

**2020 SUMMER UPDATE REPORT – LEAD SHOP STEWARD/LABOUR
RELATIONS OFFICER**

Sept 4th 2020

Greetings,

It has been an extremely busy summer! COVID has impacted our daily lives and our working community in countless ways. I hope you all had some opportunities to rest, take vacation or at minimum, enjoy a few long weekends.

Since March, Keith and I have been engaged in discussions with the College about COVID challenges and opportunities, ways of supporting our community, advocating for better communication from the College and pushing for the safe re-opening of our buildings and offices; while supporting the continuation of remote work. Some of these conversations have been beneficial for our members and some have also proven frustrating. We keep pushing College leadership and we remain committed to bringing forward your concerns and ensuring we receive answers. Please, don't hesitate to reach out if there are questions or concerns. If we don't know there are issues, we can't help and believe it when we tell you, management does not notify unions if there are issues...

We rely on the membership to bring forward concerns and as stated in my last CUPE ALL, if you need something, say something. Now is the time to speak up and ensure you and your colleagues are being heard. We need to support each other and ensure we are keeping each other safe. We need to, figuratively, keep 'kicking the shins of management' to get what we need, to get follow up responses to our questions and to hold them to account when they fail to respond. I know many work groups have done extremely well during COVID and have transited to remote work successfully. However, there are many issues that cropped up for others, either during remote work or for those who remained on campus. We are a diverse community and it is important for everyone to have a voice.

Unfortunately, we have also experienced layoffs in our CUPE community. While we have strong Collective Agreement language, the emotional impact of layoffs on those affected is important to focus on. While we have practice and procedure, it is important to remain mindful of the real people involved. The College decision to close departments and reduce workers created ripple affects of worry and fear, at a time when we were already reeling from COVID lockdown. CUPE 2081 always argues against layoffs but we acknowledge the College must address the deficit created. Please know, CUPE 2081 does not lay members off. This is the sole right of the College. Our role is to ensure the application and enforcement of member rights, as outlined in the Collective Agreement. CUPE does not identify areas for layoffs, we enforce seniority, alternate placement rights and advocate for member rights. This work has been my primary focus over the summer and will remain my primary focus in the coming weeks. Layoffs have not impacted our community in over a decade. With the turnover in HR and our own new stewards and executive members, it was important for me to ensure our stewards were well informed going into all meetings. I am extremely grateful for the commitment and professionalism, Jesse, Shirley and Shane have shown in answering questions and being available to members. While I often field the majority of questions, I can't be in every meeting. Without the support of these three, I wouldn't have been able to manage the workload alone. Thank you!

This summer, we completed the bargaining ratification process, implementation of retro-pay and conducted a member at large election: all while working remotely! This created a significant increased workload for me, but I remain committed to supporting our community to the best of my ability. We now have many new components of our Collective Agreement that need to be discussed with the Employer. As such, I anticipate a busier than usual fall and winter period. Daily work continues to include the anticipated daily business of the local: advocating for members to management, answering all member questions, supporting members in meetings or as needed, enforcing our Collective Agreement and ensuring I am connecting and communicating with everyone. There is much work yet to be done and with the arrival of the fall term, standing committee meetings that recess for the summer months, will now re-convene as well.

The work of getting us up and running for digital membership meetings is also underway, so stay tuned for more information. This will be a new practice for us but one that will also bring us squarely into the 21st Century. I am personally excited with the utilization of technology and we will likely see an increased amount of member participation. This is always good because decisions are made by those who participate, and we strongly believe we make the best decisions with high participation rates.

While the last 6 months have been some of the most challenging in my career, they have also been a source of pride: pride in our community, in all we've accomplished and the strength of our union. I am grateful for the many emails of thank you took the time to send. Humbled by your kind words and generosity of spirit. I am most proud of how we have rallied as a community, in the face of adversity, with unparalleled challenges and with much more distance to go. I remain committed to being a voice for those too afraid to speak up. I remain committed to fighting for those too scared to fight, and I thank each and everyone of you for all your hard work, dedication and support of each other. I also challenge our longer standing members to advocate and to be a source of support for newer members. To act as mentors and to advocate for them when needed. Especially, to advocate for our term and casual members who do not have all the protections of our Collective Agreement.

Together, we will come through this and I look forward to that day.

In Solidarity,

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