

The Spark!



September 2012

Official Newsletter of CUPE Local3909

Proudly Representing Teaching Assistants, Grader-Markers, Tutors, Librarians, Lab Demonstrators, Seminar Leaders, Student and Sessional Instructors at the University of Manitoba



Proudly representing
student and sessional/contract academics
working at the University of Manitoba

Calling All Members!

General Membership Meetings to be
Held:

**OCTOBER 3, 5:00 pm, 108 St.
John's College (cross common
room)**

**NOVEMBER 28th, 5:00 pm
Location TBA**

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Welcome

Welcome to all new members of CUPE 3909. This Union Local exists to provide a collective voice during negotiations for the collective agreements that govern your employment and to protect and enforce those collective agreements during the period of your employment. We invite you to call or visit the office if you are seeking information relating to the Local's operations and/or your workplace and membership issues. There are two general membership meetings per year and all our members are encouraged to attend. Our newsletter is designed to keep our members informed of information of interest to CUPE 3909 specifically and the labour movement in general. The Spark is published ten times per year and is sent to you via the listserve or through interdepartmental mail.

Unions are, by nature, participatory and respond to members' demands. For this reason, it is important that you communicate all of your questions, concerns and issues to the office or to the executive. Most importantly, please read your contract and the Collective Agreement for your bargaining group (Unit 1 if you are a Teaching Assistant, Grader/Marker, Tutor, Lab Demonstrator, Seminar Leader, or Student Lecturer; Unit 2 if you are a Sessional Instructor, Sessional/Part Time Librarian, Counsellor, or Music Teacher). If there are points that you do not understand or if you find that during the course of your employment the agreement is violated, please contact the office or email your VP. The Local will help you determine how to proceed.

We Can Help!

- Advice on issues of concern to you as a university employee
- Information and support when you think your rights have been violated
- Investigation and Initiation of formal complaints (grievances) against U of M on your behalf
- Assistance with Employment Insurance Claims
- Referrals to additional sources of help when you have any problem
- Answers to questions about your rights and duties
- Union officers to represent you or accompany you when disagreements arise
- Support for visa students facing bureaucratic hang-ups
- Guidance in dealing with student complaints
- Tips on handling differences with your professor / employment supervisor.

President's Message

Welcome Members of CUPE 3909!

On behalf of your elected executive, I welcome all new and returning members of CUPE 3909. As a student or sessional academic employee of the University of Manitoba you are automatically a member of the union.

As the democratically elected executive of the local, it is our duty to assist you in any way that we can. On behalf of the membership we bargain and enforce the collective agreements that regulate your employment here at the University. If your rights have been violated, or you suspect your rights as an employee have been violated, please contact us immediately. It is our job to fight for you, so please let us know when we can be of assistance. Whether it is filing a grievance on your behalf, joining you in a meeting with a supervisor, or simply clarifying your rights in the collective agreement, we are here to work for you. As a Union we face many challenges. Workers at the U of M continue to struggle for dignity, fairness and respect. As student academic-workers we are in a constant struggle to be paid for all the hours we work – and we know that this can become an area of contention between yourself and your supervisor. The best way to combat this problem is to be proactive by keeping track of all the hours you work. This is why your union provides you with a booklet to keep track of your hours, titled “I Don’t Work For Free.” Use it, and be diligent. Your union will fight for everything you deserve – but we need proof. Keeping track of your hours is the best way to protect yourself against exploitation.

For members of Unit 2, in particular sessional instructors, I can assure you that we are working hard at the bargaining table to reach a new collective agreement. Negotiations have been fruitful and respectful. Progress is slow, but it is being made. We know that this is a tough climate for public sector collective bargaining in Manitoba, where two-year wage freezes have become the norm, but we are hopeful that an agreement can be reached which will address some of the long term grievances of our members. Sessional instructors are professional educators, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Your bargaining committee is fully dedicated to reaching an agreement which reflects this –and will continue to spend countless hours at the bargaining table until we have a deal we can recommend to the membership.

Once again, I would like to welcome all new and returning members to CUPE 3909. I also wish to remind you that our Union is a progressive economic and political organization and that it belongs to you. Your Union is only as strong as its membership is active and organized, so I invite you all to get involved with your Union. Attend membership meetings, become a shop steward, get involved in awareness campaigns, join committees, represent your union on health and safety committees, and become an activist. Finally, I wish you all the best in the year ahead!

In Solidarity,

Matt McLean
President, CUPE 3909

Unit 2 Update

UNIT 2 STAFF BENEFITS:

During the summer, Staff Benefits sent out letters to a number of Unit 2 Sessional Instructors, Librarians, and Counsellors informing them that they were no longer qualified for benefits for the following year as a result of a review of their work records for the immediately preceding fiscal year. Many of these letters were sent out in error. If you have maintained 50% time of equivalent full-time service (for instructors this works out to 18 credit hours over the fall and winter terms of the regular academic session) and were not inactive with the University for more than 4 consecutive months, you should not lose your benefits. If you fall into this category and you did not receive a subsequent letter from Staff Benefits advising you of the error, please contact the Union immediately.

UNIT 2 SENIORITY:

According to the collective agreement, since May 1, 2009 if you work in any term of the 2012-2013 academic year that is enough to maintain your seniority until July 15, 2015. Seniority is the tie breaker when there is more than one candidate equally qualified to teach a course (subject to the department head's fair and reasonable discretion). The University maintains a list of seniority dates which they provide to the Union but which they are not currently required to post on the University's website or publish for you to review. A member recently alerted the Local to an error in his seniority date, now corrected, and as a result we have requested that Human Resources review their database for other similar mistakes. If you suspect that there is an error in your seniority date, please contact the Union.

Have a Story to Tell?

Want to share your experiences as a sessional or student worker at U of M?

Submit Content or story ideas to sec.cupe3909@gmail.com

NEWS and EVENTS

Unit 1 Grievance Settlement

Due to the settlement of a grievance regarding summer session hours, Unit 1 members who worked as Lecturer/Instructors in the summer of 2012 are to receive back pay from the university in the amount of approximately \$500 for a three credit hour course and \$1000 for a six credit hour course.

This settlement resolves an issue with the collective agreement over when the increase in the number of hours for Unit 1 summer session Lecturer/Instructors to be equal to that of regular session Lecturer/Instructors was to go into effect. This was an important equity issue for our members.

Any Unit 1 (student) member who taught a course during the summer 2012 session should be receiving back pay shortly. This could be a direct deposit or a separate cheque. If you do NOT receive a payment or do not know if you received a payment please contact the union ASAP.

Welcome Packages on their Way!

We remind all members to look for a welcome / welcome back package in the mail soon.. This package will contain: membership cards, important information about employment, and "I don't work for free" hours tracking booklets for students who are paid by the hour.

Unit 2 Wine and Cheese

Wednesday, September 26th from 4 to 6

Sessional Lecturers: Celebrate the start of the semester by meeting with your colleagues and members of the CUPE 3909 executive. Get informed about important issues facing sessionals including ongoing collective bargaining at this informal, come and go event. Share experiences / concerns about your job as a sessional lecturer and find out that you are not alone!

Fall General Members Meetings

CUPE 3909 is holding two General Members Meetings this fall. These meetings are a great way to find out about what is going on with YOUR Union and become involved in the issues that concern your employment at the University.

Meetings will take place on Oct. 3 108 St. John's College (cross common room) and Nov. 28 Location TBA

At the Oct. 3 meeting we will be passing our yearly budget and at the Nov. 28 meeting we will be voting on proposed changes to our bylaws.

Comment: Sessionals Face Catch-22

As students return to school once again this fall, they will encounter a University teaching system that relies heavily upon the labour of sessional instructors. While University enrolment in Canada has doubled since 1980, hiring of full time faculty has not and funding has lagged behind what is required by Universities. This situation has left administrators with no choice but to continue to increase class sizes and to rely more and more on sessional labour.

As our members are aware, the use of sessionals to teach a larger percentage of courses provides a massive cost saving to cash-strapped Universities, as we are paid a fraction of what a full-time faculty member would be. Currently, the lowest ranking tenure track faculty member at University of Manitoba (an assistant professor making the floor salary) is paid \$64,125. A sessional instructor teaching what is a typical course load for a professor (15 credit hours a year) would make only \$23,982, or less than 40% of their tenured colleague.

This massive difference in pay has traditionally been explained and justified upon the grounds that full-time faculty are not just paid to teach but to conduct research and provide service to the University (sitting on committees etc.) whereas sessionals are not. According to this argument, our pay is appropriate as teaching only accounts for 1/3 of the job of a faculty member. However, in reality many sessionals perform research and/or service but receive no formal credit for doing so. Others want desperately to be able to conduct research and

become involved in the University community but are unable to do so specifically because of the nature of sessional employment.

Sessionals, unlike permanent faculty members, have to essentially reapply for their jobs every year, applying to teach individual courses, one at a time. When the University is deciding whether or not to hire us again, one of the main considerations taken into account is whether or not we are current in our field, which of course requires research and other academic activity outside the classroom. Sessionals who consider themselves full-time academics are thus expected to be engaged in research, on their own time and without pay, in order to remain eligible to continue teaching. Other sessionals teach “on the side” in addition to full time or part time careers. In their case, “research” consists of their professional experience and the expertise derived therein which they take with them into the classroom and impart to students. Again, this activity, which is conducted outside the University and yet helps ensure that sessionals are outstanding teachers, is unacknowledged by the University in determining our rate of pay. It remains a double standard that full time faculty are given both time and money to ensure that they remain current in their field for the sake of teaching excellence whereas sessionals are expected to do the same if they wish to be hired but are not provided with the resources to do so.

Furthermore, while some sessionals are content to remain casual teachers of a few courses here and there, others wish to eventually leave

Comment: Sessionals Face Catch-22

the “sessional treadmill” and become tenured faculty. For this to occur, it is vitally important to be publishing research, as hiring committees base their decisions much more on research than teaching, despite these two tasks theoretically being equal “thirds” of the job. However, the low pay of sessional teaching means that sessionals often cannot survive on the amount of money that a normal, reasonable teaching load provides. While a tenured faculty member can teach 15 credit hours in a regular session, not teach at all during the summer and find time for research, many sessionals are forced to take on far more teaching, often at several different Universities just to pay the bills. Others must take time-consuming jobs outside of the academic world to supplement their incomes. Further, sessionals face financial difficulties in conducting research trips and attending conferences and our University provides virtually no professional development funds that can be used for this purpose. Similarly, many of us wish to perform service in the form of attending departmental meetings, sitting on committees etc but are again prevented from doing so by the time constraints that are typical of people forced

to take on very large teaching loads. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many sessionals actually do perform what would be considered service to the University. However, when we attend meetings and sit on committees we are doing so on our own time and for free whereas our colleagues on the same committees are considered to be performing part of their job for which they are compensated.

Sessional instructors face a “catch-22” situation. In order to keep performing our jobs at a high level we must engage in research and many of us desire to perform service. However, the very nature of our job makes these tasks difficult and fails to reward us when we do them anyway. In order to remedy this situation, we need to work toward a system in which sessionals are both compensated for their existing research and service activities and in which it is made easier for sessionals to find time and money for research and service. Acknowledging and compensating research and service for sessional instructors is in the best interest of the University so long as they continue to rely upon us to provide a high quality of University education to more and more students.

Call for Stewards

Want to get more involved in your Union? A great place to start is by becoming a shop steward. As a shop steward you will be trained on how to assist your fellow workers interpret and enforce their rights in the workplace. There are many departments still in need of a shop steward. The time commitment is relatively light, shop stewards meet once a month for training and discussion, but the work is tremendously important. If you have the time and desire to serve your union as a shop steward, please call or email your union today.

MFL Convention Report

CUPE 3909 sent two delegates to the Manitoba Federation of Labour convention, local President Matt McLean and local VP Unit 1 Brian Latour. The convention, held on June 22-24, 2012 was in many ways a disappointment for our local.

We had put forward three resolutions on the subject of affordable and accessible post-secondary education in Manitoba. Additionally, two MGEU locals submitted resolutions calling on the MFL to support lower tuition fees. Of these five resolutions, all but one (support for regulation and the eventual elimination of international student tuition fees) were given a recommendation of non-concurrence by the resolutions committee because they are contrary to existing MFL policy (a report commissioned by members of the MFL executive in 2009). Essentially, what a recommendation of non-concurrence means is that the resolutions committee is recommending the resolutions be rejected, and in order to actually pass the resolution, the resolutions committee's recommendation must be defeated on the floor, and concurrence must be moved.

Despite having non-concurrence, the resolution on supporting lower tuition fees did eventually make it to the floor of convention, where it was referred to the MFL executive to review the tuition fee policy.

The resolution on international student tuition fees was unfortunately defeated on the floor of convention.

Two emergency resolutions submitted by CUPE local 3909 fared slightly better – one, on solidarity with the Quebec student movement, was passed overwhelmingly. The other, which encouraged the provincial government to amend Bill 2, their tuition fee legislation, in order to make it adequately protect students from tuition fee increases, was again referred to the MFL executive to review their tuition fee policy.

While many of our resolutions were defeated, our local's position did have significant support, both from other CUPE locals and from other affiliates such as the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

We are hopeful that the voice of our local will be heard in the MFL's review of tuition fee policy, however given how convention went, we are understandably concerned.

Guest speakers at the convention included CUPW national president Denis Lemelin and premier Greg Selinger. Selinger's speech drew the ire of a few activists, including CUPE 3909 delegates, who held up signs during his speech demanding that the Manitoba NDP take action on implementing anti-scab legislation and reducing the threshold for automatic card-check union certification from 65% to 50%+1.

Overall, this year's MFL convention was a disappointing experience for our local, and the process and result of the review of the MFL tuition fee policy will no doubt be a factor in our continued membership in the organization.

International students are an opportunity, not a cost

Amit Chakma - Globe and Mail, Thursday Aug, 30

If the country's universities were graded on how well we've done at helping Canadians understand the importance international students can play in the country's future, we would receive a failing grade. And I count my own university among those at fault.

That harsh assessment is not to suggest that the postsecondary sector doesn't embrace internationalization. But these students' contribution is so ingrained in university culture that we take for granted that Canadians intrinsically know their vital role in our classrooms and economy.

Too often, the public sees international students as a drain on the system, or as foreigners taking places in universities and colleges that rightfully belong to the sons and daughters of Canadian taxpayers. Neither could be further from the truth.

According to a study by Foreign Affairs and International Canada, international students spent about \$8-billion on tuition, accommodations, discretionary spending and associated tourism in 2010. This spending is greater than Canada's export of unwrought aluminum, helicopters, airplanes or spacecraft. The educational services and programs Canada provides abroad form our 11th-largest national export and our single-largest export to China.

But these students' contributions go well beyond their spending power. Studying and engaging with the best young minds from around the world enriches the lives of Canadian students and increases their comfort with different cultures, something they will increasingly need if they are to excel in the global economy.

Canada's changing demographics are also a reason we need international students. We want to attract the kind of people who will thrive in Canada and help move our country forward.

Familiarity with Canadians and our culture encourages talented and entrepreneurial international students to remain here. For others, a great educational experience fosters the kind of long-term relationships that open doors to future trade, commerce and cultural opportunities.

Internationalization is also about finding ways for Canadian students to study abroad or take part in service-learning programs. These opportunities help students develop their knowledge, skills and confidence, and can advance their careers through the friendships they forge.

Canada has a strong brand with an excellent reputation for offering the highest quality of education, as well as for being a safe and welcoming country. We have a tremendous opportunity to be a top destination for international

International students are an opportunity, not a cost

students, but we need to recognize that we lag behind other Western countries.

Canada should double the number of international students from 239,000 in 2011 to 450,000 by 2022, which can be done while still accommodating the steady 5-per-cent annual growth in the number of Canadians wanting to attend university or college. But any growth in international students must be accompanied by a strong commitment to maintain the quality of education.

Education is primarily a provincial/territorial responsibility and that should not change. Research shows, however, that international students first choose the country where they wish to study, so it benefits everyone to work together under a common Canadian brand when recruiting.

We also need to target recruitment where we have the greatest potential to attract students – China, India, Brazil, the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, Vietnam and Mexico – while maintaining our traditional sources of students, including the United States, Britain and France.

Canada also needs to develop a robust and sophisticated digital strategy that provides prospective students with easy access to information on what Canada offers them.

Competitive scholarships are a requirement to

attract the best students, and that means both new funding as well as regrouping existing scholarships. At the same time, we should also be creating opportunities for 50,000 Canadian students to study abroad each year, funded by the federal and provincial governments and private donors.

International education, in all its forms, will create economic prosperity for the benefit of Canadians across this land. And it will enable us to continually build on the knowledge and talent Canada needs to succeed on a global scale.

Amit Chakma is president of Western University and chair of the Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy.

Editor's Note: At CUPE 3909 we are committed to fighting for fairness in tuition policy. Currently, international students, who make up a very large proportion of our members, pay far more in tuition than Canadian students. Unfortunately, the recently Provincial legislation "Bill 2" while promoting itself as a fair tuition policy, has not addressed this injustice.

As our MFL report (page 9) states, we are working to build alliances with other unions around this issue but often face obstacles in the form of widely-held misconceptions about international students and their place at our Universities.

CUPE Labour Day Message

Paul Moist - National President and Charles Fleury - National Secretary Treasurer

On Labour Day we take a moment to celebrate the important contributions of working people to our country. It is workers who build our cities, produce the goods we use day-to-day, and provide vital services that Canadians depend on.

We are proud of the work our members do every day to make life better for Canadians. CUPE members are the backbone of health care, municipal and social services. We're a vital part of our community's schools colleges and universities. Whether it's providing senior care or child care, CUPE members are there – safeguarding our water, delivering power when needed and keeping passengers safe aboard airplanes.

Canadians benefit from these services - the value of these public services to the average Canadian family is nearly \$17,000 every year according to a study by the CCPA. And these services and the workers who provide them are a reflection of our Canadian values. But there are many challenges facing working people.

Workers are being told they must shoulder the burden of an economic crisis they did not create. We have paid the price in declining wages, less job security, worsening working conditions and persistent attempts to erode public and workplace pensions.

Meanwhile, Canada's largest corporations are pulling in billions of dollars in profits. The OECD estimates that corporations are sitting on more than \$500 billion – hoarding their winnings rather than investing it in our economy to stimulate growth and create jobs.

And, after a lifetime of work, everyone deserves to retire in dignity. Yet 11 million Canadians don't have

a workplace pension. We must continue to demand decent public and workplace pensions for everyone. We must demand that our federal government show leadership on this important issue that affects all Canadians. Even the CD Howe institute – normally onside with conservative governments – has said that the Harper government should “rethink” strategy to introduce Pooled Registered Pension Plans. The financial security of Canadians in retirement is a looming crisis for governments and ultimately taxpayers.

Canadians deserve better.

It's time to change the direction of our country. We must create jobs – good jobs with decent pay and benefits. We can do this by investing in public services that create jobs and provide services for Canadians. We must ensure that we are not faced with a population of seniors without adequate income and reliant on government income supports. We can do this by improving the Canada Pension Plan for all Canadians.

This Labour Day, CUPE is renewing its call on the federal government to convene a national summit on pensions. The summit would bring together business, labour, government and academia to confront the burgeoning economic crisis on retirement security. We have the knowledge and the financial capacity to ensure all Canadians can retire after a lifetime of work without the fear of poverty.

We can change the direction of our country – with political leadership that puts people first and by standing together to demand better.

So, let us mark this Labour Day with renewed hope and a commitment to rebuild our Canada.