



March 28, 2022

PSEC and Public Sector collective bargaining in BC

Thank you to all those that filled out our Local's bargaining survey. The newly elected bargaining committee will meet soon to review the results and begin to identify and prioritize our issues for the upcoming round of collective bargaining.

One issue that was immediately clear from an initial review of the survey results is that the majority of our members are still not familiar with the Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat (PSEC) and the role that they play in Public Sector bargaining in BC. PSEC is a government agency that reports through to the Ministry of Finance and has numerous roles and responsibilities relating to Public Sector labour relations and compensation.

These links provide an overview of PSEC's responsibilities, their role in collective bargaining in the Public Sector in BC and a summary of the recent bargaining mandates:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/central-government-agencies/public-sector-employers-council-secretariat>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employers/public-sector-employers/public-sector-bargaining>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employers/public-sector-employers/public-sector-bargaining/mandates-and-agreements>

The applicable PSEC mandate is something that ALL Public Sector Unions in BC have to contend with in each round of Collective Agreement negotiations. These mandates have been in place for many years and we say, place limits on the ability of Unions to negotiate in fully free and expansive collective bargaining. To be clear, the term and general wage increase (GWI) during each round of bargaining are mandated and cannot be exceeded. NO tentative agreement reached that exceeds the terms of the PSEC mandate will be ratified by the government. There is no Public Sector Collective Agreement in BC that has exceeded a PSEC mandate, even after strike action.

Despite the restrictive nature of these PSEC mandates and the fact that the GWIs are set and are an unavoidable reality in Public Sector bargaining, our Local has had significant success in improving our Collective Agreements in recent rounds of bargaining. As examples, you will recall that we have significantly increased access to the Staff Pension Plan for our members, that we negotiated a 'Regular' employment status designation and with it access to regular hours of work and to benefits for hundreds more of our members, and that we negotiated better access to extended health benefits. As well we have negotiated improved modified work week (flex time) language and improved reclassification language, that has resulted in reclasses for huge numbers of our members. There are many more examples of notable improvements to our Collective Agreements resulting from the work of our successive bargaining committees.

It is these critical issues and this additional work that reflects the added value and work of our bargaining committees. It is also necessary that the University works with us and engages in meaningful negotiation on these areas that improve the terms and conditions of employment and working lives of our members.

This round of bargaining comes at an important time when costs are increasing and general inflation is rising. In anticipation of another PSEC mandate that will likely fall short of meeting the needs of our members, earlier this month we, with the other UBC CUPE Locals, wrote to the University to urge them to do what they can to influence the government when framing the upcoming bargaining mandate. This letter and the University's response are attached below this bulletin. We are encouraged by the University's acknowledgement of the current climate and reality for our members and by their commitment to work try to address these issues.

The work of Collective Bargaining is about to begin. Our bargaining committee, executive and all of our representatives will do our utmost to achieve the best possible renewed and revised Collective Agreement for our membership. We will keep you updated as bargaining commences and progresses.

Sincerely and in solidarity,



Dr. Santa J. Ono PhD FRSC FCAHS
President & Vice-Chancellor
University of British Columbia

Nancy McKenzie
Chair - Board of Governors
University of British Columbia

Via email: presidents.office@ubc.ca
board.secretariat@ubc.ca

March 3, 2022

Dear Dr. Ono and Ms. McKenzie:

As we do not often correspond directly with you, we wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the approach taken by the University towards our Union members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The work done to minimize negative employment consequences to our members has been appreciated, as was the collaborative approach taken in order to reach the temporary layoff and retention agreements.

That notwithstanding, the primary purpose of this letter is to convey to you on behalf of our respective memberships, comprising over 7,000 employees, the profound frustration with compensation levels for our members at the University.

It is incumbent on us to raise the issue of wages and compensation with you as our Collective Agreements expire in the coming months and as we plan and prepare for the upcoming round of Collective Bargaining. As you know, bargaining in the Public Sector in British Columbia is framed by the Provincial Ministry of Finance through the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) and the mandates that they impose on Employers and Unions. These mandates have not been beneficial to our members – over time our wages have increased at a level far below the rate of inflation. The austerity of these PSEC mandates have also prevented other components of employee compensation from remaining impactful. For example, extended health paramedical benefit levels have barely moved in more than twenty (20) years, greatly diminishing their utility.

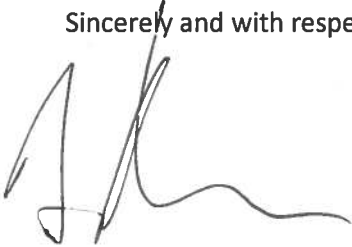
Recruitment issues are already prevalent at UBC and retention issues will soon follow if these issues are not addressed. The physical location of UBC's Point Grey Campus exacerbates these pressures, increasing the time and expense required for our members to commute to work. We do not need to be prescient to know that UBC's competitiveness for attracting talented and dedicated staff members will regress even further without meaningful increases to the remuneration rates at the University. Already reported associated impacts of increased workload, increased sick leave usage and injury rates, as well as decreased morale and productivity will also become more stark. Without change, the University will become a less desirable choice for workers of all vocations, and many will decide that they simply cannot afford to work at UBC. Another restrictive mandate from PSEC will further aggravate this situation.

The student experience and UBC's vision, purpose and values depend on the ability to employ the best Teaching Assistants and English Language Instructors, to offer well-maintained libraries and facilities and to provide a safe, welcoming living and learning environment. These qualities are provided by our members, your employees. Our memberships constitute a workforce that want to be able to continue to work at UBC. They are proud to work at the University and are loyal to it, as well as being accountable.

It is for these reasons that we call on you to lobby the Provincial Government for the necessary latitude to work to address compensation issues for our members at UBC and to impress upon them the urgency of this problem. We commit to working collaboratively with you and your delegates to fulfill this undertaking. The University community expects us and relies upon us to deliver on this responsibility.

We look forward to hearing from you and to future productive dialogue on this important issue.

Sincerely and with respect,



David Lance
President
CUPE Local 116



Phyllis Pearson
President
CUPE Local 2278



Chloe Martin-Cabanne
President
CUPE Local 2950

cc Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training
Karen Ranalletta, President, CUPE BC
UBC Human Resources
CUPE 116, 2278 & 2950 Executive Boards



March 4, 2022

David Lance	Phyllis Pearson	Chloe Martin-Cabanne
President	President	President
CUPE Local 116	CUPE Local 2278	CUPE Local 2950

Sent via email: davelance@cupe116.com; president@cupe2278.ca; president@cupe2950.ca

Dear David, Phyllis, and Chloe,

Thank you for your letter of March 3, 2022. I very much appreciate your comments with respect to our pandemic response. It was very important to the University that we act to preserve the connection our employees (your members) have to the University and do our best to assist them where possible with the many challenges COVID-19 brought. I also want to acknowledge the role each of your locals played in working with our Human Resources team to craft the right approach for the various groups of impacted employees.

With respect to upcoming rounds of collective bargaining, I appreciate your raising your concerns in a constructive and collaborative manner. I have spoken with Marcia Buchholz, who oversees all of UBC's collective bargaining teams, and I can assure you that she and I are very much alive to your concerns. As you can appreciate, there is a limit to what I, Marcia, or the Board Chair, can say to you about collective bargaining as we approach the expiry of your current agreements. Similarly, we are limited in what we share about our discussions with the provincial government. We are, like many employers, facing recruiting challenges for certain positions. We are keenly aware of this and the various contributing factors, which are not exclusive to wage competitiveness. During the mandate development process, we did participate in opportunities to provide feedback to the Public Sector Employers' Counsel Secretariat and the University Post-Secondary Employers' Association and expressed our view that a mandate that facilitates the flexibility to respond to our individual challenges was important. We know that our input was well-received and are hopeful that we will be able to respond meaningfully at the bargaining table to many of these challenges.

In recent rounds of bargaining, we have been able to negotiate renewed collective agreements with all of the CUPE locals that have demonstrated flexibility, creativity, and solutions to many issues raised by you on behalf of your members. In the last round, we were able to specifically address wage equity issues with Undergraduate Teaching Assistants, Research and Engineering Technicians, and Chan Centre



employees. I have every faith that our negotiating teams will approach this round with equal creativity and work collaboratively with you on the right solutions for your members within the parameters of the provincial government's mandate. You have worked with our Employee Relations team to develop collaborative and solutions-focused relationships that have facilitated many beneficial solutions to issues affecting your members in and out of bargaining. I have every expectation that these approaches will be central to the upcoming round of collective bargaining.

Thank you again for your letter and I particularly want to acknowledge your comments respecting the contributions made by your members to the University and convey my personal appreciation for the work performed by members of CUPE 116, CUPE 2278, and CUPE 2950 and the positive impact it has on the success of UBC.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Santa J. Ono'.

Santa J. Ono
President and Vice-Chancellor

Cc Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training
 Karen Ranalletta, President, CUPE BC
 Nancy McKenzie, Chair, Board of Governors, UBC
 Marcia Buchholz, Vice-President, Human Resources, UBC
 Mike Vizsolyi, Interim Executive Director, Employee & Labour Relations, Human Resources, UBC