

CUPE 3913

Teaching Assistants and Sessional Lecturers at the University of Guelph

Member Newsletter

September 2016

Attend your Fall Membership Meeting

There's a lot happening at the union - come out to have your voice heard

Your annual **Fall Membership Meeting (FMM)** is happening on **Thursday, September 29 from 5-8pm** in the Lifetime Learning Centre (Room 1713). Click [here](#) for a campus map if you don't know where the LLC is located.

An agenda and location will be sent out by email about a week before the meeting. Agenda items will include:

- Simultaneous negotiations with **your employer** (the University of Guelph) and with **the Local's staff** (who are members of CUPE Local 1281)
 - By-elections for vacant positions
 - 2015-16 fiscal year report
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Get Ready to Fight for *your* Labour Rights

The Union has already started negotiating a new Collective Agreement

Your current **Collective Agreement** expired on August 31! This means that Local officers have begun negotiating a new contract on *your* behalf this Fall. Your Negotiating Committee has been working over the summer drafting, redrafting, and

refining proposals to bring to the Employer. The priorities that they used to shape these proposals were approved at your **Annual Membership Meeting (AMM)** which took place at the end of the Winter semester (March). Part of that approval process instructed the Negotiating Committee to look closely at the recent member survey to ensure that it considered issues that may not have been included at the AMM. Representatives from the Negotiating Committee have been meeting with the Employer over the summer months to deal with typographical and other minor errors in order to expedite the bargaining process. They have also introduced an electronic document exchange to simplify the bargaining process and to make it easier to track progress. The Employer has been cooperative about these minor issues and has worked with us to iron out the wrinkles so that both sides can exchange documents electronically.

The first face-to-face meeting with the Employer took place last week. Representatives from the Union met with the Employer to cover ground rules, make introductions, and set the tone for bargaining. We will be keeping the membership informed about the bargaining process - look for emails with more information about how to access confidential bargaining updates.

Here's a short summary of issues that we anticipate will be important during this round of negotiations:

- We have already received some pretty clear signals from the University that they plan to reduce the number of **Unit 2 (Sessional Lecturers) bargaining unit positions at our Guelph-Humber campus**
- Our member survey indicated that **benefits** and issues of **equity** (especially for international students) are among the most important concerns for our members and will be central to some of the proposals we put forward

Formal exchanges of bargaining proposals with your Employer, the University of Guelph, will begin in October. We plan to update members as much as possible and encourage you to watch the home page of our website for **regular updates** about the negotiating process (starting in October) and the progress we're making on your behalf. If you have any questions please contact the chair of our Negotiating Committee, your President, [Ashley Wilson](#). If you would like a chance to ask more detailed questions of the Negotiating Committee please come to our **Fall Membership Meeting (FMM) on Thursday, September 29**.

Benefits Pool Exhausted in August

Not all members were reimbursed for claims when benefits ran out

About 2 years ago your benefits moved from a completely manual process administered by a claims company (time consuming and expensive) to an online process administered by the Finance Committee. This was done so that we could internally audit the process and ensure that as much money was going to members as possible. This new process has made it much easier and faster for members to submit claims and receive their cheques but it has also come with some unexpected issues. The easier claims process has made benefits more accessible and this has driven the number of claims up significantly. While it's good that more members are benefiting, the pool will continue to be exhausted earlier and earlier in each Summer semester unless the Employer provides members with more money.

Our recent member survey sent a clear message to the Finance Committee that members wanted greater access to the pool and more benefits from the Employer. This past Summer, in response to that message, the Executive Committee **expanded benefits** to allow for greater access by all members. This resulted in the pool being exhausted a little earlier than some expected and caught some members off guard and by surprise.

This isn't something new or unexpected for members who have been around for a while. The Union has a fixed pool of money and that pool runs out every August. Even though the Finance Committee continues to update the Benefits Pool portion of the Local's website once per week and send out updates to members to let them know that they should submit their claims as soon as possible it's clear that, year after year, some members miss this important information before the pool has been exhausted.

We have to do a better job of communicating this information to our members. Members have come to **expect** their health expenses to be reimbursed (and rightfully so) even though the pool has not been increased significantly over the past two rounds of negotiations. With more demand and less money the pool will continue to be exhausted earlier and earlier in each academic year.

Not to worry - the Negotiating Committee plans to address this as a serious

bargaining issue when we go to the table this Fall and to demand that the Employer provide an adequate amount of money to meet the needs of our members.

As a result of the current situation some members submitted claims early in August that were not reimbursed.

The Finance Committee recently put a motion forward to the Executive Committee to help alleviate some concern for members who submitted benefits after the pool had been exhausted and has come up with the following solution:

- Members who submitted benefits after the pool had been exhausted will be eligible to spend next year's **maximum** on benefits from the previous year (but they will forfeit benefits for the 2016-17 year in order to pay for benefits from the 2015-16 year to ensure that next year's pool is not unduly depleted)

You will be contacted directly by the Finance Committee if you are a member whose benefits were not reimbursed as a result of the pool running out. If you have questions about this please contact the [Finance Committee](#) directly.

Please remember that we currently **receive a finite pool of money (\$145,000)** that we distribute on a first-to-claim basis over the academic year. The final deadline for the pool, every year, is **August 31** but the pool will almost always run out before then. If you want to be reimbursed then make sure that you submit your claims as soon as possible in the coming benefit year. For more information [visit the Benefits section of the Local's website](#) and keep your eye on the status of the Benefits Pool (visit the page on our website after you log in) so that you'll always know what to expect before submitting a claim.