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CUPE 3906

CUPE 3906 Bargaining Bulletin #2

Unit 2: Sessional, MELD, and Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty

HAMILTON, ON — August 19, 2021

CUPE 3906's Unit 2 Bargaining Team met with their counterparts from the McMaster University Administration on three days this past week to begin this year's round of bargaining.

The Union's team presented a package that reflects the bargaining priorities that members approved earlier this summer. These priorities include: **1) Respect, Equity, and Inclusion; 2) Compensation; 3) Job Security; 4) Health and Wellbeing; 5) Workload; and 6) Professional Supports and Paid Training.**

The Union's package reflects and addresses the needs identified by the membership in survey taken earlier this year. The existence of Bill 124, a piece of legislation passed by the Ford government that restricts wages and compensation to a maximum of 1% will present a challenge to the bargaining team, though at this point **the Employer is not even offering union members a 1% total increase to compensation.**

A number of unions, including CUPE Ontario, are challenging the legislation, which we believe is a violation of workers' collective rights under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Over the first three days of bargaining, the parties were able to secure agreement on some smaller changes that will provide some benefit to the members, including improvements in the No Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment article, as well as in the Health and Safety article.

McMaster did not address many additional proposals, including those reflecting the membership's main priorities, in a meaningful way. "It was frustrating, to say the least," explained Sharoni Mitra, the president of CUPE 3906, adding that "McMaster seems content with the status quo, which sees precarious workers struggling for job security and left without many of the benefits and entitlements – such as access to a workplace pension – that virtually all of the members of the Employer's bargaining team enjoy."

"We hope that the Employer will find a way to meet us on our proposals," continued Mitra. "We expect the Employer to take seriously our proposals to improve both monetary and non-monetary language in the Collective Agreement. This round of bargaining is a chance for the Employer to demonstrate its concern and respect for its highly precarious workers."

Sessional Faculty work is notoriously precarious, with instructors often working at two or more postsecondary institutions to make ends meet. This precarity, along with the Employer's reliance on legislation that we believe is unconstitutional to suppress wages and deny well-deserved gains, will be a consistent challenge the Union will confront at the bargaining table.

"Our proposals reflect the pivotal work performed by Sessionals," said chief negotiator Brad Walchuk. "There's something fundamentally wrong with an institution that refuses to improve job security and provide basic entitlements for a group of highly-educated workers. We refuse to take 'that's not something we're prepared to agree to' from the Employer as its default answer to any proposal that will provide a meaningful gain"

The next bargaining dates with the Employer are scheduled for August 23rd, 25th, and 27th. For more information on how you can help with the bargaining support team, email bargainingsupport@cupe3906.org

Sessional Faculty, Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty, and MELD Sessional Faculty working at McMaster University comprise CUPE 3906's Unit 2. The current collective agreement expires on August 31.

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