

Unit 2 Townhall Report

April 20, 2017

A Unit 2 Townhall on Bargaining was held in the Harry Crowe room on Thursday April 20. Approximately 16 members attended the meeting.

Agenda:

- 1) Update from Bargaining Team (BT) on our activities thus far
- 2) Presentation of Bargaining Survey Preliminary Results and Open Discussion of Bargaining Issues
- 3) Mobilization discussion

1) Update from BT:

Maria (BT): So far, we have had 4 meetings. We have been working to establish and clarify our process, planning our bargaining training (we have a two-day bargaining preparation workshop led by CUPE National and another session with an American labour activist and scholar Jane McAlevey), we developed the bargaining surveys and have been working to get members to complete the survey. We are planning a discussion of equity issues with the local's Equity Officer. We received a report from local staff about potential bargaining proposals. Our local's Equity Officer is preparing anti-oppression training for the BT. The Unit 1 members of the BT have been holding departmental contract workshops to engage members and discuss the collective agreement. Our last BT report noted that members have expressed concerns about racism and Islamophobia on campus about the incident at Shopper's Drug Mart in York Lanes where a student was injured by a security guard. A poster has been prepared by the BT about bargaining and is ready to be distributed.

We are working to get better lists of contact information about our members from the employer, as they are required to provide this information according to the Collective Agreements.

2) Presentation of Bargaining Survey Preliminary Results and Open Discussion of Bargaining Issues:

Kyle (BT): So far we have managed to get a very good response to the bargaining surveys. Last round we had less than 100 completed surveys from Unit 2. This time, right now we have about 250 surveys from Unit 2 members. Over 80% of members are providing some identification such as a name or employee number, with many providing updated contact information which will be very helpful for mobilization. On page two of the survey, when we ask members to rank the issues in order of importance, we find that the highest ranked issues are: the appointment process, the Continuing Sessional Standing Program (CSSP), the conversion program, wages, and then benefits.

Discussion:

Member: Childcare funding was hard to respond to. For me personally, it is not directly relevant and I don't know. Is it in desperate need for funds?

Member: There are different funds. Yes, the childcare centres on campus definitely need money. And members do seem to need money that we distribute, it doesn't go very far towards actual childcare costs.

Member: Regarding health benefits and rising costs. With our coverage amounts are capped, they are becoming eroded.

Kyle: One of the factors in getting members to complete the survey is that it is shorter than last time. But that means we need more details about specific issues. We have been discussing further surveys on specific issues.

Member: We are a long way from proposals and priorities. This does not settle things. This is a snapshot of what people are thinking about. When members hear more about other issues they can embrace them and prioritize them.

Member: Could we have departmental Unit 2 meetings as Unit 1 is doing?

Member: Let's think about our steward structure. Stewards at the departmental level don't really make a lot of sense. We grieve each other and compete for positions.

Kyle (BT): We are considering Skype meetings.

Member: In the past, it was helpful having regular unit 2 meetings, unit 2 townhalls or unit 2 caucuses. It has always been difficult to have an active Unit 2 steward's council or network.

Member: We should not conflate conversions and LSTAs. They are very different. One is a promotion out of the local. One is some stability and job security within the local.

Member: We should be asking members - have you lost work due to qualification language?

Member: Conversions should be automatic. They should be based on seniority. They are a job security measure if they are based on job security. Otherwise, it is an anti-job security measure.

Murray (BT): There has been some concern about the limited number of people here. Keep in mind, this is April. The members that are here were all talking about their grading before the meeting started.

Many of our members are in the grading crunch. Considering that, this is a good turnout. Our survey response rate to the survey has been very good. We are doing very well. We've even started making phone calls to members. Last round, we started calling members the week before the strike vote. We are way ahead of the last round! In terms of issues, the survey produced rough data. We knew going into it that issues like childcare and equity concerns will not be the most common priorities cited on the surveys, but that doesn't mean they aren't concerns for the union as a whole. They are important issues.

Member: We need to hear from specific departments. Nursing has major problems. We need to deal specifically with those issues.

Member: There was a lot to say, that we couldn't include in the survey. Can we have a more detailed discussion?

Kyle (BT): We are going to have more focused surveys. On CCSP, qualifications, health benefits.

Mike (Chief Steward Unit 2): Where are people at with the class size suggestion?

We have been asking for a class size report from Faculty Relations. We haven't got that report from them. If we were to achieve smaller class sizes than we would be creating more positions for our members.

Member: When I was on the BT, they still wouldn't provide all the requested information when we were in bargaining. And please consult the committees (that work with the employer) before notice to bargain happens, because those committees are shut down at that point.

Member: As the surveys show, the appointment process is a real problem. Changes in qualifications is a key problem. We need to lengthen Incumbency. On CSSP: we need to get them to actually hire through the process. They know they are going to need to hire people but they are not posting the positions. It's a very good program but it needs to be more enforceable.

NRAs for the CSSP need to go out to the department. Automatic conversions based on seniority should be our demand. To control tutorial class size, it would be good for Unit 2 TAs and also Unit 2 CDs. I have concerns about academic dishonesty cases. If students have signed the form acknowledging plagiarism, they should be blocked from doing course evaluations (not just for that course, but from that course director's other courses). We should have ability to block them from taking another course with us. Childcare needs funding, clearly.

Member: A couple things that we haven't talked about. Conversions, the two streams – professorial and teaching. We need to push for more professorial stream appointments. We need a lot more. The pool is deep. Another issue, don't know if we have discussed it, to push for support for research intensive contract faculty. There are a bunch of other Unit 2 members with research grants and projects, external funds. We should get automatic research release. That should be beyond the four that we have in the CA. We should push for more support for research intensive contract faculty. After all, it is good for the university.

Push for mental health benefits. There is attention to that. We need mental health supports. YUSA and YUFA have unlimited counselling support.

Kyle (BT): In the sciences, there are very large first and second year courses. We should match YUFA workload language. We should be demanding more for those large sized classes as the CD. We are supervising large classes with only a small number of marker/graders. We should be focused on lecture or class size, not just tutorial size.

Member: In terms of research leaves. Perhaps we could work toward automatic research leaves for Contract Faculty, based on research productivity.

Member: Research leave – right now we have four. One is to help a person finish their PhD. But the form requires a person to have an external person judge the project. This is absurd. It's a PhD! A supervisor should be enough. But we need to be careful. The point of the leave is to allow for research. We shouldn't require research to get the leave. Many contract faculty don't have the resources and time and support to do the research.

Member: I understand the difficulties around this. But we are doing labour for free for the university. We don't get paid for our research. We need to get compensation for members. Keep those 4 research release. Get four more. Plus introduce additional mechanism for research support.

Member: We should move forward with focus groups on these particular issues.

Maria (BT): A focus group on equity issues would be very useful. Forms requiring signature of the chair can be a problem, if members are facing problems in their departments.

Member: Different departments and different faculties understand and use TAs and T2 (lab demonstrators) very differently. The CA is vague about the role and responsibilities and workload of T2s. Different qualifications are posted for the same work depending on whether it is posted in Unit 1 or 2.

Member: We should be careful about research leave ideas. We should have a meeting of committee members. For the BT to hear from the committees to find about the issues that emerge.

Member: On the class size issues: triggers are in the CA about when marker/graders are assigned. We have the language, but we need to defend the language as it exists. We need to put the employer on notice. Also get rid of the automatic mediation process.

Kyle (BT): The employer does not respond to step 4 grievances. They are supposed to respond to step 4 in 21 days, but they do not. We then schedule mediation. In practical terms, mediation is the step we have to get some response. If they all went to arbitration, then it would be costly. And members would be stuck in long arbitration process.

Member: Grievance process: Their response is getting longer and longer. I don't think the grievance response is working for our members. They are under immense response to settle in arbitration. We can bargain, but if we do not defend our current language then we are in trouble. We need to figure out our internal process about grievances, mediation and arbitration.

Member: We have to be thinking about the Markham campus. There are more and more CUPE exempt appointments here [Keele campus]. We need to ensure that those are CUPE jobs [in Markham].

Member: I'm concerned about housing issues and especially for members nearing retire. Why don't we think about building a cooperative retirement housing building? There are life course issues. There is a Unit 2 cohort moving toward retirement. We should think about the housing challenges. Why don't we build a building?

Member: Markham campus comes up at Senate all the time. But we don't get to discuss labour relations. For YUFA it will be optional to teach in Markham. They may not want to go there. It could become a contract faculty ghetto. But we also need to ensure that they aren't CUPE-exempt positions.

Member: A few things: 1) Class size – most classrooms don't actually fit the 30 students. Fire code. Health and safety. They sometimes just add random seats at the back. 2) Courses cancelled. We need better compensation. 3) Great to increase conversions. But the full-time hiring process needs to be accountable to CUPE. External candidates are being hired. CUPE members not even interviewed. They

are not considering CUPE members. We need a percentage of tenure-track hires. 4) Student evaluations are being used, but they are highly problematic. Poor sample size, weak information.

Kyle (BT): Markham campus – We are consulting with lawyers to think about our scope clause and to know our status. We should be ok but we are looking into it.

Member: Can we file a human rights complaint about the student evaluations? We should get rid of them.

Member: We need to address CLAs. They need to stop. They are used to take our work.

3) Mobilization discussion:

Murray (BT): It's important to recognize that a good collective agreement is not going to be won strictly by the Bargaining Team. We don't win by simply having a clever or hardworking BT or a bunch of good bargaining proposals. We will only win by having members involved and being mobilized.

My goal, and I think it should be our collective goal, is to be mobilized in Unit 2 so that our Unit is strong enough to go on strike and wage a strike on our own. I fully support working in solidarity with the other units, but if we want to get a better collective agreement for unit 2 then Unit 2 members should be strong enough and mobilized enough to fight for it. We should be thinking about how many Unit 2 members we would need to shut the university down. The goal isn't to go on strike. The goal is to be prepared to do so. That will put us in the position to get a better collective agreement which is our real goal.

The survey isn't just about getting information about bargaining issues, it isn't just about collecting member contact information, although both of those are important. It is a process. It is being in contact with members. It is about starting conversations about bargaining. It is about engaging and involving the wider membership.

Member: Why has the Unit 2 BT issue not been settled? I object to a 3 person BT team that would be all men. This has never happened in our local.

Mike (CSU2): We haven't been able to have the recount because we don't have any Election Officers. There was one vacancy and now the other one has quit. Is there anyone here willing to be an Election Officer? In terms of mobilization, if you are interested in being a Unit 2 steward, please let me know. At the start, all you need to do is be a conduit between the union and the members in your department. Be a point of contact for people in your department.

Member: I was going to bring this up too, the BT recount. What is happening here is very divisive and we need to focus on bargaining proposals.

Member: Coming from a different tact, we need to be conscious of our collegial governance. We need to think about where to assert ourselves into the institutions of the university and voting bodies. We need to make sure we have good people in the Senate and participating in Faculty Councils. We need members attending those meetings en masse.

Murray (BT): Please complete the bargaining survey if you haven't already. Please consider attending the bargaining prep workshop on Monday and Tuesday. If you're interested contact 3903bargaining@gmail.com. If you have any time to phone Unit 2 members, please speak to me.

The next Unit 2 meeting has not been scheduled, please keep track of events as they are posted on the CUPE 3903 website, the Unit 2 list and 3903 News.