

# News from NowHere

Year 31, Number 4  
Editor Gail Osachoff

***CUPE*3287**  
University of Saskatchewan Sessional Lecturers

## President's Message

For surely nearly everyone on the planet, 2020 has been a trying year – and CUPE 3287 is no exception. Just as most sessional lecturers have had to adapt to remote delivery of their courses, the Local has had to adapt to operating without a physical office, holding meetings via web conferencing, and forgoing in-person events, such as our traditional end-of-term banquet. Despite these challenges, I think we've adjusted rather well. I'd like to thank our Table Officers, our Executive Board, and our CUPE representative, Ann Iwanchuk, for the initiative and flexibility that they have shown in these new and challenging circumstances. In particular, I'd like to thank Gary Day from CUPE SK for his assistance in helping our membership meetings to run smoothly in Zoom.

As many of you know, our membership recently ratified an Offer to Settle that extends our current Collective Agreement, with some significant changes, through to September, 2021. (An overview of the changes can be found on our website: <https://3287.cupe.ca>.) This interim agreement offers some important pandemic-era protections for U of S sessional faculty in connection with Right of First Refusal (ROFR), teaching evaluations, and support for remote instruction. It also locks in a 2% wage increase, effective September, 2020, at all stipend levels. But it is far from a perfect document: There are many other important concerns that remain to be negotiated – in connection with job security, access to a pension plan, vision care, and many other things. Fortunately, however, the interim agreement commits both parties to re-enter collective bargaining

prior to September 1, 2021. In other words, we'll be back at the bargaining table seeking to negotiate a new collective agreement relatively soon.

One specific provision of the interim agreement is for the University to enter into discussions with CUPE 3287 geared towards negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on online instruction. An MOA of this sort was already part of our proposals prior to the suspension of collective bargaining for a new collective agreement back in April. This issue has gained new urgency, however, following the University's unilateral decision, announced in early July, to move instructors in courses offered through the Distance Education Unit, previously represented by the Administrative and Supervisory Personnel Association (ASPA), into CUPE 3287. Several individuals affected by this decision have reported to our Local its grievous effects – including massive pay cuts, loss of benefits, and uncertainty about future teaching appointments. If you have been negatively affected by this University "policy decision," please feel free to share your experiences with us: [cupe3287@gmail.com](mailto:cupe3287@gmail.com).

For those of you who have been affected by this change, please note that discussions between the University and CUPE 3287 regarding an MOA are now underway. (Simultaneously, this policy decision is also being grieved by ASPA, which complicates things. The final outcome of that grievance may not be known for a year or more.) In those discussions our Local is working to protect your interests. It is a basic CUPE principle that no one should be made worse off by joining a CUPE local. We are working to ensure that this remains true.

In other news, CUPE was recently learned that the University has unilaterally deemed that grants under the CUPE 3287 Professional Development Fund for equipment, software, and services in support of remote instruction constitute a taxable benefit. This means that members who received PD Fund grants for purchases related to remote will see tax deducted (up to nearly 40%!) on their paycheques. We are challenging this, and, if necessary, will be filing a grievance.

On a slightly cheerier note, the University announced in late October that employees will be given additional days off from Monday, December 21 to Thursday, December 24. Of course this makes very little difference to most sessional lecturers, who will be busy with grading and course preparations for the Winter term during that time. I've been able to confirm, however, that these extra days off mean that the usual five working day rule for submission of

grades following final exams will be suspended this year beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup>. So, if your last final exam falls within the five day prior to December 21, you apparently need not submit your grades until the University reopens in January. (You're probably not going to do that, but...you can if you want to.)

Lastly, let me encourage all members of CUPE 3287 to participate, via Zoom, in our Annual General Meeting to be held on December 7 starting at 4:00 PM. Your involvement is always important, of course, but it is especially important in the case of the AGM since we will be holding elections for several positions on our Executive. Zoom invitations have been sent to members via email and will be resent together with a reminder about the meeting as its date approaches. I hope to see you all there (virtually).

**Submitted by William Buschert**



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
December 7, 2020, 4:00 PM**

**Via Zoom  
(Meeting invitations circulated via email)**

**AGENDA**

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Roll Call of Officers
3. Reading of the Equality Statement (see reverse)
4. Adoption of Minutes, Fall Members' Meeting of October 19, 2020
5. Matters Arising from the Minutes
6. Secretary-Treasurer's Report
7. News and Communications Officer's Report
8. Correspondence & Communications
9. Executive Report
10. Elections: President, Recording Secretary, News and Communications Officer, Members-at-Large (up to five)
11. Elections: Trustee (1); Occupational Health Committee representative (1); Good and Welfare Committee (1)
12. Election: Delegates to Saskatoon & District Labour Council AGM (Date and format TBD)
13. Election: Delegates to CUPE SK Convention, (Date and format TBD)
14. New Business
15. Adjournment

## Equality Statement

Union solidarity is based on the principle that union members are equal and deserve mutual respect at all levels. Any behaviour that creates conflict prevents us from working together to strengthen our union.

As unionists, mutual respect, cooperation and understanding are our goals. We should neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Discriminatory speech or conduct which is racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic hurts and thereby divides us. So too, does discrimination on the basis of ability, age, class, religion, language and ethnic origin.

Sometimes discrimination takes the form of harassment. Harassment means using real or perceived power to abuse, devalue or humiliate. Harassment should not be treated as a joke. The uneasiness and resentment that it creates are not feelings that help us grow as a union.

Discrimination and harassment focus on characteristics that make us different; and they reduce our capacity to work together on shared concerns such as decent wages, safe working conditions, and justice in the workplace, society and in our union.

CUPE's policies and practices must reflect our commitment to equality. Members, staff and elected officers must be mindful that all persons deserve dignity, equality and respect.

## Union Positions Sought

### 1. For President

My name is William Buschert and I am seeking re-election as President of CUPE 3287. I've taught at the U of S since 2000 in the Department of Philosophy and since 2002 in the Department of Political Studies. I've had the privilege of serving our Local in a number of capacities over the years, including Member at Large, Parking Coordinator, Vice-President, and, since the 2018 AGM, as President. Despite some trying

circumstances – including the innumerable challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic – I think that I've done a good job of managing our Local's day to day operations and promoting the interests of its members over the last two years. That is ultimately for the membership to judge, however. My main pitch for re-election, though, is this: In mid-2021 we will again be entering into collective bargaining for our next Collective Agreement. Our collective bargaining process this past year was derailed by the pandemic, and while the interim agreement ratified in October provides some important protections to our

members (together with a 2% pay increase), there is still much that remains to be done. Amongst many other things, our members deserve better pay, better job protection, better health insurance coverage (including vision care), and the return of optional participation in the U of S Research Pension Plan. If re-elected, these will be my main priorities in the next round of negotiations, and I believe that I have the experience and, frankly, the temperament, to push for these priorities effectively in collective bargaining. There is, as I say, much that remains to be done and I would be honored to be able to continue to get things done for CUPE 3287.

## **2. For Member at Large**

I, Bill Gulka, wish to let my name stand for the position of Member at Large (MAL) on the CUPE 3287 Executive for the 2021 term. I have been a more or less active member of CUPE 3287 for a number of years. My home college is the College of Education, Department of Educational Administration. I have previously served as MAL, and currently represent CUPE 3287 on the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) Board. I have also been privileged to represent CUPE 3287 at a number of CUPE Saskatchewan conventions, Saskatoon and District Labor Council AGMs, Saskatchewan Federation of Labor conventions, and CUPE National conventions.

## **3. For News and Communications Officer**

I, Gail Osachoff, wish to continue as Editor of *News from NowHere*, the newsletter of CUPE 3287, and Coordinator of the Communications Committee. I have been the Editor for many years, but the position of Coordinator is relatively new.

My teaching area is English literature, with expertise in drama and Canadian Literature. More useful perhaps in terms of this position on the Executive is my interest and participation in local, provincial, and national politics for many years.

I have served as our union representative on the FEAP Board at the U of S, have been on our Contract Negotiation Committee for three agonizing times, and have attended provincial and national conventions as a delegate, but gone only twice to the Canadian Association of Labour Media conventions.

Just recently, I have renewed my membership in CALM, which will give me access to its resources to make our newsletter more informative.

I am proud to be a founding member of CUPE 3287.

## Professional Development Fund Recipients

Pearson Ahiahonu	Remote teaching equipment	500.00
Khajawa Ahmad	Bioinformatics Course	2,445.85
Rhonda Anderson	Remote teaching equipment	111.00
Ryan Banow	Remote teaching equipment	1,383.09
Patrick Braun	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
William Buschert	Remote teaching equipment	1,891.61
Xing (Emma) Chen	Tuition waiver	1,466.40
Hillary Colborne	Tuition waiver	688.50
Hillary Colborne	Materials for course	25.00
Tanis Crawford	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
Paul Gustafson	Textbooks	600.00
Mickey Jutras	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
Getahun Lombamo	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
Bryce Marcotte	Remote teaching equipment	1,500.00
Heather Newell	Remote teaching equipment	1,500.00
Terrance Pelletier	Tuition waiver	1,466.40
Frances Robson	Art materials	2,800.00
Sanders, Lee	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
Andrea Scerbe	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
Kirat Shukla	Tuition waiver	1,466.40
Tristan Taylor	Tuition Waiver	1,466.40
		<b>28,109.05</b>

## Getting To Know Jason Zorbas

### Interviewed by Gail Osachoff

Jason Zorbas has a PhD in history from the U of S as well as an MA and an Honours BA from Laurentian University. He started his PhD in 2000 and has been a Sessional Lecturer since January 2004. His area of expertise is Canadian diplomatic/political history. He has taught for a wide variety of universities, colleges and programs during the past 16 years.

As one who loves to teach (and loves to be paid for what he loves to do), Jason has numerous amusing stories to tell about his out-of-town experiences. He once stayed in a hotel where the staff left for the night, and he was the only person left in the hotel - overwhelmed with the thought that he was part of a Stephen King novel. Surviving that experience, he had a plane land right beside his car, although on the grass rather than on the highway as he was driving to work. On other occasions, he held a number of babies – but only one at a time – as their mothers wrote final exams in his classes. Teaching out-of-town classes has certainly given Jason the opportunity to get to know Saskatchewan and to meet many wonderful people.

Needing a treasurer, CUPE 3287 was lucky to acquire Jason's services a few years ago, and he has found it to be rewarding to be able to contribute to the well-being of sessional lecturers. He shares our overwhelming feeling of being undervalued by the university administrators and believes that they could do a better job of incorporating sessional lecturers into the academic life of the institution.

In his spare time, meagre as it is, Jason practises Kempo Karate and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu with his children. In regards to "Zorba the Greek," he has read the novel and seen the movie and recommends both.

## All About Rhonda Anderson

### An Interview by Bill Gulka

Rhonda has served as Secretary for the CUPE 3287 Executive since 2007, thirteen years. Her duties include taking care of the mail, correspondence, urging Executive members to do whatever it is that they are to do in a timely manner, keeping the minutes of Executive and Member Meetings, organizing the AGM, and "whatever the President wants you to do." Prior to assuming the Secretary position, she served as a Member at Large (MAL). Rhonda has devoted about 15 years of service to CUPE 3287 in addition to a number of years of union activity in pre-CUPE 3287 times.

Rhonda was born in Prince Albert. Her family relocated to Smeaton where she attended elementary school. Following completion of high school in Choiceland, Rhonda worked for a couple of years, and decided to pursue higher education. She attended the University of Saskatchewan where she obtained her BA (Hon) in English and Philosophy, followed by an MA in English. While working as a sessional for a few years, she completed an MA in Philosophy. Feeling the urge to further her education, she received a Leave of Absence from the University and the Union to complete a PhD in Philosophy at McMaster University,



returning to the University of Saskatchewan as a sessional lecturer.

At one time, there was no sessional union at the University of Saskatchewan. Sessional lecturers had no job security and academic injustices were common; working conditions were precarious. During the time she worked as a sessional lecturer, Rhonda started to become involved in union activities. She was part of this movement, voluntarily visiting sessionals on campus and encouraging them to attend meetings and support the creation of a union. Marches were organized to highlight the need for a sessional union. The sessional lecturers succeeded in forming a union, joining CUPE in 1989.

Rhonda noted that at the University, there are many faculty members who individually value the role and services of sessionals to the University's academic enterprise, how important they are to the University. At the wider university level, their situation could be described as one of precariousness. One change she indicated that would be helpful is for sessionals to become more involved in the affairs of the Union. Better working conditions for sessionals would also highlight their importance to the University.

Rhonda makes time for some leisure activity outside her academic and Union responsibilities. This takes the form of ball room dancing, an activity she quite enjoys, is quite good at, and which she has been doing for quite some time.

## Occupational Health Committee Report – November, 2020

1. There have been 220 reported incidents so far this year across campus. We typically average about 1 per day under normal conditions, so we are on track to reduce that average this year. There have been 17 "lost time" incidents compared to 43 usually, with forty days left in the year.
2. There have been 16 positive COVID tests on campus so far. There appeared to be a spike after Thanksgiving. When a positive test occurs, the work space is typically closed down for deep cleaning. The number one priority is to protect staff from further contagion. All staff are receiving regular and periodic COVID updates from the university by email.
3. LSC inspections are proceeding although at a reduced level. Many of these are being handled by Pat Hauser in Safety Resources.
4. Some facilities and services have reopened: Murray Library, Grad Studies, and the PAC Centre. Lower Place Riel remains closed.
5. Staff are encouraged to report concerns to their local safety committee, and they will be investigated.

**Report by Bill Rafoss**

## Canadian Labour News

Alas, we have missed World Teachers' Day on October 5 and World Pasta Day on October 25. We will do better next year.

Labour unions in Canada have confronted many problems in the last two months and have had some notable successes. Twenty-five cannabis workers at an Ottawa dispensary have become members of UFCW Local 1006A, workers at Pepsico Canada are “building a better life” in UFCW 175 and 633, and 27,500 federal public service workers (PSAC and CRA) signed a new collective agreement.

Unifor has been very busy. Its members at General Motors ratified a new contract, and 1,700 new and returning workers will have a revived truck assembly plant. Supporting the CRTC, Unifor insists that foreign internet giants be compelled to create, stream, and broadcast more Canadian content. It has protested the actions of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary during a peaceful picket by striking Dominion workers in St. John’s. The good news here is that those workers achieved their goal.

No university workers have been on strike, but CAUT has not been idle. It has condemned threats to teachers and unions in Columbia, it has added its voice to those in France that condemned the savage murder of a history teacher, and it has written to the President of Turkey protesting the jailing of a Carleton University doctoral student (along with dozens of other academics) for unknown reasons. It has intervened in a Supreme Court decision involving Access Copyright's imposition of tariffs on York University, a decision that could affect post-secondary teachers and students elsewhere. A second case (this one at the University of Toronto) involves the hiring and then the revoking of the job offer when a sitting judge with the Tax Court of Canada objected to the appointment. The judge happens to be a major donor to the university.

On the Saskatchewan front, SEIU-West has finally – after three and a half years – reached a tentative agreement with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations. Exhausted by the ordeal, Barbara Cape, president of this 11,500 member union, could not supply details since the two parties have 60 days to ratify. Bargaining lasted this long because the union refused the 3.5 per cent wage cut that the Sask Party government proposed in its 2016 budget.

The 10,000 members of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses had to wait a mere two and a half years for their tentative agreement. The *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* reported on November 24, that SUN president Tracy Zambory “heralded the announcement as good news amid the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

**Gail Osachoff  
(with help from CALM)**

## CHIRPS

Maude Barlow, Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, includes contract workers among those exploited by institutions that promote economic globalization:

“The 30-year promise that economic globalization would lift all boats has proven to be a contemptible lie, with three-quarters of the world's working age population now forming the precariat – part-time workers with no benefits or security. As well, people around the world know that uncontrolled corporate-led growth has led to the climate crisis that threatens all life on earth. The sides are being clearly drawn and the lies

exposed. In my view, the WTO is a discredited institution ready for the dustbin of history. A new day is waiting.”

*Monitor* (Nov - Dec 2019)

Here is a hazard of remote teaching that had not occurred to me. Joe Friesen reports:

“Canadian universities are warning professors that students enrolled online while living abroad in China and other countries may not be able to access materials that run afoul of domestic censorship and could have their internet activity monitored.

The restrictions could place a burden on professors to avoid some subjects or alter their teaching for students in some countries. Some universities are asking professors to be aware of the restrictions students may face and to be accommodating where necessary.

China, the largest source of international students at Canadian universities, restricts internet content, particularly information or views critical of its government.”

*The Globe and Mail*, (Sept.12, 2020)

The result might be self-censorship and a loss of academic freedom. But there is another danger. Forty per cent of international students at the U of S are from China. Since these students pay tuitions of almost three times that of domestic students, there might be pressure on us to encourage them to continue studying here by grading their work generously.

Using the numbers provided by Sara Birrell in *Sask Dispatch* (III, 4), I calculate that 11.5 students' tuition covers our wages. Thus, if

there are 50 students in a class, that leaves 38.5 student tuitions to cover infrastructure repairs, support staff, and administration. The purpose of her article is to bring to our attention the large student debts that result from high tuition. (U of S has the third highest tuitions in Canada.) Nevertheless, her remedy is one that we can support:

Cuts to administrative salaries and reductions in the number of high-level administrators would go a long way toward redistributing revenues to those whom universities cannot run without: students, faculty, and support staff.

Unemployed or poorly employed sessional lecturers and our students as well will be looking for jobs. Here is some advice: give up on a “traditional university education” and turn to Google.

“Tech companies are getting into education to try to make up for a lack of skilled workers in the new digital economy. Google...is offering a six-month career certificate that they are treating as equivalent to a four-year college degree. [and] the company's IT Professional Certificate will not only provide you with the training but also help you find a job with over 50 employers...all for the low cost of \$49 per month.”

*Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* (Sept. 8, 2020)

Didn't someone say that every cloud has a googlized silver lining!