

CASUAL UNIT BARGAINING UPDATE #3

May 20, 2021

We're (finally) hitting the bargaining table!

A message from your USW Local 1998 Casual Unit Negotiating Committee

Are you a casual employee (i.e. a lifeguard, research assistant, lab technician, standardized patient, etc.) at the University of Toronto? Did you know that you are a unionized member of the USW Local 1998 Casual Unit? If the answer to those questions is yes, please keep reading. If the answer to those questions is no, please still keep reading. We need all of the support we can get. And we have some important updates to share with you!

Since the expiration of our current collective bargaining agreement (CBA) last July, the University and the Union have yet to reach a renegotiated settlement. Not for a lack of trying. Under normal circumstances, such delays would be frustrating and worrisome, but there is an added worry – and danger – to seeing such delays this past year. It should come as no surprise that the global pandemic has increased urgency for a renegotiated contract, especially for our members who are required to work on campus and/or the hundreds of members whose contracts were cancelled or not renewed.

In the fall of 2020, the Casual Unit Negotiating Committee met with the University to discuss a one-year contract freeze, an agreement that other groups on campus had successfully bargained. It was quickly decided, however, that a contract freeze was not in the best interests of our members who needed improvements quickly, such as paid sick days and job-protected COVID-19 leave. In December 2020, we let the University know that we wanted to move to full bargaining. To our dismay, our repeated requests went overlooked. Until recently.

In April 2021, our call was finally answered. The University notified us that they had struck a bargaining committee and were ready to begin the bargaining process. **The afternoon of May 25 will mark our first meeting with the University.** This also means it will be our first opportunity to provide safer and healthier working conditions for all casual employees at the University of Toronto. The Casual Unit Negotiating Committee understands the importance of this first meeting, and we are working diligently on a strategy to make this round of bargaining as effective as possible.

We understand the bargaining process can be perplexing at the best of times. But it's important that you're informed of our efforts, so let's break down the bargaining process into two simple steps. Step one is non-monetary asks, so things like improvements to the language in our CBA, the request for an internal job board, or the redefinition of what makes a "casual" worker. This will be the focus of our first meeting. Step two is monetary asks, i.e., paid sick days, wage increases, free access to Career Learning and Development courses, etc. As we progress in the stages of bargaining, there will be more updates on monetary asks to come.

For now, here are our key non-monetary bargaining asks:

1. Improvements to the language around discrimination and harassment
2. Eliminating a step in the grievance process to streamline the grievance procedure
3. Adding an article explicitly addressing vacation
4. Providing clarity around the definition of a "casual" employee

No "model" employer should feel comfortable relying on casual contracts where a significant group of employees are working with little job security or protection. Our bargaining position is that all workers at U of T, including our casual members, should have specific protections in their CBA aimed at reducing the precarity of casual employees' work environments, and we are eager to get to the bargaining table to negotiate a fair deal for our

members. We are also urging our members and others from the wider U of T community to actively show your support.

Here are some things you can do:

1. Remember: [There's Power in a Union!](#) Our strength lies in our collective voice.
2. Watch and share our [PrecarityU video](#) to your social media accounts; and
3. Sign up for our text messaging system so you don't miss a Bargaining update! **Text Casualunit to 32323**. Members will need to opt in in order to receive bargaining updates. Using your cell phone or mobile device text **Casualunit to 32323** and follow the instructions. Note: There is no cost to subscribe to the service, but subscribers are responsible for any messaging fees from their service provider.

Yours in solidarity,

USW Local 1998 Casual Unit Negotiating Committee