March 17, 2022.

Negotiations continue with the Victoria University administration for a new collective agreement. Although we have come to an agreement with the University on several language issues, as of today we have been unable to reach agreement on several issues important to members. We have not been able to reach agreement on language that would provide better protection against the contracting out of bargaining unit work. We have also not come to an agreement on language that would provide a transparent process for members to request a remote work arrangement. An agreement has not been reached on an expansion of collective agreement rights for our casual employee members.

**The University Wants Concessions**

Equally important as our efforts to improve the collective agreement are our efforts to resist the concessions the University is looking to win. The University wants to drastically cut the number of vacation days that we can carry forward into a new vacation year. Currently, without the permission of our manager we can carry forward the number of vacation days we accrue in a year plus five more vacation days. For example, our current collective agreement language allows an employee who accrues 25 vacation days in a year to carry forward 30 vacation days from one vacation year to another. The University wants to limit the number of vacation days we can carry forward to 10, no matter how many vacation days we accrue in a year.

The University also wants to eliminate daily overtime. With the elimination of daily overtime, if a member works, for instance, an hour of overtime one day, they would only be paid overtime wages for that hour if they work in that week an hour or more than they normally work in a week. We think that kind of arrangement would open the door to managers scheduling their employees’ start and end times day by day so that they would not go over the total hours they normally work in a week.

The University seeks to further limit the possibility of a member who is either temporarily or indefinitely laid off to exercise their seniority rights by displacing into another job. In addition to the current restrictions that limit which job a laid off member can displace into, the University wants to restrict displacement rights to jobs that are in the laid off member’s own department and to jobs where the member meets all the qualifications in the job description of the position into which they want to displace. Currently, a member who is laid off can displace into any job in the bargaining unit if it is in the same or lower pay band than the job from which they are being laid off, if they have more seniority than the incumbent and if they can do the job with 5 days of training and familiarization. It is commonplace for the University to hire people into jobs even though they do not meet all the qualifications for the job, but the University wants to make it harder for a laid off member to stay employed than it regularly is to get hired into a university job in the first place.

As painful as the implementation of a laid off member’s displacement rights can be under the current layoff provisions, those rights honour long time service and create complications for managers which can act as a deterrent to the implementation of layoffs. If we accept the University’s proposed changes to displacement rights, it will be much easier for the University to implement layoffs and we can reasonably expect that the University will implement more layoffs.

We expect to begin negotiating the monetary aspects of the collective agreement during the week of March 21. We should not assume that the University will be agreeable to the maximum amount of wage and benefit increases allowed by the Conservative government’s Bill 124.

**What We Need to Do**

In order to have the best chance to win the best possible financial increase, to have the best chance to win improvements in language provisions and to have the best chance of successfully resisting the University’s demands for concessions, we need to show our union solidarity and strength. The most effective way to do this is to use and display your union gear in the workplace, to vote in favour of a strike mandate and to talk to your colleagues about the importance of supporting the union bargaining team.

**Union Information & Solidarity Event**

**Date:** Thursday, March 17

**Times:** 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** On the sidewalk in front of the Goldring Building

**Join your bargaining team at the USW booth in front of the Goldring Building for an opportunity to ask questions, get information and pick up union swag.**

**Strike Mandate Vote**

As in previous rounds of collective bargaining, Victoria University USW members will have the opportunity to cast a ballot in a strike mandate vote and let the University administration know that they need to be serious about bargaining fair employment terms, including wage and benefit increases. Your “yes” vote will contribute to a strong strike mandate and it will give your negotiating team the right to call for job action, if necessary, as of 12:01 a.m. Saturday, March 31.

Your negotiating team will work hard to reach a settlement with the University without resorting to job action, but the University needs to know that the Union’s negotiating team has the support of the membership. You have the opportunity to show your support for your negotiating team by voting “Yes” on a strike mandate ballot.

**A strong strike mandate is essential in achieving a fair and reasonable collective agreement. Local 1998 has a long history of negotiating good contracts without calling a strike or even limited job action, but that has been accomplished with strong strike mandates.**

Our union colleagues at U of T recently won gains in their collective agreement. Their excellent results were, in part, due to the membership voting 90% in favour of a strike mandate. Let’s get an even better vote result here at Vic.

**Strike Mandate Vote**

**In-person Voting on the Vic Campus**

Please bring at least one piece of identification.

**Date:** Friday, March 18

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Location:** Old Vic, Alumni Hall

**Date:** Saturday, March 19

**Time:** 11:00a.m.– 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** Old Vic, Alumni Hall

**Online Voting**

**Date:** Monday, March 21

**Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 11:59 p.m.

Members who do not cast a ballot in person will be sent an email that includes a digital link for online voting.

If you are not receiving the Union’s email communications, please send an email to john.ankeman@usw1998.ca

The wording on the strike mandate ballot will read, “Are you in favour of giving the Negotiating Committee the right to call for job action, up to and including a strike, if necessary?”

**Join with your USW colleagues and use your vote to put the power of the membership behind your negotiating team. Vote “Yes” on March 18, 19 and 21.**

In solidarity,

John Ankenman, Chris Greenwood, Wanda Hughes, Tom DeSousa (USW Staff Representative) & Colleen Burke (USW Staff Representative)