

General Membership Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 24th, 2024

10:00am-1:00pm

Executive Committee

President:	Vic Wojciechowska (he/they)
Vice President:	Mason Fitzpatrick (he/him)
Vice President External:	Leah McGrath-Reynolds (they/them)
Secretary Treasurer:	Eric MacPherson (he/him)
Recording Secretary:	Rachelle Sabourin (she/they)
Lead Steward Unit I:	Rebecca DeWael (she/her)
Lead Steward Unit II:	Hamed Afshari (he/him)
Lead Steward Unit III:	Bitia Pournabari (she/her)
Health and Safety Officer:	Anastasia Soukhov (she/her)
Benefits & Advocacy Officer:	Kyle Morrison (he/him)
Equity Officer:	Sonia Hill (they/them)
International Officer:	Sarah Elshahat (she/her)
Undergraduate Officer	Adi Gelb (she/her)

Committee & Working Group Chairs

PAC Chair:	Vacant
Organizing Committee:	Wouter van den Berg (he/him) and Katie Mountjoy
Women and Gender Rights Committee:	Kusum Bhatta (she/her) and Niki Sadat-Afjeh (she/her)
Indigenous Solidarity:	Emily Howse-Hackl & Zahra Tootonsab
Communications Committee:	Jeffrey Arcand
Prisoners Solidarity:	Sonia Hill (they/them)
Tenants Solidarity:	Elliot Goodell Ugalde & Connor Galloway

Trustees

exp. Fall 2023 audit:	Wouter van der Berg (he/him)
exp. Fall 2024 audit:	Walter Cristofoli (he/him)
exp. Fall 2025 audit:	Zahra Tootonsab (she/her)

Staff

Staff Representative:	Brad Walchuk (he/him)
Staff Representative:	Mary Ellen Campbell (she/her)
Administrator Coordinator:	Francesca Brugnano (she/her)

Regrets:

Agenda

1. **Acknowledgment of Indigenous territory**
2. **Roll call of Officers & Introductions**
3. **Reading of the Equality Statement**
4. **Approval of the agenda**

Rachelle moves to approve the agenda

Eric Seconds

Eric moves to amend the agenda as follows:

Move items 12, 13 and 14 up the agenda to follow item 10, then return to items 11, 15, 16

Kyle Seconds

Motion Passes

Agenda is approved

5. **Reading of the minutes**

- a. <https://cupe3906.org/files/2024/01/CUPE3906-December-2023-GMM-Minutes.pdf>

Kyle moves to adopt the minutes

Eric seconds

Carries with one abstention

6. **Matters arising from the minutes**

7. **President's Report**

Vic: Thanks to everyone for joining our first GMM of 2024, [you can find my report online in the materials](#). To acknowledge some of our incredible organizing in 2023: Raise the floor, Prisoner's solidarity working group, Tenants solidarity working group, Indigenous solidarity working group, the local has also become a leader in local and global solidarity . . . I am looking forward to supporting the work of CUPE Local 3906 from near and far under the leadership of a strong and principled Executive. With this said, I regretfully announce my resignation from my position as President of CUPE Local 3906. It has been my great honour and privilege to serve this term as President for a union that has been much beloved to me since my undergraduate years at McMaster, and I will work closely with the interim President onboarding to carry out the remainder of the term until the end of March 2024.

8. **Secretary-Treasurer's Report**

Eric: Overview of financial records for December, as well as the 2022/23 audit. Local is doing well, we are well within our budget on all line items, we were planning on a large deficit this year, but we are on track for a smaller one than estimated. This fluctuates as we make a lot more money during the fall/winter semesters vs the summer. There are some suggestions in the audit that we will take on for the coming year. Looking forward to seeing how our funds can support bargaining and our other solidarity actions.

Myself and the 3 trustees met to audit 2022/23 books, this audit does not include the strike accounts as these had already been audited. These are more operational/normal expenses. Trustees were satisfied that money had been spent according to bylaws, and made a few corrections and suggestions. We'll be working on setting up these suggestions, including auto-transfers through our bank, and we'll

also implement some new software to assist in accounting. We've purchased a new computer for the office, mainly for Treasurer's purposes, but is also available to the local. This will make record keeping much easier and efficient.

9. Communications and bills

- a. [Keep Transit Public](#) - public delegations at City Hall on January 29th, 1 pm
- b. Hamilton-Centre Independent Riding Association meeting on February 6th, 6 pm
- c. Neptune Frost @ The Westdale, February 7, 6:30 pm - more info to come in a mailer soon. We're working on subsidizing or offering free tickets to members in need.

10. Executive Committee Report

- a. Available on website: <https://cupe3906.org/gmm-materials/>

11. Reports of committees and delegates

- a. Stewards Network (Chaired by: Bitu Pourbahari, Rebecca DeWael & Hamed Afshari)
- b. LMC
- c. Bylaws Committee (Chaired by: Mason Fitzpatrick)
- d. Equity Action Committee (Chaired by: Sonia Hill)
- e. International Committee (Chaired by: Sarah Elshahat)
- f. Communications Committee (Chaired by: Jeffrey Arcand)
- g. Women and Gender Rights Committee (Co-Chaired by: Kusum Bhatta & Niki Sadat Afjeh)
- h. Indigenous Solidarity Working Group (ISWG) (Co-Chaired by Emily Howse-Hackl & Zahra Tootonsab)

Zahra: we're working on a speakers panel and workshops this summer, thinking through how to strengthen our relationship to water and land, stay tuned for updates

- i. Raise the Floor (Chaired by: Ellie Bloomfield, Zahra Tootonsab)
- j. Tenant Solidarity Working Group (Chaired by: Elliot Goodell Ugalde & Connor Galloway)

Mason: the landlord has admitted the water is dangerous after a tenant was hospitalized, they are asking all residents to be gone for a week, we're working on a meeting and larger action coming soon

Kyle: is the individual planning to take legal action, and if so, how can we support them?

Mason: we did reimburse some legal funds, but we are happy to receive any suggestions

- k. Organizing Committee (Chaired by: Wouter van der Berg & Katie Mountjoy)
- l. Health & Safety Committee (Chaired by: Anastasia Soukhov)
- m. Benefits Committee (Chaired by: Kyle Morrison)

Kyle: changes to PDF for Unit 2 regarding tech items cap of \$200, as of Aug 31 we'll see how much has been spent and then using any surplus to members who made additional claims above \$200 and reimbursing as possible

- n. Prison Solidarity Working Group (PSWG) (Chaired by: Sonia Hill)
- o. Hamilton & District Labour Council (HDLC)

12. Nominations, elections, or installations (Brad chairing)

- a. [Dave Saunders Memorial School](#) Spring 2024 Delegates (3)

Vic nominates Rebecca

Eric nominates himself

Kyle nominates himself

Rebecca does not stand her nomination

If anyone is interested in the last spot, the executive is able to appoint someone outside of a GMM

- b. Unit 2 Bargaining Team (4) (and one alternate)

CUPE 3906 / Canadian Union of Public Employees

U2 members: Kyle, Clementine, Jeff Arcand, Hamed, Sara Swerdlyk, Herman, Leah, Ally B,
Alejandro eligible to vote (9)

Kyle nominates himself

Ally nominates herself

Jeff nominates himself

Alejandro nominates Sara Swerdlyk

Anastasia nominates herself (written in)

Sarah stands

Jeff elected alternate

Sara, Kyle, Ally and Anastasia Elected

- c. President - Interim (All exec positions are available for election at AGM in March)

Vic nominates Leah

Leah stands nomination

Leah elected

Position of VP external available as of tomorrow

13. Old business

14. New business

- a. Rebecca DeWael moves that CUPE Local 3906 spend up to \$3000 to support the planning and production of the event "Transnational Solidarity: A Panel on the Role and Position of International Students in the Higher Education System of Ontario", as proposed by local member Alejandro Franco Briones (See Appendix A)

Seconded by Rachelle

Carries with one abstention

- b. Stanley Ho moves that CUPE Local 3906 pass \$1000 for a table at the Chinese Worker Network dinner hosted by the Toronto and York Regional Labour Council on February 12, 2024. A letter with further details is attached (see Appendix B)
 - i. The union sponsorship package is in the amount of \$1000 for a table of 10 and a full-page ad in the program booklet (5.5"W x 8.5"H)

Seconded by Leah

Carries with one abstention

- c. Elliot Ugalde moves that CUPE Local 3906 pass \$600 to cover legal expenses incurred by the Tenant Solidarity Working Group this month.

Seconded by Sonia

Motion passes

- d. Vic Wojciechowska moves that CUPE Local 3906 passes up to \$2000 for a swag order to replenish sticker supplies.

Seconded by Rebecca

Motion passes

Quorum lost

15. Good of the Union

Leah: just want to remind folks about the upcoming Conflict Resolution course happening during reading week <https://cupe.ca/mrm-union-education/event/7104>

16. Adjournment

Rachelle motions to adjourn

Mason seconds

Motion passes

Appendix A

Event Proposal: *Transnational Solidarity: A Panel on the Role and Position of International Students in the Higher Education System of Ontario*

Summary

I (Alejandro Franco Briones) will organize a 2-hour long, hybrid talk with experts and experienced scholars that can offer a vision of the issues and conditions that international students face as workers and intellectuals when participating in the Canadian higher education system. I will facilitate a conversation among experts with the purpose of thinking further on ways to integrate the international student as individuals and communities to the struggles for fair wages for all TAs and RAs-In-Lieu, and to integrate CUPE's actions towards ameliorating the negative consequences of the neglect which international students face, often affecting their ability to study, but, sometimes also profoundly compromising their mental and physical health as well as their financial well-being.

This conversation has the intention to map the abstractions governing the educational institutions that rely on international student labour and market – like McMaster – and give a sense of the difficulties that students from abroad face when clashing against the institutionalized reality of profit-driven Universities. Some fundamental questions I would like to consider are:

- What are international students gaining from degrees of so-called prestigious institutions like McMaster?
- How can we explain that Canadian institutions – like McMaster – to be interested in capturing international students' presence but fail to provide a context that will allow them to thrive?
- In a context where people are atomized into ephemeral and fragmented lives – like immigrants, students, and intellectual workers – how can we understand our rights, strengths, and vulnerabilities better?
- How can we create solidarity amongst domestic and international students that are not mediated by McMaster's institutional framework and be more conducive to organisation, mutual aid, and care?
- What, precisely, can CUPE do to support international students?

Introduction

From the start of 2024, aspiring international students will have to show bank accounts with \$20,635 (CAD) instead of the \$10,000 that has been in place for two decades as required savings, in addition to paying for travel and tuition. The reasoning behind this new policy offered by Canadian immigration agencies is to align the economic ability of prospective students with the realities of costs of living in the country without being misled by educational institutions. For example, McMaster claimed that the cost of living in Hamilton in 2018 was more or less \$ 12,000, when it is, actually, much higher. International students are drawn into the Canadian academic system with inaccurate information, which presents major problems of credibility facing Canadian higher education.

Some sector of Canadian public argue that Universities are “the diploma equivalent of puppy mills.” Thus, the experience of international students is portrayed by media more like an immigration pathway to Canada rather than a substantial educational experience and, therefore, extremely politicized. Similarly, in major cities, the deep housing crisis has led to the rise of xenophobia; in this context, international students have been used as scapegoats for the rise of rent and the lack of access to housing options endangering and limiting the lives of students from abroad.

Tuition for undergraduate international students is not regulated and is often the site of abuse from universities. For example, McMaster undergraduate international students pay 4 times more in tuition than domestic students. Regardless of being major sources of income and profit of the university, international students’ needs, and presence appear erased from campus beyond the occasional email, potlucks, and trivia nights. The centre for assistance for international students is understaffed and under-prepared for the emergencies and problems that international students face.

Last year, in the middle of a TA strike, McMaster announced their housing project targeting students from outside the city. The housing units that McMaster profits from are now inhabited by many international students. The units are rented at rates that can only be described as exploitative; specially if we take into consideration that international students may come from a financial reality that is vastly different from Canada and the lack of context of newcomers to understand the rent market in a new city.

One of the major lessons learned at the TA strike to CUPE members is the key role that international students play in the success of a strike given the conditions of Canadian educational system. On the one hand, understanding the vulnerabilities of international students will allow more participation in the strike and avoid fractures, where (cultural and political) difference creates insurmountable tensions. On the other hand, and more importantly, the experience that international students bring to the table is a resource that can be used in the Canadian context to benefit all kinds of struggles, including those of interest to the union.

Details & Budget

- The tentative date for the panel is March 22nd, 2024, at 6:00 PM. The location will be McMaster University Campus (specifics TBD).
- There will be four panelists plus a moderator.
- We expect to have between 40 to 70 people in-person.

Budget Item	Quantity	Allocated per Item	Cost
Speaker Rate	5	\$ 500.00	\$ 2500.00
Transport Rate	2	\$ 27.20	\$ 54.40
Refreshments	1	\$ 300ish	\$ 300 ~
Total:	\$ 3000.00		

Appendix B

December 12, 2023

RE: Invitation to Support the Chinese Workers Network Lunar New Year Banquet

Dear Union Leader,

CUPE 3906 / *Canadian Union of Public Employees*

I trust this letter finds you well. We extend our sincere gratitude for your past support and participation in the Chinese Workers Network's (CWN) Lunar New Year Banquet. Your commitment has been instrumental in making our event a success, and we truly appreciate your continued involvement. In 2023, we were honored to have 33 unions participate and purchase tables at our Lunar New Year Banquet. On February 25, 2024, we are excited to welcome Mayor Olivia Chow and her team to join us in celebrating the Year of the Dragon. The Lunar New Year Banquet serves not only as a festive occasion but also as an educational opportunity for Chinese union members to become actively engaged in the broader labor movement and electoral politics.

We would like to extend a special invitation to your union to participate once again and, if possible, increase your involvement in our dynamic and growing CWN. This event provides a unique platform for your union's self-identifying Chinese members to connect, share experiences, and be part of a larger community that advocates for workers' rights.

Consider joining us with your entire executive team to witness the incredible celebration and enjoy a sumptuous 10-course Chinese meal. To show our appreciation, every person at the banquet will receive a beautiful program booklet. This booklet can feature information about your local union, including details about who you represent, your union's mission, and opportunities for new members to join.

To facilitate your participation, we have outlined three sponsorship levels for your consideration:

1. \$1000 for a table of 10 and a full-page ad in the program booklet (5.5"W x 8.5"H)
2. \$950 for a table of 10 and a half-page ad (5.5"W x 4"H)
3. \$900 for a table of 10 with no ad.

Your support at any of these levels will contribute to the success of the event and further the goals of the Chinese Workers Network. We believe that this celebration will strengthen the bonds within the labor community and provide lasting benefits beyond the Lunar New Year.

We look forward to your positive response and hope to continue our partnership for this significant event. If you wish to purchase any tables, please contact Jennifer Huang at jhuang@labourcouncil.ca by February 12th, 2024.

Please note that all cheques should be written to Toronto & York Region Labour Council and should be mailed to our new office address. In the memo, please write "CWN Lunar Banquet Dinner 2024." Any graphics for the program booklet should be in PDF or 300 dpi JPEG. If you have any further questions or require any additional support, please also contact Jennifer at the above email address.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and we anticipate celebrating the Lunar New Year with you once again.

In solidarity,
Andria Babbington
President
Toronto & York Region Labour
Council
COPE 343

Kingsley Kwok
Co-Chair
Chinese Workers Network

CUPE 3906 / *Canadian Union of Public Employees*

Tania Liu
Co-Chair
Chinese Workers Network