

CUPE 3913

Teaching Assistants and Sessional Lecturers at the University of Guelph

Member Newsletter • Oct 2014

President's Update

It's been an incredibly active time at the Local since I was elected at the AGM in March. We have been steadily working through an exciting transitional period to modernise the Local. We've tackled a number of large projects in the past 6 months including an office renovation, major website update, benefits and Bylaws reviews, staff hiring, and the printing of our Collective Agreement.

At what is now the mid-point of my term, I'm working closely with the Executive Committee and Staff to prioritise our remaining goals and to finish the projects we have begun before our AGM in 2015. While there are still a number of significant challenges ahead, including a financial audit, I'm heartened by the support of our over 2500 members and the University community.

To that end, I'm incredibly appreciative of the effort, time, professionalism, and dedication that every member of the Executive Committee and Staff has shown throughout the past year. These large initiatives wouldn't have been possible without their ongoing dedication and support.

This is also a significant time in the Local's history. The 2014-15 academic year marks the Local's 20th Anniversary. It's a time to reflect on our past successes and failures and to build on the strong foundation that so many individuals have worked hard to establish.

This has made me mindful of what I will leave behind when my term is up in 2015 and what I hope will continue to be the bright future of our Local. In this spirit, I'd like to take a moment to urge you to consider getting more involved with CUPE Local 3913 by joining one of its committees.

We have a wide range of committees that allow members to participate in social activities and event planning, financial management, stewarding, Bylaws revisions, labour relations, bargaining and negotiations, and political advocacy.

We've worked hard to find ways for every member to participate either by joining one of our committees or by starting initiatives, campaigns, and caucuses of their own. If you're not sure where to start please come out to a General Membership Meeting (GMM), Executive Committee meeting, or simply drop by our office some time to chat.

For more specific information about how you can get involved, including a list of the Local's current committees, please visit cupe3913.on.ca/your-union/committees.

I hope to see you all at the GMM in October and wish you a safe and wonderful semester.

Cameron Kroetsch

President
CUPE Local 3913

General Membership Meeting

We will be holding a **General Membership Meeting** in **THRN 1307** on **Oct 29** from **4-6pm**. Since we did not have quorum at our S14 GMM, it's especially important that members attend this meeting. All current members of the Local will receive an email with information about the meeting approximately 1 week before hand.

Nov 10-19: Count Yourself In!

The University of Guelph will be conducting a **Diversity Matters Census** from Nov 10-19. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the Office of Diversity and Human Rights (formerly HREO) to collect data about the campus community and about the diversity of our membership. We encourage you to participate in the survey as the results will help us to better develop equity policies and procedures at the Local. More information will be sent to you directly from DHR in the coming weeks but we just wanted to give you a heads-up so that you will look out for the email.

Member Benefits

Updates to our benefits policies and procedures are coming along well.

We've just finished a series of changes that will ensure the speedier processing of claims by members. Of course, that means that there will be a transition process between the old and new systems. We appreciate everyone's patience as we fine-tune the process, train staff, and test the new system.

To that end, below is a summary of what has changed and what you should expect to see in the next month or two.

(1) Benefits will be done entirely in-house

We will be processing benefits directly out of our office. Apart from this transitional period, you should receive reimbursements very quickly in the future. Part of the delay during this transitional period has been negotiations with the Employer to use the University's direct deposit system. We're hoping that this will be much more convenient for members. Of course, there may be situations where this isn't possible and where paying by cheque will still need to happen from time to time, but overall we're excited about being able to streamline the process. We will provide a list of cutoff and pay dates to ensure that you are informed about how the process will work to ensure that your funds are deposited into your bank account as quickly as possible.

(2) There will no longer be a paper claim process

By the end of October we will be completely phasing out the paper claim process. All claims will be processed online and through a member login portal. We will still offer in-office support for this process, especially for any members who would like assistance in filling out the online form. There will be no exceptions made to this policy and old forms will not be accepted once we go online completely. If you have any questions, issues, or require an accommodation to complete a form, please contact us directly at benefits@cupe3913.on.ca to arrange an appointment with our Administrative Assistant.

(3) Member benefits will be capped

We have routinely exceeded the benefits amount provided to us by the University. As you can imagine, this is not a sustainable practice. The Finance Committee, after consulting

with the Executive Committee and receiving their approval, and as part of introducing a range of financial controls, has implemented a cap on the member benefits pool. We will be paying out a maximum of \$145,000 in benefits over the coming academic year. Any additional benefits amounts must be approved by members at an Annual or General Membership Meeting. To that end, we have far exceeded the pool allocated to us in the previous year and are no longer providing benefits for the period before September 01, 2014. If you have not already submitted claims for services before that date, you will not be able to do so.

(4) The benefit year will follow the academic year

Benefits will be processed based on the date that products were purchased or services performed and only in the current academic semester. Saving up your claim forms and submitting them at a later date will no longer be a valid method for submission. More information will be added to the Benefits section of the website detailing exactly how this process will be adjudicated as soon as it is available.

(5) The emergency benefits pool will continue to be frozen

As we outlined in an announcement made on our website on August 17, 2014, the emergency benefits pool will be frozen until we have met at our GMM to discuss the issue in detail. We will ask the membership for recommendations to implement regular and appropriate policies and procedures.

Office Renovations

We've almost completely finished our office renovations! This summer we updated the carpet, furniture, electrical, and signage. We're in the final stages of adding some splashes of colour and will be holding a series of open house events when we're completely finished. The new space features an area for the Executive Committee and Staff to work in as well as a comfortable member lounge area with a computer. Come by the office to visit anytime - we're happy for members to come by and hang out! As part of the new look and feel of our office we have recently adjusted our Office Hours. You will now be able to visit the office any time from **10am-4pm Mon to Thu**. While we will be in the office on Fridays, we'll mostly be in meetings and only available by chance or appointment.

New Website & Newsletter

Your Local has been working hard to ensure that our website is

user-friendly and up-to-date. We've been updating it over the past 2 semesters with important updates and information as it arises. We've had some positive feedback about this new regular method for communicating with members but also some suggestions that we renew the use of our newsletter. That's why you're also hearing from us in this method. The newsletter will be an update/recontextualisation of the posts from the month and a chance for members to get all of their information in one place. As a result, this month's newsletter is particularly long. In future, we hope to keep them to 1-2 pages. The best place to get immediate information about changes happening at the Local will be our website. Just visit the home page at cupe3913.on.ca and scroll through the recent posts.

Rewriting the Bylaws

As you may be aware, major and substantive changes to the Local's Bylaws have not

been made since their creation in 1995. The Bylaws Committee has been working diligently to modernise them and bring them in line with those that govern other locals in our sector. We will be presenting them to members for their review and consultation in either F14 or W15 with the aim of having them officially approved by CUPE National before our AGM.

Financial Audit

You may recall receiving a message from us during the summer about a financial audit. Just a brief update

to let you know that all members attending the Oct GMM will receive a presentation about the audit during the meeting and will have a chance to ask questions.