

Who is a member of the Union?

CUPE local 2626 represents Teaching and Research Assistants, Markers, Tutors, Lab Monitors, Demonstrators, Proctors and Students performing research from external funds or bursaries.

What is a Collective Agreement?

This is the contract between the Union and the Employer (the University administration). It includes things like wages, hours, working conditions, benefits, workers' rights, and procedures to be followed in settling disputes and grievances.

Why are we bargaining and what is collective bargaining anyway?

We are bargaining at this time because our current Collective Agreement expires on August 31st, 2010 and we are preparing to negotiate to modify and renew the contract. The collective bargaining process can take a long time or could happen very quickly. This is one of the reasons you (as a member of the Union) should keep up with what is happening with the bargaining. Here is a basic run-down of what can happen during collective bargaining.

Two teams of negotiators are selected, one chosen by CUPE 2626 members at the Annual General Assembly (the Bargaining Chair and the Bargaining Committee) and one chosen by the Chancellor for the University administration.

Both teams work on collecting feedback from those they represent about what issues or changes should be raised during negotiations. Each team presents a list of proposals in a document to the other team. Our proposals are ready and were based on our survey of all members and with the Bargaining mandate that was passed at the AGA. The two bargaining teams met on June 25th to exchange proposals, but the Employer failed to present proposals. Instead, they gave us a general idea of what they were seeking: no additional compensation at all for at least 2 years.

Beginning again in August, both teams will meet repeatedly to negotiate the proposals on the table. When an agreement is reached on a particular Article, they jointly approve specific

wording to modify the contract.

If all issues are resolved, the Bargaining Committee will explain to the members the modalities of the contract and recommend its acceptance by a ratification vote by CUPE members in a secret ballot vote.

However, if all issues cannot be resolved at any point during negotiations, a 3rd party conciliator may be brought into the bargaining process. This is called conciliation and it is a process that attempts to resolve the disputes through mediation and compromise to arrive at an agreement that is equally fair for both parties.

If still no agreement can be reached then negotiations may go to arbitration. This involves the intervention of a 3rd party whose decision is final and binding.

Who came up with all these proposals?

Last semester, a pre-bargaining team was appointed to prepare the Bargaining survey. From the results of the survey, a Bargaining mandate was created and was adopted at the last AGA.

What the proposals currently cover is job security, financial aid fund, benefits, holiday provisions, late payments, workload, wage increases, job posting, grievance procedure, and parental leave, among others.

The priorities for bargaining may need to change over the course of negotiations. Proposals shouldn't be added to the table late into the bargaining process but your feedback is still welcome along the way (bargaining@cupe2626.ca). Updates will be provided along the way via email and remember to visit the website often for updates (<http://www.cupe2626.ca/>).

Is a strike/lock-out inevitable?

NO

IF talks break down, at any point during the conciliation process, either side may request a

“No Board” from the Conciliator. The “No Board” then leads to a 17 day countdown to the date at which the Union is eligible to legally go on strike OR the Employer can legally lock us out.

Before the talks break down, the Union may call a strike vote to see what the membership wants and what issues, if any, would lead them to want to strike. If 50%+1 of the membership vote YES, the Union has a strong tool at the Bargaining Table because the Employer DOES NOT want a strike. This does not mean that there WILL be a strike. A strong YES vote shows the University that we are prepared to defend our proposals and that there is strong support for negotiating a better contract.

While a strike vote may sound alarming, it is not at all unusual. We have used it in the past to give our bargaining teams more leverage at the bargaining table. We were able to make significant gains that produced stronger contracts and better benefits to our members. Like the access to emergency financial aid, conference funds, and the tuition support bursary. Plus free parking during the weekends and holidays and a dental plan.

Please keep in mind that the Bargaining climate is ever changing this year, with the Government of Ontario’s wage restraint legislation.

Why should I care about all this? I'll be gone next year!

The gains and protections we win in this round of collective bargaining, combined with the results of collective bargaining efforts across other unions in all sectors, will have an impact on working conditions and wages in all sectors of the economy. So no matter where you end up, unionized or non-unionized, your wages, working conditions and benefits improve as a result of union efforts.