

# Outsider – The Voice of the Tutor

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

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*All members are  
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The CUPE newsletter is published 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: Virginia Gillese

## Reboot

Another year, another executive, another chance to create the workplace we want (there might be some resistance to us on that last point). This is my farewell to the newsletter as I have been demoted to co-chair of the local. I leave the newsletter and communication duties to the able hands of Virginia Gillese. Before I go into the sunset, I thought I'd clear up a bit of confusion. Sometimes it's good to clarify a few things that some people seem confused about.

1. CUPE 3911 represents Tutors, Academic Experts, and Markers. We are ALL part-time workers for Athabasca University.

2. AUFA is the faculty association of Athabasca University: that is the unit that represents faculty. We are not considered faculty, but are non-designated academics (which is why we can be unionized).

3. AUPE represents non-academic staff at Athabasca University. Note that we are academic staff (we are simply non-designated academic staff).

4. Out-of-province tutors, academic experts and markers fall outside our membership. To date, we cannot represent them (though we have tried), nor can we protect them. They have absolutely no representation or bargaining unit.

5. The pension plan that has just been negotiated is for ALL our members. (Some people believed that it was only for full time workers, of which we have none)

6. We are here to bargain/negotiate the collective agreement and defend your rights as workers through mediation and grievances. If an issue arises, contact us. You are not alone.

7. All members are welcome to the monthly meetings, and you can dial in from the comfort of your homes. You can vote on any issue at these meetings, for they are all general membership meetings.

Introducing. . .

Welcome to the new executive of CUPE 3911. You'll see some old blood and some newish blood. Welcome to all. See below for the names and positions of the new executive.

## 2013 -2014 Executive

Insert photo here.

If I don't get the photos from Wayne today. I will replace this box with the list that I sent out of executive.

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Ernie Jacobson, Dougal MacDonald, Rob Woznura, Nyron Jaleel, Glynnis Lieb, Natalie Sharpe, Sharen Patterson, Virginia Gillese, Klaus Thomson, Ronnie Leah, Maryss Valiant, Wayne Brehaut, Sonia Atwal, Joyce Miller, Chandan Shirvaikar, Mark Dimirsky, Brenda Kuzio, Lorraine Laville, Yessy Byl, Ann Reynolds, Deborah Foster, Teresa Bosse, Rochelle Sato, Lantry Vaughn, Helen Onderka, Lorrie Adams, Sonia Atwal, Paul Notley




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*Please fill in the  
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## Conference 2013

Thanks to all who participated in (and to those who organized) our tutor/AE conference at the University of Alberta. Admittedly, the room at the Lister Hall venue was a bit hard to find: we had to walk through a cafeteria to find the room and the signs were not overly well placed at first, requiring some traffic direction. For those who didn't attend, we began the morning with a hot breakfast (bacon, eggs, pancakes, bread and so on) before hearing Rachel Notley, MLA, speak. We had a number of sessions over the course of the day, mostly about our current battle with AU on the call centre model, and we discussed strategies. We got some excellent feedback and ideas from our members, inspiring us to carry on the fight. There were a couple of brief information sessions on paycheques (which will be posted on our website, with another presentation on an AE's paycheque) and pensions (lots and lots of questions about this). Our intrepid administrator, Jackie, had stacks of pension forms for people to fill out if they hadn't already. All the sessions dovetailed into the annual general meeting where we, among other things, elected our new executive.

We'd like to thank all those who submitted the incredibly thorough reports that came in the package and greatly facilitated the AGM. Thanks to all who volunteered to serve on the executive and on committees this year. Please fill in the feedback forms so we can start planning for next year. I know that I have some ideas that I want to pass on.

## Access to Adobe Connect for CUPE Tutors

For those adept with Adobe and would like to adopt it or who could and would correctly connect with this computing creation or have some inkling as to what Adobe Connect even is, AU will set you up with an account to contact your students. Simply "connect" with the help desk (likely the "old fashioned" e-mail way or, if you are a real dinosaur, via the telephone) and they can set you up. As I have no idea what Adobe Connect is or what it claims to do, I will leave it to those saavy people who do know to volunteer to write an article about its wonders for an upcoming newsletter.



## E-texts and E-exams

Many of you have been inundated with training sessions of late to link up with the new e-texts or online exams. The former, I am glad to say, are quite easy to access. The latter, the online exams, I did not find so intuitive or user friendly, but it is what it is. You likely noticed the new Moodle upgrade. Maybe I am just cranky, but it seems to do less of the things I liked about Moodle and does more of the annoying things. Is it age? Is it the weather? Feedback? Let us know your responses to these technological "upgrades." The more voices, the more powerful our suggestions. You are the ones using these things every day: no one is better equipped to comment. Feel free to complain about Citrix while you're at it: if you can get on it!

## The Advocate Debates

Here is one newspaper that is covering the AU layoffs with great interest. Below you can find an article on the issue (originally published in the Advocate), an ad from AUFA (faculty), and a letter to the editor from a board member. To clarify, when Andy Neigel, board member for AU, says that CUPE "agreed," we agreed as a man offers a wallet to someone threatening him with a loaded gun. Just saying. There is talk of passing a motion in support of the AUPE and AUFA members at the October General Membership Meeting. Again, feel free to participate.



# More AU layoffs

**BROMLEY CHAMBERLAIN**  
ADVOCATE STAFF

Following a 7.3-per-cent decrease to its government operating grant, Athabasca University (AU) has resorted to layoffs. In the spring, 44 staff members (24 in Athabasca) were laid off, and AU recently announced a second round of layoffs, which include temporary layoffs for support staff and permanent layoffs for faculty.

John O'Brien, manager of media relations for AU, said this was a last resort.

"We didn't want to take this step, and we are in a position where we have to balance the budget, and we don't have any tools left in our toolbox."

O'Brien said though Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) and Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) bargained with AU for months, no agreement was reached.

AU wanted the union staff to take 10 voluntary days unpaid.

"The voluntary 10 days would have had the same effect, but it would have given the staff an option to pick the days that suited them best," he said. "It would have allowed the university to spread the pay cuts over 12 months."

"Now, unfortunately, what is going to happen is that their pay is going to be deducted for the day that they are laid off in that month," he said of AUPE staff. "Since the union wouldn't agree to that, this is the route we had to take."

# AUPE to take legal action

*From LAYOFFS, page 1A*

O'Brien said the layoff tactic the university is using is allowed under the AUPE agreement.

"What is happening with AUPE is that under the contract, the university is allowed to temporarily lay off employees and recall them. That is under Article 10 of the AUPE agreement; it gives the university the ability to do that."

O'Brien said the university is trying to lessen the effects of the layoffs.

"It means we are going to be reducing operations on the days that we are going to have to be laying off people," he said. "We are trying to minimize the impact operationally, but there will be some impact, obviously."

## AUPE reaction

AUPE represents more than 270 support staff at the university, and according to the union, most are at risk of being temporarily laid off.

"This unilateral decision will not only have a serious affect on our members' livelihoods, but it's also another economic blow to the Town of Athabasca and will damage the quality of education that AU students are paying for," said Guy Smith, president of AUPE, in a press release. "We will launch legal action, lay a formal complaint with the Alberta Labour Relations Board and file policy grievances."

Employees were notified last

Friday of the layoffs, which amount to at least eight days without pay throughout the year.

AUPE states the total number of lost working days will be 2,160 and that the layoffs will allow the university to save approximately \$500,000.

These layoffs will impact AU greatly, according to Kevin Davediuk, AUPE staff negotiator.

"If these layoffs go through, it will amount to the elimination of thousands of working hours that should have been spent updating students' records, maintaining equipment and directly supporting students," said Davediuk in the release. "The income reduction will be felt in the community, where the employees won't have as much money to spend at local businesses. The previous round of job cuts has already drained millions from the Town of Athabasca's economy."

Athabasca University expected a two per cent increase to its funding this year; instead, its funding was cut.

"Our economy is booming and Alberta needs more skilled workers," said Smith. "Instead, (Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education Thomas) Lukaszuk is forcing program closures, student-space reductions and generally eroding the quality of advanced education in the province."



# Letter to the Editor

What we have to remember is that while a council can take meaningful steps towards economic prosperity, no single body (the new four-year term notwithstanding) can clear economic hurdles in a single bound.

Economic development may quickly become a top election issue, but we must remind ourselves that it will not be so quickly resolved.

## Clarifying AU layoffs

I'd like to clear up some misconceptions that may be circulating in the community around Athabasca University's recent layoff announcement. When the university learned of the cuts to its budget earlier this year, administration developed a plan to provide a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year, which included permanent layoffs and unpaid leave days (fur-

lough days) across all employees groups. The budget was developed with input from the staff through the budget committees and approved by the Board of Governors.

As part of that budget strategy, and to reduce the number of layoffs across the university, it was proposed that the five employee groups would agree to a four-per-cent temporary rollback, providing them with 10 days unpaid leave.

## CORRECTION

In the story "Ratepayers unhappy with town council's response to 40-page report," (Sept. 17, page 1A), the *Advocate* reported that the purpose of the Athabasca Ratepayers' Association's Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) request was to obtain information on councillor expense reports, as well as details on former chief administrative officer Doug Topinka's retirement package.

In fact, the FOIP request related to the Muskeg Creek paving project.

On Sept. 18, the association filed a separate FOIP request regarding Topinka's retirement package.

We regret the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.

## Got a comment?

We will print all letters provided they aren't libelous, in bad taste or too long. They must be signed. Please include your phone number. Letters may be e-mailed to [advocate@athabasca.greatwest.ca](mailto:advocate@athabasca.greatwest.ca).



The executive group, the managers and non-union staff and the Canadian Union of Public Employees who represent tutors all agreed, and their pay has been reduced accordingly.

The university has been negotiating with the Alberta Union of Public Employees, who represent the majority of support staff, and the Athabasca University Faculty Association, to see if a similar leave without pay program might be possible. Had they accepted, the university would have deducted the four-per-cent savings from the monthly paycheck over a 12-month period.

Unfortunately, the university has now no option but to seek the four-per-cent savings through mechanisms available in the current collective agreements — either temporary or permanent layoffs. These will be selected so that service to students will not be disrupted.

The Alberta Union

of Public Employees agreement allows for a temporary layoff of its members, and we have decided that the majority of the AUPE members would be laid off temporarily based on operational needs. No temporary layoff would be more than 30 days, and most will be around 10 days, of which four would be at Christmas and the rest in association with key holiday times. Pay would be deducted from the month in which the layoff occurred.

The Faculty Association agreement does not allow for temporary layoffs, so once positions are identified, individuals will be laid off permanently. The university is determining the details (overall numbers and individual positions).

Throughout this process, the university was very clear with the bargaining units on the financial position of the university, the requirement to balance the budget

and the plan on how it is going to get there. The largest part of any University's budget is invested in its human resources, and that is where savings had to be achieved.

We all wished that the two groups would have seen the larger picture and worked to a solution, which could have avoided any further layoffs. We are left with no choice now other than what our collective agreements allow.

I have had the privilege of serving on the Board for the past three years and appreciate the passion and work of all those at the university. We are all there to provide an opportunity for people to learn and succeed in achieving a post-secondary education. We must all work together for the university to be able to fulfill this important mission.

**Andy Neigel**  
Public Member  
AU Board of  
Governors

## LAST WEEK'S POLL RESULTS

*Athabasca's getting a new restaurant; what does it*



## THIS WEEK'S POLL QUESTION

*Was the funding for the Muskeg Creek local improvement project*

*Tell us your answer at [www.athabascaadvocate](http://www.athabascaadvocate)*

## Upcoming Events

CUPE GMM	Oct. 5
Thanksgiving Day	Oct. 14
AU Reduced Operation	Oct. 15
CUPE GMM	Nov. 2
Remembrance Day	Nov. 11
CUPE GMM	Dec. 7
CUPE Furlough Day	Dec. 23
CUPE Furlough Day	Dec. 24
Christmas Day	Dec. 25
Boxing Day	Dec. 26
New Year's Day	Jan. 1
CUPE Furlough Day	Jan. 2
CUPE Furlough Day	Jan. 3

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### OCTOBER 2013

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