

Dear Members,

I'm sure you are all as tired as me in hearing things like "what a crazy time this is", or in opening reports with "in these unprecedented time..." The reality is, as your Union, what we are facing from the employer is more of the same. We are still fighting to stay informed on the changes McMaster has planned for the near and distant future, let alone being involved in the decision-making process in order to ensure your needs and interests are met. Your grievance committee has been busy with a slew of group, individual, and policy grievances in various stages of the grievance process – only some of which have any relationship to COVID-19. Your Unit 2 bargaining team continues to face an employer which has stated it hopes for a mostly status-quo agreement. The problem is that status-quo job security, wages, and benefits are simply not tenable for most of our members.

I wish I could say that McMaster has used this time, along with their vast resources, to demonstrate that our members are valued and deserve support, but unfortunately, we have been disappointed with their responses as of late. Time and again, McMaster shows that it is committed to only providing the bare minimum of support and service to its workers.

Now is the time for all of our members to recognize that they are workers. This is how McMaster views you, first and foremost. As much as I, and I'm sure many of us, love academia, the reality is that McMaster views itself as a business and treats its employees in the same way as any business who values profits above all else. McMaster has the resources to provide more paid training to support online teaching, and it has the resources to reduce tuition, but it chooses not to. Instead, McMaster expects to maintain and even increase its profits. As students, educators, researchers, and employees, these actions (or lack thereof) should anger us all.

My time as president has been devoted to adapting to our operations to deal with COVID-19, supervising our staff and booked-off members, and working alongside the staff and executive in handling grievances, labour-relations, and our ongoing Unit 2 Collective Bargaining. We are also gearing up for the fall, including preparations for TA orientations, the Teaching and Learning Forum, and onboarding members under their benefits plans. I have also been working closely with the new Organizing Committee to get them coordinated, and I am very excited for the plans and initiatives they have begun.

I urge all of our members – not just Unit 2 – to support the Unit 2 bargaining team. They are facing an extremely difficult round of bargaining. If you are a sessional instructor, know that the U2 team has put in a tremendous amount of work so far, meeting twice a week for the last few months crafting their first pass on the new Collective Agreement. Reach out to us on social media, email us (president@cupe3906.org / mobilizer@cuper3906.org), and watch for our emails and communications. If you know a sessional, now is the time to let them know you are behind them. The team will need all of us to show up for them.

Thank you all for your patience, kindness, and hard work.

In solidarity

Nathan