

## **Special General Membership Meeting Minutes**

**Date: September 25th, 2024**

**Time 1pm**

### **Executive Committee**

President:	Leah McGrath-Reynolds (they/them)
Vice President:	Mason Fitzpatrick (he/him)
Vice President External:	Vacant
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 Pourbahari (she/her)
Health and Safety Officer:	Mohammad Rezaul Islam (he/him)
Benefits & Advocacy Officer:	Kyle Morrison (he/him)
Equity Officer:	Oluwakorede Ologun (he/him)
International Officer:	Kusum Bhatta (she/her)
Undergraduate Officer	Vacant

### **Committee & Working Group Chairs**

PAC Chair:	Vacant
Organizing Committee:	Wouter van den Berg & Katie Mountjoy
Women and Gender Rights Committee:	Kusum Bhatta
Indigenous Solidarity:	Emily Howse-Hackl
Communications Committee:	Jeffrey Arcand
Prisoners Solidarity:	Vacant
Raise the Floor:	Rand Clayton

### **Trustees**

exp. Fall 2024 audit:	Walter Cristofoli (he/him)
exp. Fall 2025 audit:	Zahra Tootonsab (she/her)
exp. Fall 2026 audit:	Stanley Ho

### **Staff**

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

**Regrets:** Bitia

## Agenda

1. **Acknowledgment of Indigenous territory**
2. **Reading of the Equality Statement**
3. **Approval of the Agenda**

*Rachelle Moves*

*Mason Seconds*

*Motion Passes*

### 4. **New Business (Election Overview)**

Leah: The election will run a little differently than in the past, last year we used Motion meetings for the AGM, but this year we will have the opportunity to hear from each candidate, a 2 minute motivation for their candidacy, and then a question & answer period, this is the first time we're doing this taking in feedback from last years meeting. We will vote after the meeting via Election Runner, an online platform that will come to your McMaster email so please check Spam/Quarantine folders, even though we flag it with the IT department they may still end up in other folders. You'll be able to vote in that platform, according to bylaws and the National constitution, we can't vote over Zoom so this is our best bet.

Brad: There's a link in the chat - [cupe3906.org/sgmm](https://cupe3906.org/sgmm) which has a copy of the procedures for today, we've been taking attendance so we know which folks attended and then we can send them a ballot. The ballots will take a bit of time to prepare, but will go out a few hours after the meeting, if you don't see the ballot later tonight, let me know. The website lists the q&a process, this is a new process, we have always had candidates give a 2min pitch, but based on feedback from the AGM we've included a question period, 4 questions per candidate, each candidate has 2 mins to answer, and so on. There's an order for the elections, which is also on the agenda. If you want to nominate yourself or someone else, we will call x 3 each round, you can raise your hand to nominate. If we have two or more people interested in the position we'll have a contested election. The ballot will contain all of the positions eligible, unless someone is acclaimed. You can only hold 1 position at a time. You could technically run for everything, but the first one you're elected for is the one you'll get, and can't run for other positions. You can be on the exec and also be on a committee. You can also nominate a scrutineer, they would be present to review the election results on your behalf. In order to be elected, you need the majority, with more than 2 people running it can get complicated but with election runner we can arrange for you to rank nominees. In the event of an absolute tie we can run another election. The ballot will have a list of names and arrows where you can arrange the candidates in order.

Mary Ellen: you also need to vote for at least two positions, which is part of the National constitution.

*Chair to Brad*

### 5. **Elections**

**Summary:**

**Acclaimed Positions:**

# **CUPE 3906** / *Canadian Union of Public Employees*

Vice President - Rand Clayton  
U4 Lead Steward - Caleb Smolenaars  
Undergraduate Officer - Elissa Cunningham  
Bylaws - Sadia Chowdury & Kyle Yu  
HDLC - Mitchell Lupa & Kusum Bhatta

## **Elections:**

President - Mason Fitzpatrick, Mahnaz Tajik  
VP External - Oluwadamilola Babatunde, Enrique Luna  
Treasurer - Mitchell Lupa, Saba Khorasani  
Recording Secretary - Bonnie Evans, Mabel Arellano  
Grievance Committee - Tim Fowler, Sadia Chowdury, Bonnie Evans

### **a. President**

Nominations:

**Mason Fitzpatrick** (also nominated by Caleb) - Stands

I'm a second year student in my master's labour studies, I've been the VP for almost a year now, when I ran at my first meeting I was nervous, but everyone has welcomed me and it's been great. My highlights for my work so far have been organizing the new bargaining unit at U4 and my work at 10 Bay, but frankly all the work I've done has been 'fun' stuff, organizing, which I've enjoyed but what I'm asking for as your president is faith that I can do the more tedious stuff as well. The paperwork, the meetings, the truth is McMaster is in a crisis right now, there's mold in the buildings, sessionals are in precarious contracts, and the university is using reactionary tactics like banning students for protesting. So if we want to put ourselves in a position to use this to be laser focused on bargaining. I want to use my ability to have one on one conversations and create unified collective action this year.

### **Q&A:**

Ori: Mason in your VP it seems to me that 3906 has been doing anything they can to make me and people like me feel excluded, and have been wasting resources on dividing the union rather than focusing on what's important. Would you change the focus to labour issues?

Mason: Thanks Ori. I believe very strongly in the democracy of our union and the idea that the position that we come together is the one we should arrive at and express publicly. I think we've done a good job and had tough conversations. There will be disagreement on these things, and I welcome that, but frankly we've done good job of navigating these conversations, and the democratic choice is expressed. If there's any doubts about the focus, I do lots of organizing, I take seriously that we can't disconnect the conditions in which we work with the greater economy and politics. Sometimes this causes divide, but it's extremely important.

Enrique: Mason, can you elaborate on how you will deal with the reactionary movement?

Mason: I think that we can see that McMaster is embracing reactionary tactics that have also happened at U of T and other places, in terms of banning protest. In that case, I think the best thing we can do is showing we're not afraid, the best thing we can do is not be intimidated, we will keep saying and doing what we know is right, that's how we deal, reactionaries are paper tigers, they'll talk and make statements but we have the power.

Ori: Would you support violence by any means also on campus?

Mason: I'm against the idea of violence itself, I don't think it's useful, sometimes it gets fetishized in left wing spaces, that's not at all what I'm advocating for. There are cases where things get labeled as violence, especially in response to state violence, and I don't accept these framings. If someone got arrested or harmed on a picket line and they protected themselves that's not violence. If someone intimidated our members at a meeting and we kicked them out of a meeting, that's not violence. This also doesn't mean we lie down.

Oluwadamilola: I'm concerned about the issue of including minorities and marginalized people, how do you plan to reach these populations through policies? What are the plans that you both have for different groups?

Mason: I think the best way to encourage people to get involved and make sure that voices are heard is to engage with as many people as possible with one on one conversations, by visiting classes, TA offices, emailing, by doing the work to get people involved. We need everybody on board to be strong. I often have this maxim I try to live by, that if you're in a position of leadership and start to blame the membership for anything, you have to see yourself as the culprit and need to make new plans for engagement, you have to show everyone they have a place in the union.

**Mahnaz Tajik** nominated by Sadia Chowdhury - Stands

Good afternoon friends, thank you for the opportunity to present my candidacy. Phd in medical sciences, did my masters here as well, a woman in engineering and health science including a commitment to inclusion and collective growth. CUPE represents a diverse group all facing challenges, as both a TA and international student I understand these struggles well, and as a previous position, I have taken leadership roles such as co-president in my GSA, and in my department, and mentoring international students in Mitacs, and working with the international student office as a navigator for new students. Back home I was a supervisor in a medical lab for 7 years, as a president I will focus on fair wages, improving working conditions, essential resources, and fostering an inclusive environment. I believe in amplifying the voices of all members in the union, with your support I'm excited to make this happen.

## Q&A:

Ori: would you support violence by any means also on campus?

Manhaz: No, there is no need for violence, we must talk and be democratic. I will do all work to keep the union and help people have their voice without any violence. I believe universities are not the place for violence, it's for resolving problems with talking and democracy.

Anonymous Q: how will you ensure CUPE 3906 remains a strong united voice for its members especially within issues of global politics?

Manhaz: I think for 3906 it's important to stay strong and unified, I will advocate to keep this, especially within global conflict. It's important for us to be a voice for people who need to be heard, and strongly supporting them. For that reason I believe the only thing that can help this is to work

together collaboratively and cooperatively to have this movement happen. For me, its important to stay in union with each other to resolve conflict.

Oluwadamilola: im concerned about the issue of including minorities and marginalized people, how do you plan to reach these populations through policies? What are the plans that you both have for different groups?

Manhaz: I think as an Iranian woman who is an international student, to strand for such a position, I would encourage international students and marginalized folks to take their rightful place in the union. Since 2019 I was a TA here, to be honest, I never attended CUPE events or ran for any positions, but this time, I believed there was time for change, especially for people who are international, women, its a time for them to stand and fight for their rights, and to get more familiar with CUPE and the facilities and resources provided by the union. I'm standing here to be proof that we can and must take ourselves to these positions.

## b. Vice President

Nominations:

**Rand Clayton (self) - Stands - Acclaimed**

Oluwadamilola Babatunde (nominated by Sadia C) - Does not stand

## c. Vice President External

Nominations:

**Oluwadamilola Babatunde (self) - Stands**

Thank you, its a privilege to be here. I'm a black scholar Master's student in English and Cultural studies and I'm running for this position because I believe the power of unions, and to fight for workers rights for all of us. I understand the importance of CUPE for strudents and workers. I'm in favour of fair wages, safe workplaces and given my experience in diverse work experiences and volunteering, I consider myself a great candidate. And if I win, my key priorities are to strengthen solidarity in the work place, to ensure fair treatment for al workers, benefits, resources, I will make sure we push for accountability from the university. I also champion equity and inclusion, as a black scholar I understand the importance of diversity in leadership, I want to ensure we are a safe and diverse place for all members of all communities. I am willing and ready to work with the president and ensure all of our policies and bylaws are accurate.

## Q&A:

Boyu: during the strike we got a lot of support from other locals and organizations, what plans do you have for the VPE to maintain these relationships and keep this support?

Oluwadamilola: I think it's a valid question, especially for our union. My focus as an international student and worker is advocating for policies that support social issues, climate justice, anti racism, gender equity, things that would help our union to be seen as part of the larger social change movement. One thing I've always advocated for is partnership and having to find a middle ground in which social issues can be settled amicably, I advocate for policies that support these social issues, and am willing to work with the president on these issues and ensure that the underrepresented and marginalized groups feel stronger and included. I believe in equality, everyone gets good grounds, to

be heard, to be treated the same.

**Enrique Luna** (self) - Stands

I've been part of the union as a steward in my department, I'm interested in this position to help the union make meaningful relationships outside of the university. I think we struggle with the same problems across institutions, and we need to use the same strategies. I think through VPE I will keep the union up to date on other labour movements in Hamilton. I will do good work - In terms of experience, I have experience with stewarding, none the less, I have learned a lot from labour studies and how labour works in Canada, and want to learn more. Thank you.

**Q&A:**

Boyu: during the strike we got a lot of support from other locals and organizations, what plans do you have for the VPE to maintain these relationships and keep this support?

Enrique: I will prioritize the support of 3906 by making sure I'm connected to the labour movement, I'd like to plan a flying squad that stays connected, I want to ensure our flying squads function properly, sometimes there is bad timing and although we have the resources to support other locals, there is no one available to support - so I want to make sure that these squads are ready to support and have the ability to participate and visit the different unions.

**d. Secretary Treasurer**

Nominations:

**Saba Khorasani** (nominated by Sadia C) - Stands

I'm happy to be here for this opportunity. I'm a Phd candidate in finance, with years of investor experience, strategic planning, and quantitative analysis. I have experience in financial planning and I believe my experience of modeling, budgeting, and risk management makes me perfectly qualified for this position. And the financial health of our union is important to fight for the rights of our members. I will prioritize accountability and transparency in showing how every dollar is connected to our members. I am committed to financial certifications to support our union and the needs of our members. I'm eager to bring my strategy and analytical skills to the position. I ask for your vote for the financial success of our union.

**Mitchell Lupa** (nominated by Eric) - Stands

I'm a first year MA labour studies student, I want to be treasurer for a few reasons, I grew up in a labour community, my parents met at OPSEU, my whole family has ties to the labour movement. Part of the reason I came to Mac and labour studies was in part to join this local. I've been very impressed by this local. I'm deeply committed to the labour movement, work is so central to our lives, so ensuring we have strong people to represent us is key. I spent the last two summers working at the union representing Hydro Works and Bruce power, part of my work there which was very tedious not unlike this position, including archiving and managing and developing databases. I hope those skills will apply, I've also had some brief instruction from the current treasurer. I think this is an important role and I'd be honoured to fill it.

*No questions submitted*

## e. Recording Secretary

Nominations:

**Bonnie Evans** (nominated by Mason) - Stands

As I've been involved with the union over the past year as a steward in labour studies, since I've joined I've been ready to get involved, including the CAT and through other union activities I've had some experience with the Recording Secretary duties. I was able to have a bit of 1 on 1 time with Mary Ellen and Rachelle to go over the position, and feel my commitment to the union is clear and hoping to get more involved, this is the final year of my MA so I'm looking for new ways to get involved. I've done project management in various industries, and currently manage drives and files for my supervisor, I feel up to the task and excited for it and hope you'll put your confidence in me.

**Mabel Arellano** (self) - Stands

I'm in the MA labour studies program, I also did an undergrad in labour at York U, in my work experience I worked for Workers United and Canada Council in research and communications, I have a lot of experience in database management and note taking. I've been to all leadership, negotiation meetings etc, I'm privy to technical requirements and accurate recordings. While I'm doing the work I want to be able to give input that I've gained from my experience, and also my involvement in the labour movement, and as a member of Acorn. I wanted to see however I can help, I want to help get members involved, and seeing where I'm needed to get involved. I'm also open to other positions. The admin part is where I have a lot of experience.

## Q&A:

Kusum: Mabel you said you've held a similar position, could you expand more on this work?

Mabel: I was the communications and research officer, so one part was backend website and social media platforms and campaigns, I would be a part of the meetings and take records, I've worked on several bargaining campaigns, and I would use that info to develop it into campaign strategies, newsletters, keeping members informed. and the research part was organizing, seeing new places that needed to be organized, so internal and mobilizing efforts.

## f. Unit 4 (Residence Life) Lead Steward

Nominations:

**Caleb Smolenaars** (nominated by Mason) - Stands - Acclaimed

## g. Undergraduate Officer

Nominations:

**Elissa Cunningham** (nominated by Caleb) - Stands - Acclaimed

*Chair to Mary Ellen*

## h. Grievance Committee Member

Nominations:

# **CUPE 3906** / Canadian Union of Public Employees

**Tim Fowler** (unable to attend - self) - Stands

*I have been a CUPE member for over 20 years, and have experience sitting on an academic local's executive. I currently sit on the steward's committee for 4207. I have extensive experience in grievance handling, mediation, and arbitration. I would very much like the opportunity to contribute to 3906 by giving my knowledge and experience to the grievance committee.*

**Sadia Chowdhury** (nominated by Oluwadamilola) - Stands

Thank you for the nomination. I'm a 3rd year Phd student, I am a TA, and I am interested in this committee as back home I worked with coordination teams and government and non government agencies. At Mac I have been involved in professional and social committees. I have lots of organizational skills, and have experience in working in compliance committees as part of my profession, and know how to be work through these cases and work confidentially. I'm a planner, I'm familiar with labour rights and the concepts that make this a better place, I think my experiences are helpful to understand and stay committed to this role.

## **Q&A:**

Boyu: In the past few years we have seen the repercussions if we protest on campus, people have faced retaliation on their employment, how would grievance committee member handle this?

Sadia: I think in such a situation its important to coordinate with the TAs and what they think, we need to hear about the members and how they're thinking

Saba: as part of the committee, what are the steps you plan to follow to in this particular area?

Sadia: I will follow the ethical stance, for transparency, I think communication is the way to build relationships, I will be open to suggestions and feedback from others.

Mabel: I appreciate what's been said about not taking the position lightly, because sometimes the interest of the person on that committee is not heard, because you may be competing with other committee members with different views, how can you ensure you wont be silenced? How will you balance the position of the local?

Sadia: I would review the work process and hear the complaint properly, and all communications, and how all legal issues are related, the committee is very important, I will hear from both sides and react in a neutral way to ensure the people are getting justice.

**Bonnie Evans** (self) - Stands

As a steward I've been part of the stewards meetings and grievances that have been brought forth across the committees and departments, this includes hours of work, pay discrepancies, its difficult to be a student in Hamilton and across the GTA, when you can't rely on a stable work environment it effects everyone we work with in this community. When it comes to the heart of the union the grievance process is really important and special to be able to back up our fellow members. I think it's beautiful extension of the stewardship role and be a part of this vital role. It would be an honour to take part and I would not take it lightly.

## **Q&A:**



Boyu: In the past few years we have seen the repercussions if we protest on campus, people have faced retaliation on their employment, how would grievance committee member handle this?

Bonnie: I appreciate the question and agree it's something we're seeing including members on this call who have been targeted for speaking out on this issue. Just to be clear, I would argue in most cases when this is happening, I think most cases are well covered and protected within the collective agreement, we already have established things and I would advocate for going through this binding agreement to see where we could find different avenues of recourse to get a student back into a position where they're comfortable working and getting paid. In a situation where even if that is successful but in a hostile situation with a grievance, this has happened before, I would look to the committees experience as well, and members who have demonstrated solidarity across these issues, we stand together its hard to be ignored.

Mabel: I appreciate what's been said about not taking the position lightly, because sometimes the interest of the person on that committee is not heard, because you may be competing with other committee members with different views, how can you ensure you wont be silenced? How will you balance the position of the local?

Bonnie: There are probably situations where there will be pressure, from folks at the university, especially when its your work at stake, and putting forth a grievance to go forward. I would really highlight that we all are the union and that the complainant is not alone. These cases are typically not unprecedented, I would emphasize the importance of standing up, but that there are plenty of times that the union has stood behind members that encounter these pressures, again I'll reference the PNG issues to folks participating in rightful protest and the union stood with them. Even with the strike, talking about Eric being a one man payroll, of folks holding up bus lines, that now you and I get to benefit from, this was won by holding steadfast against university pressure.

**i. 2 x Bylaws Committee Members**

Nominations:

**Sadia Chowdury** - Stands - Acclaimed

**Kyle Yu** (nominated by Boyu) - Stands - Acclaimed

**j. Unit 2 (Sessional Faculty) Bargaining Team Alternate**

*Not enough members present for election*

**k. 2 x HDLC delegates**

Nominations:

**Oluwakorede Ologun** (nominated by Eric) - *Left meeting, wasn't present to accept nominations*

**Mitchell Lupa** (self) - Stands - Acclaimed

**Kusum Bhatta** (self) - Stands - Acclaimed

*Rachelle and Eric appointed scrutineers*

**6. Adjournment**

# **CUPE 3906** / *Canadian Union of Public Employees*

*Chair to Leah*

Brad: Ballot will be arriving likely tonight or early tomorrow but it will take some time to create, and then you'll have 72 hours to vote

*Rachelle moves to adjourn*

*Mason seconds*

*Motion passes*