 - b. To ensure a standard of acceptable employee performance.

Let’s talk about these purposes. Note that there is an onus on the coordinator implicit in both these purposes. If, for example, a coordinator only contacts you once a year and has some complaint or other with your performance, how is that in the spirit of this clause??? If the coordinator has not helped you to improve the quality of your tutoring or helped to ensure a standard of acceptable employee performance, that is *his or her failure as a coordinator*. Again, don’t get into an argument with him or her, but come to us if you are unhappy with the how the actual process played out.

Keep accurate notes of your phone conversations. You might even ask, “I’m going to put this on speakerphone, okay? I would like to record this to help me with my notes: are you good with that?” The onus is now on the coordinator to say no to your recording of the meeting. Given that the problematic coordinators tend to have entitlement issues (just saying), they likely *won’t* mind you recording the meeting. A recording device can be purchased at a place like Staples for under \$20. If you teach at other places, you will see students use them in your classes. If you do buy one, invoice the university under your PD allocation.

Keep these words in mind during your conversation—*improve* and *ensure*. For any issues that the coordinator has, keep bringing the conversation back to those words: “How can we *improve* on this issue: what are your suggestions?” “I wasn’t aware that there was a problem. Perhaps you could have contacted me earlier and we could have addressed/solved it?” “I really want to *ensure* the university standards: could you give me list of specific things you want from me to *ensure* performance?” Make the coordinator actually coordinate. They are supposed to solve the problems, not you.

Many tutors and coordinators care about one thing: the magic “satisfactory” box. The process is not an evaluation of your moral worth, but assessing if you are maintaining adequate standards. If not, the coordinator needs to give you specific recommendations to help you meet those standards and establish some form of reasonable follow up to assess the outcome of those recommendations. Again, make the coordinator coordinate. For example, “There were some issues with my turn around time this year, around the same time as we were getting conflicting reports from the university about what those times actually were. A number of my students were confused, so I have taken steps to clarify what those times mean and the distinction between calendar and business days. Is that sufficient or should I take other steps? How do you want me to proceed?”

Let the union deal with the real problem makers. Try to keep your own experience positive (as much as that is

possible) and try to maintain your poise, contacting us with any problems.

4. Read through the actual report before approving it. You have ten days to respond to the report. Use those days. If unhappy, contact the union for advice. Obviously, as none of us are full time, the sooner that is done the more likely you are to get that advice. If the coordinator is unwilling to amend the report, you are entitled to submit a response which will also go in your file. Avail yourselves of these provisions in the collective agreement.
5. Discussion marking times. Try not to destroy your paycheques! If there is too much time given for a specific assignment (highly unlikely), don't feel compelled to draw that to their attention. Conversely, when the deemed marking time is unreasonable—actually marking takes 1 hour and you are paid for 40 minutes—do make the case for upping the time. Chances are that they won't up the time, but the more tutors complain, the more likely things will be appropriately adjusted. It's likely you have no idea how much time is allocated for each assignment. You can access that information in Newton under "reports" or you can simply tell the coordinator "I have never been given that information so I cannot assess the reasonableness of marking times. I would like to know them. Could you tell them to me now so I can write them down?" If you want to stir the pot, you can alter the above slightly: "I have never been given that information. Who is supposed to give me that information? When I have questions about things like that, is there someone I could contact? Could I contact you with such questions?" and so on (try to sound very innocent and sweet).
6. Be proactive and address the course itself. What works and what doesn't? You are the front lines and deal with actual students far more than your coordinators. For example, one of my coordinators tutors around 10 students a year for a specific course where I tutor closer to 60. Who has the better knowledge about what is and is not working in the course?? If the course needs revision, offer your services (not that the university has any money at this point, but plant seeds for the future).

Remember, the whole process is to make the university a better place. When the dust settles, remember the words of Max Erhmann, "whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy."

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, May 26th at 9:30 a.m. Watch your email for the agenda.



I just want to say ...

Spirit of the Alma Aluminum Workers: Dignity, Defiance, and Organization - Dougal MacDonald

The spirit of the Alma, Quebec, aluminum workers, locked out since last December 31 by Rio Tinto Alcan, is to be highly appreciated by all. On March 31 over 8,000 workers flooded the streets of the city of 15,000 inhabitants to stand shoulder to shoulder with 785 Alma workers. The majority came from Quebec, and some from the Toronto region and Hamilton. Also present were contingents representing international mining and metallurgical workers' federations and unions from the U.S., Mexico, France, Turkey, UK, Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, representing millions of workers in hundreds of countries. The 8,000 people who came affirmed that they do not accept the dictate of a foreign company on the lives of communities like Alma. The significance of this march can be summed up as: dignity, defiance and organization.

Dignity because the aluminum workers are defending not only themselves but also the generations of workers to follow. Dignity because they refuse to submit to the worsened conditions, refuse to become modern day slaves. They refuse to be kicked out of their factory, without protest and on their knees. The Alma workers know well the criminal actions of Rio Tinto around the world because the workers from other continents tell of Rio Tinto's anti-worker and anti-union activities in the mines and factories in Australia, the Middle East, Africa, the United States and England, among others. But mostly they know the concessions that Rio Tinto demands and wants to further subject Quebec and their region to in its several facilities, such as contracting out and reducing workers' wages by 50%. The March 31 demonstration was a march for the dignity of labour and the working class.

Defiance because the Alma workers' courage resonates as a challenge to the monopolies that they

ardently defend the rights of the aluminum workers to decide what should be done with the wealth created by their work and the natural resources linked to it, such as the electricity produced by Rio Tinto dams. All proposals can be discussed and developed except those which would put more of Quebec's resources and labour into the hands of Rio Tinto. Rio Tinto has set aside any pretense of social responsibility to reveal its true nature, that of grabbing our human and natural resources, as if everything belonged to them, as if workers, peoples and nations can be disposed of at a whim. Defiance because the Alma workers demand the Quebec government render accounts for permitting a foreign company to attack a Quebec community and its workers. The March 31 demonstration reflects the Alma workers' struggle to restrict monopoly right and that of its political representatives.

Organization, not only because the march was a total success (although blacked out by the monopoly media), but also that it is the result of collective work in which each person had their place and responsibility. The questions of mobilization, security, infrastructure, the route, the cleanup, logistics, the speeches, the costs, the concert, and so on were all taken up in detail by involving the greatest number of people possible. Even the prospect of confronting Rio Tinto's *agents provocateurs* was considered with utmost seriousness and preparation. The March 31 demonstration was one of discipline and organization, where the working class calmly faced the new situation with full confidence. This march was an invaluable experience in the Alma workers' fight against Rio Tinto's phony lockout and in recognition of their rights. We should all stand united with the Alma workers and against Rio Tinto.

AFL Centennial Celebrations!



38 Days to June 16th!

The 100th Anniversary of the Alberta Federation of Labour is June 16th. Be part of it - join us!

[READ MORE »](#)



PICNIC IN THE PARK - JUNE 16



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