



Annual Report: Lead Steward Unit 4

Submitted by Caleb Smolenaars (they/them)

Term served: January 2026 – March 2026

It has been a pleasure serving as your Lead Steward Unit 4 this year. Since being re-elected at a by-election in January after a few months away from the role, I've been working to support Unit 4 members in preparation for the implementation of our new Collective Agreement. During the bargaining process, much of my work centered on acting as a liaison between members, the Union, and the Employer; documenting workplace concerns; and of course, serving as the Chair of our Unit 4 Bargaining Team. Now that bargaining has concluded, I have been educating members and working closely with our staff to ensure the transition period is as seamless as possible.

Workplace Issues and Health & Safety

Throughout the year, I've worked closely with our CUPE Local 3906 staff, our CUPE National Representative, Employee/Labour Relations, and University Health & Safety to address concerns reported by members. These included:

- Health and safety hazards like flooding, mould, and insect infestations
- Harassment at work
- Statutory freeze violation complaints
- Concerns about reprisals and employer conduct

I encourage members to continue submitting UHS Hazard Reports to document health and safety hazards and reaching out to the future Lead Steward Unit 4 or our staff for support with workplace concerns.

Unit 4 Bargaining Support

During bargaining, many of the Lead Steward Unit 4 duties overlapped with the Bargaining Team and Contract Action Team (CAT). These included:

- Supporting member-facing actions at trainings and social events
- Creating and distributing promotional materials, including literature and swag
- Planning and implementing strategic actions like open letters and petitions
- Educating and mobilizing members

I encourage future Lead Stewards to continue working closely with future Bargaining Teams and the CAT to build strong relationships with members. We have the most power when all members are engaged and aware.

Committees

I have made participating in as many committees as possible a priority to support my role. The committees I have been a part of this year are:

- Communications Committee (elected Chair in December 2025)
- Grievance Committee
- Bylaws Committee
- Benefits Committee
- Palestine Solidarity Working Group
- Political Action Committee
- Unit 4 Bargaining Team (elected Chair in 202)
- Contract Action Team (CAT)

I have also made an effort to attend the events of other committees and collaborate with other campus organizations (eg. Students Against Austerity) as well. I encourage the next Lead Steward Unit 4 to continue participating in these committees whenever possible and any others they deem relevant to the role.

Education and Involvement

Over the past year, I have proudly delegate for CUPE Local 3906 at a number of conferences and conventions including:

- CUPE Ontario Convention
- CUPE National Convention
- Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee Conference
- Hamilton and District Labour Council Meetings

I have also been a representative for Local 3906 at events, rallies, and meetings with elected politicians.

Looking To The Future

Now that our Collective Agreement is ratified and implementation is ongoing, the next Lead Steward Unit 4 will need to recruit and hire Stewards, establish a Stewards Network, and prepare for our first ever CUPE 3906 orientation session at Residence Life August Training. The next Lead Steward Unit 4 should also enroll in grievance training courses through CUPE's Union Education program to ensure they are prepared for what's to come.

I sincerely hope that the next Lead Steward Unit 4 will also continue mobilizing around labour-adjacent issues impacting undergraduate and graduate student workers. Engagement and awareness are high right now because of cuts to OSAP and our union can play a role in fighting these cuts and all austerity at McMaster.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to serve as the first and third Lead Steward Unit

4! I hope to continue this work for another term, but regardless of who is our next Lead Steward Unit 4, I will be ready and willing to support them during the transition period. Let's keep fighting for fairness for Residence Life workers!

In solidarity,
Caleb Smolenaars (they/them)
Lead Steward Unit 4