



January 4, 2017

Dear Member of Unit 1,

Once again our employer is not taking our demands seriously at the bargaining table.

Our collective agreement for Unit 1 (Instructors, TAs, Lab Demonstrators, Course Coordinators, Marker-Graders), expired on September 6th 2016. In preparation for negotiating our new collective agreement, Unit 1 members elected a Bargaining Committee in October 2015, surveyed the membership in January, and compiled and ratified priorities at membership meeting in the Spring.

Since then, the Unit 1 Bargaining Committee has been diligently working to present language that addresses priorities and concerns raised by members in the January 2016 membership survey. The BC met with the employer nine times between September 1st and December 16, 2016. To date, little progress has been made at the bargaining table. We have been forced to fight off a set of concessions that would make our work in Unit even more precarious. It is quite difficult to negotiate improvements to our collective agreement if much time is spent fending off proposals upsetting one of the top priorities indicated in the survey – job security.

Conciliation

This is why the Executive, at the recommendation of the Unit 1 Bargaining Committee, applied for conciliation. When negotiations come to an impasse, either party can request the Ministry of Labour to appoint a conciliator to mediate between the two sides, aiding to bring them closer together. Conciliation is legally necessary before a strike or lockout can occur. The date when Unit 1 will be in **conciliation is January 10 and 11th**.

Strike vote

In order to get an acceptable collective agreement we need to pressure the employer to take our proposals seriously. A strike vote, just like the conciliation process, is a legal step in order for a strike to happen. It gives a mandate to the union to call for a strike if situation demands it. *A yes vote does not necessarily mean the union will go on strike, and a no vote doesn't mean we will definitely avoid a strike.* A high yes vote gives the union strength at the bargaining table and the employer an incentive to make a movement on issues that are important to us. For more see <http://cupe4207bargaining.ca/faq-items/about-a-strike-vote/>

According to our bylaws, the process of giving the union to call a strike if necessary, takes two days. First a Special General Membership Meeting takes place and then a full day is reserved for a strike vote.

Special GMM and Strike Vote

- A Special General Membership Meeting has been scheduled for **Wednesday, January 18, at 5:00 PM in the Pond Inlet for the sole purpose of discussing a Unit 1 strike vote.** At this Special GMM the bargaining team will provide an update on the outcome of conciliation, the strike vote and its role in negotiating an acceptable collective agreement will be discussed.
- A subsequent strike vote will be held the whole day on **January 19th, from 9 am to 8 pm** at table in Mackenzie Chown A hallway.

Who can vote?

Any member in good standing is eligible to vote. If your name is on the latest seniority list you are eligible to vote. You do not have to hold an appointment in Winter in order to vote. If you have been hired for a Unit 1 work after the current seniority list was compiled, you can still cast a vote. We will verify with the employer your membership status.

What to bring as an ID?

Bring your student card or your Brock staff card. In case you do not bring any of these, any photo ID is acceptable.

For more information about a strike, how can you get involved to mobilize members, what is expected from you should there be a strike, how a potential strike can affect your work, etc., visit <http://cupe4207bargaining.ca/faq/>

The Bargaining and Executive Committees unanimously recommend members to give their union a strong strike mandate. As precarious academic workers we have much to desire to make our working and learning conditions better. Only when united behind our proposals can we defend what we have won in the past and fight for a #BetterBrock. All members are strongly encouraged to attend the Special GMM on January 18th, if they are able to do so.

In solidarity,

The CUPE 4207 Executive and Bargaining Committees

The Core Issues

Job security: While two concessions were taken off the table* the employer is not willing to move on one substantial hit to instructors' job security. We are fighting against the employer's proposal to grant PhD students preference for instructor jobs. This highly aggressive move by the employer intends to divide our members and weaken our union. We must defend our instructor members' jobs and pressure the university to deliver their promises of teaching experience to doctoral students without causing deliberate job losses.

In response to this concession, which prioritizes some members at the expense of others, Unit 1 members worked to develop a counter-proposal that requires a guaranteed position of one 0.5 credit course to PhD students who need teaching experience. In other words, we have proposed a viable solution that does not hurt instructors and helps graduate student members in their doctoral programs.

This could be easily achieved by splitting large courses into sections, creating thus more instructor jobs. Although the employer seemed to entertain this suggestion, they ultimately rejected it.

* In exchange for us dropping a number of our lower priority proposals (ex: Senate representation, time changes to the grievance procedure, personalized mail slots for every member, and others).

Wages: Our wages for TAs and for Instructors are well below those at other Ontario universities. Instructors at Brock earn a full \$10,000 less than instructors at York. TAs and Lab demonstrators earn on average \$5 less an hour than their counterparts at Ontario universities. This amounts to a loss of \$600 per term for 120 hours of work!

Benefits: We have minimal benefits (only minimal dental coverage) for our members who are not graduate students (about half of our membership). Again, this puts us behind academic workers at other Ontario universities. The university boasts about paying up to 100% of the employee health plan premiums, but not for its frontline academic workers – our members. This is a disgrace; it's the highest time for the employer to do the right thing and include our members in a health plan!

We are seeking **tuition assistance** for our graduate student members – a guaranteed payment of the equivalent of a 60 hour appointment if they applied for work and no work was found, which is especially acute in the Spring/Summer period.

Statutory Holidays: The employer also refuses our members Statutory Holiday pay. A basic provision under the Employment Standards Act continues to elude Brock University, declared one of the top employers in Niagara/Hamilton region.