

# OUTSIDER: THE VOICE OF THE TUTOR

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**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees

## Attend the CUPE 3911 General Membership Meeting

Our next general meeting, open to all of our members, will be Saturday, January 28. Additional information will be sent to all members as needed. Stay tuned.

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## New Year's Message (BY DOUGAL MACDONALD, COMMUNICATIONS)

On the occasion of the New Year, CUPE 3911 sends a message of solidarity to all its members and allies, and to the working class and people of Canada and Quebec from coast to coast to coast. We also greet our sister unions, our Indigenous allies, and the peoples the world over who are courageously fighting for their right to be.

As we enter the New Year, those in power speak of nothing but the difficulties which lie ahead in 2023. They then trot out the same old non-solutions such as privatization and austerity that have been repeatedly exposed simply as ways to make the rich richer. We encourage everyone to look instead at the successes they are achieving as they unite in action with co-workers, neighbours, friends, and allies to fight for what belongs to them by right as the producers of all the wealth society depends on for its living.

There is no doubt that the present period is a difficult one. The old forms have outlived their purpose while new ones based on the full participation of the people in discussing and implementing the decisions that affect their lives have yet to come into being. The people are bringing new forms into being by speaking in their own name and fighting for what belongs to them by virtue of being human. This is what is providing society with the only coherence it has at a time.

Under the present conditions, the role of the people in making history is missed altogether. The workers and middle strata are reduced to disposable things while the ruling class dismisses the people's resistance as just another story. But people from all walks of life have learned that they cannot trust the promises of those with privilege and power to set things right. The many resistance struggles tell us that our security lies in the fight for the rights of all, not in governments that serve only the rich.

The more the ruling class seeks to contain and crush the struggles of the workers to realize their claims on society, the struggles of the Indigenous Peoples to uphold their hereditary rights, and the struggles of people of all walks of life to affirm their claims on society, the more valuable experience the workers acquire. They are becoming more and more aware that the political process does not serve them at all and that the society must be radically renovated to meet the requirements of the 21st century.

CUPE 3911 calls on everyone to go all out in 2023 to oppose the widespread retrogression and lift the political process to the level of the demands of the people. All out to humanize the natural and social environment, support the just demands of the Indigenous Peoples and for equal status for all citizens and residents, migrant workers, refugees and undocumented workers. All out to oppose state-organized racist and other attacks as well as the blocks to protection of all those who are vulnerable due to age, gender, sexual orientation, or any other criteria.

Let us make 2023 a year in which working people take their place in determining the character of the period!

Best wishes for success in all your endeavours in the New Year!



# CUPE 3911 Elect Executive for 2022-2023

CUPE 3911 held their annual general meeting in November 2022. One of the main features of the meeting was the elections for the new executive. The results can be seen in the chart below.

## Executive Positions Elected for 2022-23

| Position                                    | Term   | Current Executive    | Status of Position |
|---|--------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Executive Officers</b>                   |        |                      |                    |
| <b>Co-Chair</b>                             | 2-year | Glynnis Lieb         | Term ends in 2023  |
| <b>Co-Chair</b>                             | 2-year | Ann Reynolds         | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Co-Chair</b>                             | 2-year | Ronnie Leah Joy      | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Recording Secretary:</b>                 | 1-year | Fiona MacGregor      | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Secretary Treasurer:</b>                 | 2-year | Vanee Narayanan      | Term ends in 2023  |
| <b>Grievance Officer:</b>                   | 1-year | Ernie Jacobson       | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Communications Officer:</b>              | 1-year | Dougal MacDonald     | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Membership Officer:</b>                  | 1-year | Leigh Brownhill      | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Representative Officers (up to 8):</b>   |        |                      |                    |
|   | 1-year | Marie Weingartshofer | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Jordan Thompson      | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Gregory Krabes       | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Robert Changirwa     | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Pamela Rogers        | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Gordon Drever        | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Trustees:</b>                            |        |                      |                    |
|   | 3-year | Henry Agbogun        | Acclaimed (2025)   |
|   | 3-year | Evelyn Chernyk       | Term ends in 2023  |
|   | 3-Year | Lorraine Laville     | Term ends in 2024  |
| <b>Permanent Committees</b>                 |        |                      |                    |
| <b>Human Resources Committee (up to 3):</b> | 1-year | Vanee Narayanan      | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Grievance Committee (4 or more):</b>     |        |                      |                    |
|   | 1-year | Krzysztof Swiatek    | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Brenda Kuzio         | Acclaimed          |
| <b>Byron Paegge Committee (up to 2):</b>    |        |                      |                    |
|   | 1-year | Marie Weingartshofer | Acclaimed          |
|   | 1-year | Nancy Fisher         | Acclaimed          |

|  |        |                    |  |
|--|--------|--------------------|--|
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Indigenous Scholarship Committee</b>                | 1 year | Henry Agbogun      | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1 year | Melissa Scott      | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1 year | Deborah Foster     | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Bylaw Revision (up to 5):</b>                       | 1-year | Leigh Brownhill    | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Glynnis Lieb       | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Henry Agbogun      | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Vanee Narayanan    | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Ernie Jacobson     | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Representation to AU Committees</b>                 |        |                    |  |
| <b>PD Fund Committee (up to 4):</b>                    | 2-year | Leigh Brownhill    | Acclaimed (Term ends 2023)               |
|  | 2-year | Edna D'Jokoto-Asem | Term ends in 2023                        |
|  | 2 year | Kimberley Van Tol  | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 2 year | Gregory Krabes     | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Board of Governors</b>                              | 3-year | Liam Connelly      | Term ends in 2023                        |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Complaint Review Committee (1 and 1 alternate):</b> | 1-year | Brenda Kuzio       | Term Ending – will let name stand.       |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Labour Management Committee (2):</b>                | 1-year |                    |  |
|  | 1-year | Brenda Kuzio       | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>OH&amp;S Committee (2 or more):</b>                 | 1-year | Melanie Cook (alt) | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Joyce Miller       | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Health Benefits Committee (2):</b>                  | 1-year | Lorraine Laville   | Acclaimed                                |
|  | 1-year | Ann Reynolds       | Acclaimed                                |
|  |        |                    |  |
| <b>Bargaining Committee:</b>                           | 1-year | Ronnie Leah Joy    | Bargaining Committee in place until next |

|                            |        |                         |   |
|----------------------------|--------|-------------------------|---|
|                            |        |                         | collective agreement ratified.  |
|                            | 1-year | Glynnis Lieb            | Bargaining Committee in place until next collective agreement ratified. |
|                            | 1-year | Cal Hauserman           | Bargaining Committee in place until next collective agreement ratified. |
|                            | 1-year | Mark Dimirsky           | Bargaining Committee in place until next collective agreement ratified. |
|                            | 1-year | Sue Mitchell (Resource) | Bargaining Committee in place until next collective agreement ratified. |
|                            | 1-year | Ann Reynolds            | Bargaining Committee in place until next collective agreement ratified. |
|                            |        |                         |   |
| <b>Conference Planning</b> | 1-year | Chris Rahim             | Acclaimed   |
|                            | 1-year | Glynnis Lieb            | Acclaimed   |
|                            | 1-year | Natalie Sharpe          | Acclaimed   |
|                            | 1-year | Ronnie Joy Leah         | Acclaimed   |
|                            | 1-year | Vanee Narayanan         | Acclaimed   |





## Update: CUPE 3911 Bargaining Report

The bargaining committee met with the employer twice in December and twice in January so far. We are nearing the end of our negotiations on monetary items; saving the wages for last.

As we have previously stated, it is a difficult round because the employer has been given a mandate of net zero, which means that we cannot cost them any more coming out of bargaining than we did going in.

Regarding wages, we are subject to the same UCP mandates that other post-secondary institutions have been given. This is zeros each year until 2023, and then a small increase of 1.5% in April 2023, and an additional 1.25% later in the year for a total of 2.75%. And the current government is wanting contracts to be open again in 2024. We are presenting evidence that we are currently paid under market rates, and therefore there should be an exception made for our wages.



The employer's bargaining team has been very amicable and has made legitimate attempts to introduce language that is beneficial to us and more equitable for our members. But it remains a near impossible task to look for substantial gains with this mandate in place.

We thank all the members who have attended town hall meetings already. We will be looking to organize additional town halls in the near future to gain feedback and direction as we move into the final and most difficult negotiations.

Kind regards,

Glynnis Lieb PhD

## Who Won the Battle of Athabasca U? Not Alberta's Government

*By Charles Rusnell, reprinted from the Tyee*

Under previous UPC premier Jason Kenney, Alberta Advanced Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides fired board members of Athabasca University who opposed his demands. An expert in university governance called it the worst political interference in a Canadian university in more than a century.

But despite an escalating campaign of bellicose threats and firings over the past eight months, Alberta Advanced Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides appears to have mostly failed to force a mass relocation of Athabasca University staff to the small town of Athabasca to bolster its economic development.

Nicolaides also effectively failed to force Athabasca, Canada's top online university, to abandon its near-virtual strategy, which allows senior administrators, academics and other staff to work remotely, while serving 43,000 online students across Alberta, Canada and the world.

In a news release, Nicolaides claimed victory, saying the university's board of governors had unanimously voted to approve an investment management agreement (IMA) between his ministry and the university that sets local employment targets for executive and administrative staff in the town of 2,800, about 150 kilometres north of Edmonton.

The vote, however, was not unanimous; there was one abstention. And the agreement represents a major climb down for Nicolaides, said Sir John Daniel, a world respected expert in distance learning.

"It is good to see that Minister Nicolaides has come to his senses in his battle with Athabasca University and has abandoned most of his sillier ultimatums," Daniel said in an emailed statement.

"But, we have had false dawns before and I worry about his reneging on some commitments once the story is no longer news," he said.

Earlier this year, Nicolaides fired board chair Nancy Laird and all the board members who hadn't resigned, including Daniel, and replaced them with handpicked political appointees after the board refused to accede to his directives. Nicolaides publicly stated he did so to ensure his directives were implemented.

Months ago, Nicolaides threatened to slash the university's operating grant of \$3.4 million a month unless it forced 65 per cent of its staff — about 500 people plus their spouses and children — to live and work in Athabasca.

Experts told The Tyee this was logistically impossible because it would overwhelm the town. Nicolaides later claimed this figure was simply an opening bargaining position.

The new IMA signed recently only increases administrative staff in the town by 25, from 252 to 277, and requires only four executives, including president Peter Scott, to work in Athabasca within three years.

But the IMA waives financial penalties set for 2022-23 for not meeting the staffing targets. The ministry signs new funding agreements with universities each year by March 31, which means the university can essentially ignore the local staffing targets for both administration and executive staff until March 31, 2023.

The new IMA also directs the university to cease implementation of its near-virtual strategy. But the university already has fully implemented its near-virtual strategy, so ceasing it now is effectively moot.

The signing of the IMA has not been without consequence, however. Scott so far has not indicated he will quit but two senior executives resigned within hours of the board's decision.

Both Daniel and University of Toronto professor Glen Jones, an expert in university governance, had said Nicolaides' original IMA, if implemented, would cause resignations that could threaten the university's survival.

Jones called Nicolaides' final ultimatum "the most egregious political interference in a public university in Canada in more than 100 years." Daniel was less diplomatic. He called it "completely stupid" and suggested president Peter Scott would likely quit if it wasn't amended.

Nicolaides began his escalating pressure campaign in March. This fall, Deborah Meyers, the university's vice-president of finance and performance services, and chief human relations officer Charlene Polege both told president Peter Scott they were thinking of leaving.

"Since that time, I have been working very hard to find a way to retain them, their incredible leadership and expertise," Scott said in a news release announcing their resignation Thursday.

"The last months and particularly, the last few days have been challenging for AU, and I regret to share that I have not been successful in my work to retain these exceptional leaders."

Both Jones and Daniel said recruiting replacements for highly skilled and experienced staff will be much more difficult if they're required to live in Athabasca.

"What we're seeing is a lesson on how to create uncertainties when taking stupid approaches with universities that cause people to leave," Daniel said. "But President Peter Scott] can probably survive this one compared to where this all started."

Daniel believes Scott, who declined a Tyee interview request, will continue in the job at least until the next election scheduled for May 2023.

Premier Danielle Smith's United Conservative Party is now trailing by nine points in the polls even as it continues to advance deeply unpopular policies, most specifically the controversial Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act.

Alberta's opposition NDP have promised, if elected, to tear up the investment management agreements. The agreements tie university funding to performance measures such as employment rates for graduates.

"By the time this all gets processed, we will all be in another year and quite conceivably Alberta will have another government," Daniel said.

"It seems like major progress but I suppose that is like saying when you bang your head against the wall it feels nice when you stop."



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## Two Years in Review: Academic Restructuring at the University of Alberta

(BY EMILY WILLIAMS; REPRINTED FROM THE GATEWAY)

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On the surface, the University of Alberta seems to be thriving. Classes are back in person, the U of A has been performing better in global rankings, and there are more students on campus now than ever before. But underneath all those successes, the U of A is crumbling from the inside. In the wake of academic restructuring, non-academic staff are trying to keep it all together.

Academic restructuring was first proposed in June 2020 by then-incoming President Bill Flanagan at a virtual town hall. Flanagan presented his plan for a "University of Alberta for Tomorrow", just under a month before starting his term as president.

The plan was to reorganize the university's faculties into groups over a two-year period, to create a more financially sustainable model in light of unprecedented budget cuts from the provincial government. This resulted in a reduction of 1,050 staff positions, an anticipated drop in international rankings, and an overall feeling of uncertainty at the university. "A restructuring 'must occur,'" Flanagan said.

Restructuring was meant to pool administrative staff and resources, reducing administrative costs. Less resources to go around, meant more sharing of what remained.

Out of the different configurations presented, the college model was an effort to preserve the identities of different parts of the university. This was done by organizing faculties into three colleges: health and sciences, natural and applied sciences, and social science and humanities. Each faculty would be headed by an additional layer of administration: college deans.

The college model however, added more bureaucracy containing the highest number of senior leadership positions of all the proposals — a concern for some faculty. General Faculties Council (GFC), the governing body in charge of academic and student affairs, was not in agreement on whether the colleges required a senior leader.

GFC ultimately recommended the college model, with a caveat: no college deans. They approved a motion which recommended including a "service manager" who would report to faculty deans, as opposed to a college dean who would manage them. This recommendation was then overridden by

the Board of Governors (BoG), the highest decision-making body at the U of A — meaning college deans would stay.

In a comment provided to *The Gateway*, Verna Yiu, interim provost and vice-president (academic), said that work is still being done to refine the college model.

“Since they were launched in summer 2021, work has been ongoing to define and operationalize responsibilities of the colleges. This past fall, a new operating model was released that articulated those responsibilities and authorities.”

Yiu said that an 18-month review of the model is underway and will be presented to GFC and BoG when complete.

At one of the final town halls before the 2020 BoG decision, Matina Kalcounis-Rueppell, the current interim college dean of natural and applied sciences, assured concerned students that they “will really not feel this organizational change in [their] student experience.”

So, just over two years later with the model now implemented, does this ring true? Alexander Dowsey, a fourth-year ancient medieval history student, says it does not.

Dowsey said the most prevalent impact of academic restructuring on his student experience was the loss of immediately accessible services. Previously quick and efficient processes were now taking much longer to complete, which could potentially derail students’ degrees.

According to a survey done by the Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA), academic restructuring left a profound impact on the quality of services. One respondent said that academic restructuring posed a “significant challenge to offering exceptional service.”

In March, Dowsey reached out to Arts Undergraduate Student Services (USS) for help in his BearTracks and received a response almost six weeks later.

“They told me I contacted the wrong administrative branch and had to go talk to a different branch, because they couldn’t do anything about it,” he said.

To say the current model is unsustainable would be an understatement. For those who are new to campus, trying to get help on top of long wait times can be a daunting and stressful task.

Dowsey’s mother is a history professor, so he’s familiar with the university’s resources and processes. Even then, he said the process was grueling and long.

“I don’t think that’s ideal for our university. And it doesn’t speak to our administrative health that it takes so long to deal with relatively small requests.”

The feeling that services are now requiring extra steps, and extended periods of time, was also shared amongst many faculty members *The Gateway* interviewed for this article.

Marko Zivkovic, an associate professor in the department of anthropology, said that in the new model, oftentimes faculty don’t know who to ask for things. To illustrate his point, Zivkovic asked: how many people does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

“In the old ways, it was usually one or two. Now, we are talking about three, four, or more,” he said.

“I at least need to know who to ask, who may know who to ask, who will probably in the end know, who to ask really.”

### **“Whole environment changed” after academic restructuring**

These extra layers of complexity are the result of centralized services. Many faculty had an administrator they knew well in the office next door who may have been laid off, relocated to another building, or are now working for multiple departments rather than one.



Laurie Adkin, a professor in the department of political science, talked about how COVID-19 exacerbated the effects of academic restructuring, as both events happened at the same time. Despite now returning to work in-person, the office is largely empty.

“The whole environment changed. We used to relate to people who had faces and names, and we knew who to go to if we had a problem,” Adkin said. “Those people are essentially gone.”

Now, in place of a team of dedicated administrators, faculty have been redirected to a staff service portal that operates on a ticket system.

Heather Coleman, a professor and an associate graduate chair in the department of history, classics, and religion, described the ticket system as “very clunky, compared to just having the name of somebody and emailing them.”

On the surface restructuring is nothing more than the addition of college deans, longer wait-times, and a new shared services portal. This may be an annoyance for some, but for non-academic staff, restructuring has been nothing short of a major overhaul of their lives on this campus.

### ***“It was an ugly, embarrassing situation,” staff member speaks on fall contract delays***

*The Gateway* spoke to a non-academic staff member, who works as an administrator, about their experience of working at the university after academic restructuring. Because of concerns regarding job security, *The Gateway* granted them anonymity, and will be using Jones as a pseudonym.

When academic restructuring was still in the planning and consultation process, there was lots of talk about creating economies of scale. By pooling the faculties into three colleges, the university was hoping to provide efficient and centralized administrative services for a fraction of the cost. Jones felt like this was anything but true.

“That’s been a complete misnomer, almost an outright lie, because the only economies of scale that have been achieved [are jobs done] by two people [are] now being done by one,” they said.

To Jones, the processes are unstable. Either non-academic staff are doing jobs they are unfamiliar with, or they worry that jobs they used to be responsible for won’t get completed. Many tasks that used to fall to support staff have now been taken out of their hands, Jones said. As a result, many jobs go undone for long stretches of time, or they are done poorly.

For example, payroll functions and expediting contracts became centralized tasks. Initially, Jones had high hopes, since the spring and summer rollouts were so smooth. Very quickly, it became apparent that the job would not be completed on time this fall.

Prior to academic restructuring, payroll and contracts were handled at department level. However, the Shared Services unit has since taken them on. Launched July 2021, the unit is a hybrid model of centralized and decentralized student and staff services at the university, currently operating online.

In the fall, contracts for positions that began September 1 were not issued until September 29 — leaving graduate students working for nearly a month with no contract. Several graduate student associations said the delays were the result of restructuring and spoke out strongly against the process.

Despite working in “what had always been the normal time frames,” Coleman described the fall contracts as “the key problem” her department experienced with the Shared Services model so far.

“It was totally unacceptable,” she said. “The students were waiting to be paid, and it was just appalling.”

Non-academic staff watched from the sidelines as jobs they used to do were mismanaged.

“HR went way over capacity. Shared Services didn’t have enough people doing the job, they were working evenings, weekends. People were leaving, because the stress of it was so awful,” Jones said.

“It was publicized, a lot of students came out and talked about it, professors talked about it. It was an ugly, embarrassing situation.”

*(END OF PART ONE. TO BE CONTINUED IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER.)*



## Waterloo Sessionals Join CUPE

By CUPE NATIONAL

We're thrilled to announce that Sessional Instructors at the University of Waterloo are the newest members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), following a decision at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB).

The decision follows a vote in December, when an overwhelming majority of instructors voted to join the union, which represents academic workers at most Ontario universities.

*“Waterloo is a world-class university but as instructors we’re way behind other universities in this province. It’s time to bring us up to standards for things like employment security, benefits, professional development, and basics like appropriate office space and equipment,”* said Scott Sorli, one of the sessional instructors involved in the organizing drive.

More than half of the instructional positions in Canadian universities are filled by contract instructors. In non-union environments they have little or no job security.

Without a union, we really had no voice in our workplace. We had no way to influence health and safety standards during the pandemic, almost to training and no way to safely raise concerns or questions about our workplace. We’re excited that we now have a pathway to fixing all this,” said MK Stinson, a sessional instructor.

The University of Waterloo decision closely follows a vote by clinical nursing instructors at Brock University at the end of November to join CUPE, and international programs teaching staff at the University of Toronto’s New College.

CUPE represents more than 63,000 academic, maintenance, custodian, food service and other workers at Canadian post-secondary institutions and academic staff at 18 Ontario universities.



# Going Beyond the Limits Imposed by Labour Relations

*By Enver Villamizar, Ontario High School Teacher*

A serious issue facing Ontario teachers and education workers in the ongoing negotiations in K-12 education is how the Ford government is concentrating powers in its hands. It demands that what it calls negotiations take place within the confines of labour relations but gives itself the right to dictate terms outside of the labour relations regime using its legislative majority and prerogative powers. When the workers recognize that they are deprived of power within the labour relations regime and make their fight a political fight which concerns the entire society, they win the support of their colleagues, parents and students. The government then tries to get them to give this up with promises that if only the workers stay within the labour relations regime they can make headway.

At this time, for example, the government is going after teachers and education workers' pay and benefits at the negotiating table where it is the negotiators on both sides and lawyers who are informed and able to speak. Those who must live under the conditions decided or imposed and the public which is directly affected by the outcome do not have a role or voice. The government deliberately attacks wages and benefits at the negotiating table in order to try and put teachers, especially, and their unions on the defensive based on a disinformation campaign that education is a cost, and teachers and education workers are a drain on the system rather than its most vital component.



What is most important at this time is to not accept foregone conclusions or pessimism but to pay attention to the actual conditions in K-12 education and what is required. This is a matter of concern to the entire society and includes the pay and benefits of those who provide education. By keeping teachers and education workers defensive about their wages and benefits the government is hoping to keep them within the confines of the labour relations regime where they hold the cards. However, when they can't get the unions to accept what is unacceptable they will once again try to use their political power to dictate what must be accepted while keeping the workers constrained.

By not permitting themselves to be constrained by the very regime which does not restrain the government, the workers can make an advance, involving everyone in the fight for the right to education which has been shown to be where power lies.

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## Important Matters in Ontario Education Negotiations

*(BY MIRA KATZ, JOURNALIST)*

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There are many important matters which require the attention of the public so they can intervene in the negotiations in education. For instance, since taking office in Ontario, the Ford government has set out to use different means to contract out the delivery of education in order to get around the unions and hand over public funds to private interests.

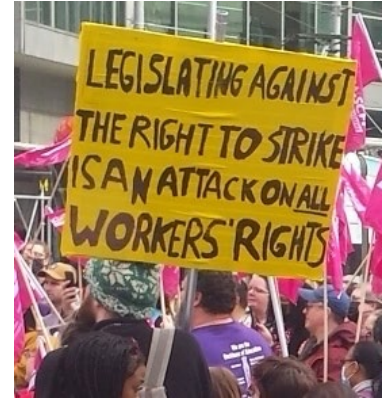
This includes direct payouts to parents to pay for private education or just to pocket, payouts to parents for technology instead of investing in schools so the youth can have what they need in their classrooms, and the introduction of tutors in the schools who are not part of the education unions and who can be used as a scab labour force in the event of educators working-to-rule or strike. This also includes the



increased use of online apps and the required per student subscriptions which remove public funds and put them in the hands of private tech giants. None of these are part of any rational plan to use public resources such as TVOntario, for example, to deliver education through TV shows or learning apps at home.

Another very significant aspect is the way in which what is taught is being decided right out of the Premier's office in secret with little to no input from educators or experts with curricula only available online so that changes can be made "just-in-time" as various private interests dictate. The math and science curricula have both been arbitrarily changed, not only in terms of what is taught but in how curricula are changed. This has led to serious problems of teaching and learning, as evidenced in the self-serving test scores the government promotes.

By bringing forward the actual conditions and what they reveal and telling the truth about issues, public opinion can be formed and ways worked out to resolve the problems in a way that favours the educators and the youth in harmony with the general interests of society itself. Openly discussing the conditions in education and what is being negotiated should not be looked at just as a matter of strategy. Teachers and education workers and the public have a right to know what is taking place and what the situation is so that they can play their role.



## Pay and Benefits Are Investments in Education, Not Costs

(BY LAURA CHESNIK, ONTARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER)

It has been amply revealed in the case of both health care and education workers, if pay and benefits do not keep up with increasing cost of living and stressful working conditions, it directly affects staffing levels and the quality of care and services people receive. The public must be informed about this relationship so that they can see that investments in education are in fact what create value in the form of a healthy and educated population and any agenda which seeks to remove funding from education with cuts or privatization will only remove value from the economy and the public services everyone requires.

When governments attack wages and benefits, they hide that they are in fact trying to steal the value produced by workers in the public sector in order to pay off private interests who want to use it for their own self-serving purposes. The value produced by educators is the youth they educate who go on to produce immense value in the economy. When the value they produce is not returned to society but retained by the private enterprises that benefit directly from it, public education is undermined. This is what the government is trying to hide.

As for benefits and sick days, the government uses this as a wedge to get educators to shut up on the basis that they have "good benefits and sick days," which many others don't, as if these had no relationship to the conditions required to teach and provide the required supports to students. If teachers and education workers are sick or physically unwell they cannot teach and provide the supports students need -- let alone under the conditions of packed classes with all the demands in any given classroom without the supports that have long been required.

Teachers and education workers also do all kinds of extra-curricular activities and even when off sick have used the time to catch up on marking or planning, which they should not have to do. In some



cases, sick days are needed just to have the mental health to be ready for what dealing with students in today's classrooms requires. So how can sick days be considered an individual benefit?

If the government arbitrarily breaks the arrangement for sick days again -- as the previous Liberal government did when it arbitrarily removed half the sick days and then put in place a union-administered benefits plan in an attempt to have its imposition of provincial bargaining legislation accepted -- it will lead to more chaotic conditions in the schools, with more fending for oneself by both staff and the youth in their charge. In other words, pay and benefits are vital to the actual learning conditions of students and should not be treated as a private matter as if educators have something to hide.



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## Food Insecurity in Canada

(WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS)

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The first food bank in the modern era was created in 1967 in the U.S. At first, food banks were considered to be temporary solutions to temporary shortages of food. However, it soon became clear that food banks were here to stay and the number and size have continued to increase as years have passed.

Edmonton's first food bank was set up in 1981. Presently, every month it serves over 30,000 individuals and provides food for nearly 350,000 meals and snacks to more than 300 agencies, schools, churches, and food depots. In fact, food banks such as the Edmonton Food bank are one of the most glaring symptoms of the abject failure of the socioeconomic system to provide for all its members. CUPE 3911 and other unions contribute financially to a number of Alberta food banks as part of their core activities.

Disturbing reports say food bank usage across Canada reached an all-time high of nearly 1.5 million visits in March 2021. Food Banks Canada released its annual report on October 20 painting a picture of unprecedented food insecurity in the 21st century. The 1.5 million visits to food banks in March of this year was 15 per cent higher than the number of visits in the same month last year and 35 per cent higher than visits in March 2019.

More than 4,750 food banks and community organizations contributed to the details in the report. Comments in the report suggest the skyrocketing cost of food and housing, as well

as general price inflation, stagnant income for workers, and low social assistance rates are all contributing to the rise in food bank usage.

Kirstin Beardsley, the CEO of Food Banks Canada, called the reported numbers of usage "devastating."

"What we are seeing is the combination of long-term effects to a broken social safety net combined with the effects of inflation and high costs driving more people to use food banks than ever before in Canadian history," she said in an interview with *The Canadian Press*.

"Behind each one of these numbers is a person who is struggling too much to get by."

Beardsley said fixed-income groups like seniors and employed but low-income people such as students have been hit harder because their paycheques can't keep up with inflation. "We have got people like seniors, who have been able to afford to live, suddenly having to turn to the food bank for the first time in their lives because it doesn't all add up," Beardsley said. "(Some people) are on a very limited income, and so when the costs go up, the way we have seen, you just can't stretch the dollar."

The Food Bank reported that around 500,000 food bank visitors in March or about one-third were children, who make up around 20 per cent of the country's total population. Hunger among children is an issue that can have a lasting impact, Beardsley said.

"This is the future of our country; this is who is going to be our future leaders, scientists, artists," she said. "When you're going to school hungry, you're not learning, you're not focussing, you're not setting yourself up to thrive."

Beardsley called the report a "wake-up call" that should trigger moves to tackle food insecurity and the issues that contribute to it. Food Banks Canada said the problem is especially dire in Northern Canada suggesting a need for the development of community-based approaches in those areas to address the issue.

The report demands increased investments in social programs and pro-social reforms such

as providing more affordable and rent-assisted housing and immediate changes to employment insurance, which has become virtually useless in most cases.



**Random Thoughts:** Like water flowing from a wide valley into a narrower valley, the pace of events in Alberta is speeding up. Why? Because the focus has now become the impending provincial election in May 2023. Almost all the moves that any political party or organization or commentator makes at this point is carried out with an eye as to how they might affect the coming election. The Alberta election, as has been the case for almost 70 years, will be carried out using the First Past the Post voting system. The candidate who ends up with the most votes wins. But it was not always thus in Alberta. The 1955 Ernest Manning Socred government switched Alberta's voting system to First Past the Post from the combined Single Transferable Vote/Alternative Voting system it had been using up until then. STV is the original Proportional Representation voting system, a system promised by Justin Trudeau while campaigning but never implemented. CCF member Elmer Roper, who served as mayor of Edmonton from 1959-63, later said he thought that Manning had abolished the STV system to keep Roper from ever again getting a seat in the legislature. Certainly, it worked to the degree that no CCF or NDP candidate again took an Edmonton legislative seat until 1982. The change to First Past the Post was likely the main cause of that pattern.

## CUPE 3911 Monthly Grievance Summary Report

BY ERNIE JACOBSON, CUPE 3911 GRIEVANCE OFFICER, JANUARY 15, 2023)

A grievance results from a violation of the Collective Agreement, Human Rights, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Labour Relations Act, or other University policies. If you feel there has been a dispute or difference of opinion or interpretation between yourself and the employer you should contact your administrator and/or your executive immediately. If the matter cannot be resolved informally then a grievance can be filed.

There are three types of grievances: individual, group, and policy.

- An individual grievance is a complaint that an action by the employer has violated the rights of an individual as set out in the Collective Agreement, law or by some unfair practice. E.g., discipline, demotion, timesheets etc.
- A group grievance is a complaint by a group of individuals all affected the same way, e.g., all employees in a particular department.

- A policy grievance is a complaint by the Union that an action or failure or refusal to act by the employer is a violation of the Collective Agreement that could affect all members covered by the agreement.

## **Grievance Committee Activity Report for January 2023**

### **Summary of Activity for the past month:**

Grievance for member who returned to work and is seeking restoration of their prior full workload is proceeding and nominees for AU and CUPE have been named as first step in setting up the arbitration hearing as soon as possible in 2023.

- Grievance from 2020 re GFC appointments is proceeding to arbitration with discussions with CUPE lawyer set up for January.
- Two grievances challenging dismissal of a tutor in each case are scheduled for the summer of 2023.
- Continuing discussions with members re not obtaining acting coordinator positions and ensuring that AU is engaging in a fair, transparent selection process.

The union currently has 4 grievances which are going to arbitration in 2023. Dates for two of these arbitration hearings have been set, with the other two not set at this point. Arbitration is the best opportunity for the case to be heard by an independent party rather than having the investigation being done entirely by the employer. In all cases, step 1 and step 2 grievance meetings were held and in all cases the CUPE grievance was denied by the employer, making it necessary to take the cases to arbitration.



## **Announcements**

**CUPE 3911 Annual General Meeting and Elections.** Saturday, January 28.

**International Women's Day.** March 8.

**May Day.** May 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Alberta Provincial Election.** May 29.

**CUPE 3911 Website.** We have a shiny new CUPE 3911 website which we urge all our members to visit and use. The URL is [CUPE3911.ca](http://CUPE3911.ca)

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### **Editorial Policy: The Outsider**

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The Outsider is the voice of CUPE 3911. It is our vehicle for communicating with our members, on a regular (monthly) basis, about the issues that concern and confront us as workers. The Outsider is also the voice of our members. We encourage and welcome relevant contributions from members. While contributions are welcome, they need to contribute positively to the welfare of our union local and our members. They also need to contribute positively to the advancement of public post-secondary education in Alberta. We will not accept or print attacks on any of our members or our union leadership/executive. We also reserve the right to reply to any submissions that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of CUPE 3911 and its policies. Please direct all articles, letters, comments, and ideas to our administrator.