

# STEELDRUM

USW1998 NEWSMAGAZINE

SPRING 2022 | Vol.20 No.1



## CASUAL BARGAINING UNDER BILL 124

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## COLLEEN BURKE'S FAREWELL

### After Serving Six Years as President

This is my last President's Message for the Steel Drum and I write it with mixed feelings.

In March, I will be stepping down as President and moving on to the position of USW International Staff Representative. I will be the Rep servicing Local 1998, so I'm not going far. It is a change in my office location and a change in responsibilities, but I will still have the same fundamental goal of supporting the members of this Union Local.

Over the past six and half years that I've been President, our Local has seen many changes and challenges. Together with the Executive, staff and union activists and volunteers, we have worked hard to meet them.

Our membership has grown by about 1000 members since June 2015 when I started. More recently, we have also grown by

organizing a new unit, the Residence Dons, which is expanding our membership into a new job group on campus. It has been really exciting working with this dynamic group of young workers.

While the membership grows, we have also increased the staffing in the office to keep up with the demand, to be more responsive to member needs and to improve our outreach and communications. Most members do not see the administrative work that goes on behind the scenes, but I am very proud of the initiatives we've taken in the past few years to update and improve our office processes and information management. (I could talk for hours about what a difference our database has made in tracking grievances, organizational change, events and member data). Many of our members work in administrative roles, so you will understand

the importance of good administrative processes to the effective running of an organization.

We have also worked hard to build up our network of volunteers and activists, whether they are stewards, committee members, CAT team supporters or many other engaged members. As with all volunteer roles, there is an ebb and flow as people join and drop off, depending on their other commitments. We were really on track with more committee activity when the pandemic struck, so that is something we need to rebuild. I want to give a shout out to the BIPOC / Racialized Workers for Anti-Racism Committee which was created by members who wanted a space to work together on issues of racism and inclusion in the University and in the Union.

Personally, the project I am most proud of during my term is the creation of the University Pension Plan and our members' strong consent vote to join it. With this plan, we have ensured that our defined benefit pension plan is protected in the long term. I will continue to serve on the Employee Sponsor Committee of the UPP and look forward to the possibility of members in our Victoria and St. Mike's Units joining as well.

The past six years have not been without their challenges and the pandemic is certainly the most stressful thing many of us have experienced in our lives. Our members and the union had to deal with

temporary and permanent lay-offs, health and safety issues, family accommodation for people working with daycares and schools closed, work from home, return to campus uncertainty and the vaccine mandate. Throughout this stressful period, we've been in constant touch with U of T Labour Relations and Environmental Health and Safety and with our allies UTFA and CUPE as we had to navigate challenging decisions and judgement calls about what was in the best interests of our members and how to balance the needs of members with conflicting interests.

The pandemic has also led to the longest bargaining season in our Local's history. Bargaining generally happens every three years and ramps up from late spring to the end of the fall term for all our Units. As I write this, I am in bargaining with the Staff-Appointed Bargaining Committee, who were elected in November 2019. With all the stops and starts of the pandemic, it seems that we have been at various bargaining tables for almost two years. We successfully bargained a first contract for the Arts and Science Residence Dons and a renewal contract for the Casual Unit, winning paid sick days for the very first time.

The other perennial challenge that we face in the post-secondary sector is the influence of the provincial government in University operations and our ability to bargain.

**“Personally, the project I am most proud of during my term is the creation of the University Pension Plan and our members' strong consent vote to join it. With this plan, we have ensured that our defined benefit pension plan is protected in the long term.”**

*– Colleen Burke*

Over the past eight years, we have seen provincial directives on “net zero” increases, wage freezes, tuition cuts and, most recently, Bill 124 with the punitive 1% cap on wages and benefits for all public sector workers. When members ask why unions get involved in political issues instead of sticking to “bread and butter” issues, this is why. If we’re going to have politicians interfering in our bargaining tables, then we need to work to have labour-friendly politicians in office.

I am leaving this position satisfied with the job I’ve done and keenly aware of the massive “to do” list of things that still need to be done. A union is a dynamic organization with changes in membership, changes in volunteers, changes in leadership and frequent changes in the challenges and issues we have to face both within the union, in the workplace and in society. The job is never done and there is always something we could be doing better. I have great confidence in John Ankenman, who is stepping up to the role of President. He is the most experienced union representative in our Local and has been a mentor to me in so many ways. I have always valued his insight and advice and he will excel as President.

I want to thank all of the staff in the union office for all of their hard work, dedication, good will and support over the past six and a half years. Many members may not see it first hand, but I see and appreciate the long hours that you all put in, with your top priority always being serving the members. I would like to thank all the volunteers and activists in the union who have stepped up on their own time as Executive members, stewards, committee chairs and members. Member engagement is the lifeblood of any union and you contribute a great deal. I would also like to thank the two USW Staff Representatives who have served our Local in the past six years – Omero Landi and Mary Lou Scott. Both have taught me a great deal and leave intimidating shoes to fill as I step into their role.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank all of our members. You are the union – all of you. The energy you bring, the support you give, the expectations you place before us – all of this makes the Union a lively, responsive, active and collective voice for workers. I will miss the daily contact I have with members, but I am looking forward to seeing you in “the aftertimes” at BBQs, holiday parties meetings and events.

Solidarity Forever!

– **Colleen Burke**, President, USW 1998

“I am leaving this position satisfied with the job I’ve done and keenly aware of the massive “to do” list of things that still need to be done. A union is a dynamic organization with changes in membership, changes in volunteers, changes in leadership and frequent changes in the challenges and issues we have to face both within the union, in the workplace and in society.”

– *Colleen Burke*

**PHOTO:**

*Departing USW1998 President Colleen Burke and her trusty mode of transportation. Colleen will continue to serve the Local as our new USW Staff Representative.*

## A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR JOB EVALUATION ASSISTANT: Meena Sivaneswaralingam

Meena Sivaneswaralingam (she/her) assisted the Job Evaluation Team this past winter and early spring.

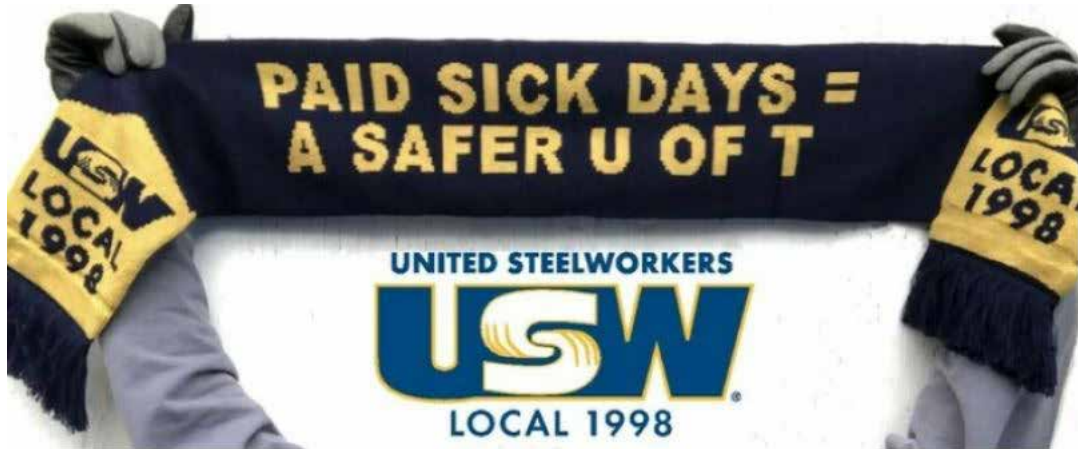
Meena has worked across the University of Toronto campuses for over five years in various areas including mentorship programming, student-staff hiring, admissions and recruitment, as well as intercultural programming in student housing. Additionally, she has worked at Humber College as a Work Integrated Learning Program Coordinator with the Faculty of Social & Community Services. Meena is an alumna of the University of Toronto, graduating with an Honours Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Education degree.

With a passion for equitable and inclusive practices, Meena helped our members and ensured that they had access to support while navigating the job evaluation process. Thank you, Meena, for all of your hard work!



**PHOTO:** Meena Sivaneswaralingam

# CASUAL BARGAINING UNDER BILL 124



**I**n November the **USW Local 1998 Casual Unit** (~3,500 members) bargained an unprecedented win with our employer: each Casual Unit member now has access to two paid sick days per year.

Given the outpouring of support we received from members across the Local and beyond, winning sick days for our unit during a global pandemic should have been simple. However, due to Bill 124 (a three-year moderation period imposed on all public sector employees, capping financial gains at 1% per year), this was deemed impossible. We were tasked with the impossible question: how do you bargain a 1% gain on zero?

It takes multiple teams of lawyers, an outrageously determined Bargaining

Committee, and engaged, vocal unit members to pull two sick days out of that empty hat.

Of course, we wish we could have bargained more. At times, there was a glimmer of unspoken understanding that perhaps even the employer wished more could have been gained. At the end of the day, the Ford government has the right to review our Collective Agreement and say: "No, this violates Bill 124." Then we would be sent right back to the beginning of the bargaining process.

While the bittersweet sentiments linger from this round of bargaining, we look ahead to our next



*Scan this QR code to watch the award-winning Precarity U video, produced by Rebecca Singh & directed by Laura DaSilva*

Collective Agreement, which should be entirely free from the constraints of Bill 124 (provided that the Bill is not extended or renewed by a re-elected Ford government). What we gained in this round will serve as a foundation from which to grow and expand. We will continue to push for equality for all Casual Unit members and build on our ongoing momentum when we return to the bargaining table next year.

Thank you to all our USW Local 1998 members who speak out and support the Casual Unit!

– **Karen Hampson**,  
Chief Steward, Casual Unit



**PHOTO:** Karen Hampson, Chief Steward, Casual Unit, served on the most recent round of casual bargaining.

## CASUAL UNIT UPDATE

**A**s we know, unions are by **workers for workers.** But it's key for unions to engage their membership to better represent their interests!

The more members actively participate in union life, the better informed the union is of these workers' priorities, thus the better equipped the union is to represent them. As Casual Unit members, we know it's not always easy to connect with the union. You'll see changes in 2022 though - this year, we're prioritizing strategic planning and capacity building in Local 1998's Casual Unit!

You may have heard that we recently hired a part-time Casual Unit Organizer, Gabriele Simmons. That's me! I've been a member of the Unit since 2015 and have held over 15 jobs at the University. You may have seen me at the UofT daycare, working in an equity office, or acting as a residence don, among other roles. Like you, I understand the challenges of securing your next job at UofT, seeking free

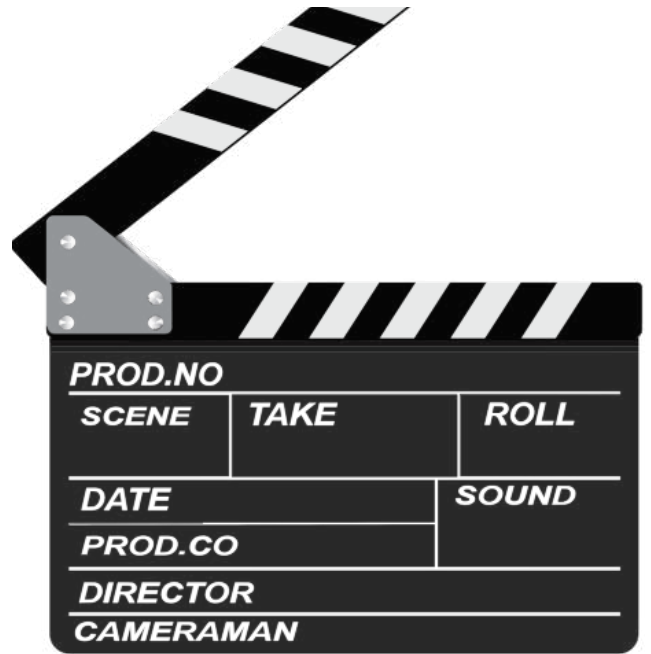


**PHOTO:** Gabrielle Simmons, Casual Unit Organizer

professional development opportunities, and budgeting for health and wellness expenses as a precarious worker. But did you know that we made gains in these areas in our new Collective Agreement? That's right! In November 2021, the Unit ratified a new Agreement between the union and employer. This Agreement outlines the employer's intent to explore creating a casual-specific job board and increasing our ability to access 'internal'

*Continued bottom of page 9*

# The Worker in Films: 5 Movies About Labour & Unions

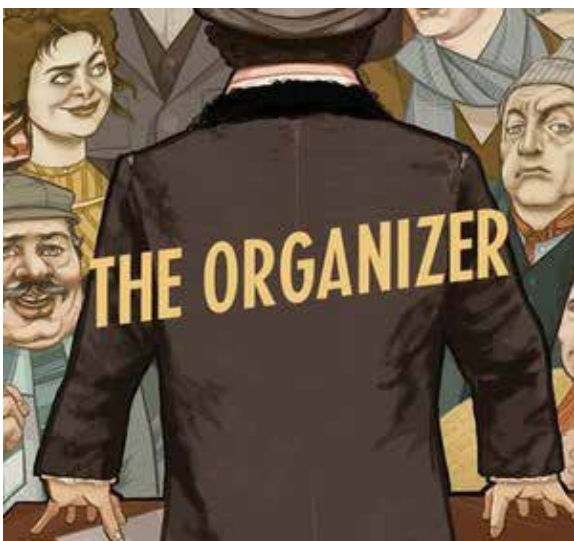


**I**n order to strengthen the wellbeing of workers and show solidarity in the workplace, we must first be aware of the issues that affect workers.

One of the most well-known vehicles for heightening awareness is film. Films have the power to transport us to another world. They encourage us to expand our empathy as we follow the journeys of various characters. They validate a wide range of human experiences, and they invite us to understand the internal goals and social environments of people that are different from us. Like what the legendary film critic, Roger Ebert, has said, "For me, the movies are like a machine that generates empathy."

Here are some feature films that highlight the workers and their fights for better working environments -- Please note that the DVDs of the films can be borrowed from the Toronto Public Library as well!

– **Cecilia Nguyen**, Communications Committee Member, USW 1998



## **The Organizer (1963)**

**DIRECTOR:** Mario Monicelli | **CAST:**

Marcello Mastroianni, Renato Salvatori,  
Gabriella Giorgelli | **GENRE:** Drama | **MAIN  
LANGUAGE:** Italian

**ACCOLADES:** Nominated for Best Original  
Screenplay at the 37th Academy Awards

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** Following a terrible  
accident at a textile factory in Turin, a  
professor (Marcello Mastroianni) attempts  
to empower exploited workers while facing



constant scrutiny from law enforcement authorities.

NOTABLE LINE IN FILM: “What’s crazy is exploiting people.”

STREAMING WEBSITE, as of Spring 2022: Criterion Channel

## Norma Rae (1979)

DIRECTOR: Martin Ritt | CAST: Sally Field, Beau Bridges, Ron Leibman | GENRE: Drama | MAIN LANGUAGE: English

ACCOLADES: Academy Award for Best Actress, Academy Award for Best Original Song, Best Actress Award at the 1979 Cannes Film Festival

BRIEF SUMMARY: Based on the true story of Crystal Lee Sutton’s life in America, the film, Norma Rae, follows the challenges a single mother (Sally Field) faces as she leads an effort to unionize her fellow workers at the mill she works at.

Notable Song in Film: “It Goes Like It Goes”,



sung by Jennifer Warnes

STREAMING WEBSITE, as of Spring 2022: STARZ on Crave TV

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## CASUAL UNIT UPDATE

*Continued from page 7*

job postings on the UoFT Careers website as well as to expanding professional development opportunities to casual members. It also lays out a dental benefits project the Unit is piloting ([see our website](#) for more details), and an Employment and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP) members can access for free, confidential short-term counselling, coaching, mental health support, and more. Take some time to read our [new Collective Agreement](#) and/or to attend one of our New Member Orientations to learn more.

At Local 1998 we’re also doing an overhaul of the Casual Unit newsletter. We’re aiming to ensure it better reflects areas of interest to you as Casuals and that it gets sent to your preferred email address to increase readership. You’ll begin to see advertised in this newsletter Casual engagement opportunities like Committee positions and events, Casual Unit-specific

meetings, and union education workshops. Of course, we’ll continue advertising items of note from our community partners and allies. [Ensure you let us know](#) the the email address you’d like us to send these materials to - keeping up to date with the union’s efforts helps you better advocate for yourself in the workplace and in the union too! It won’t be long until we’re at the Bargaining table again. Share your skills and knowledge in the Casual Unit so we can secure even better gains in our next Collective Agreement.

I hope to see you at one of our upcoming social or educational events and new member orientations. And I would encourage you to attend general membership meetings! I can’t wait to get to know you, and to ensure that your interests are consistently being represented in the Unit and wider union’s operations.

In solidarity,

– **Gabrielle Simmons**, Casual Unit Organizer



# Don't wait on the promise of a **MANAGER-INITIATED RECLASSIFICATION**

**I**n the five years I served as a **Grievance Officer**, I met with many members immediately after they received their organizational change notice eliminating their jobs. Too often, I heard similar things along the lines of: "My manager promised to reclassify me. Why is my job now being eliminated?"

It can be a frustrating situation to find yourself in. Many members and managers do not understand the distinction between reclassification and organizational change. They are two distinct processes. Organizational change is covered in the collective agreement under Article 12:05. Typically, if a job changes by 20% or more, it will trigger an org change. Note that while the collective agreement only specifically talks about a reduction in FTE of 20% or more, the practice has been that when the duties and responsibilities change by 20%, a new position is usually created and the old one eliminated via the org change process. Budget cuts and the introduction of new technologies are other factors that can lead to org change. Sometimes, they occur after a new manager is hired and decides the organizational

structure can be made more efficient. Ultimately, management has the right to determine how departments are structured.

The reclassification process is not mentioned in the collective agreement. It is governed by a separate protocol that outlines the job evaluation and pay equity process for the Staff-Appointed Unit. For this reason, grievances cannot be filed if a member believes their position is improperly classified. Instead, members must go through the reclassification process the Union and University agreed to under the

## [Job Evaluation/Pay Equity Maintenance](#)

[Protocol](#). Members can either work with the Union's Job Evaluation (JE) team to submit an Employee Initiated Reclassification (EIR), or managers can submit a Manager Initiated Reclassification (MIR) if they agree a position's payband should be changed.

To start this process, the manager or employee needs to submit a [Statement of Significant Change Form](#) (SSCF). This form is available through the Manager Self Service (MSS) for MIRs, or, through the Employee Self Service (ESS) for EIRs. While a member can submit their SSCF on their own, the Union strongly recommends that members consult with the JE Team early in the process. The JE Team can help you learn more about the Job Evaluation process, assist you with applying for a reclassification of your position, and provide information about the SES/U factors and job classes. The duties, skills and responsibilities, and the language you use to describe them can have an immense impact on the outcome of the process. When people submit their own forms without Union input, they can miss reporting important information about their job. As the process involves assessing 17 job related sub-factors, consulting with the Union's JE team is important to understand more about what is involved when a position is classified. If you aren't careful, it's possible that your job can be reclassified to a lower payband.

While MIRs may sometimes be processed with your manager's support, far too often members take their manager's commitment to do this too seriously. Waiting too long for an MIR to be implemented can be a mistake. For one, even well-intentioned managers can be overruled by HR. If a manager goes to HR asking to reclassify a job, HR will want



**PHOTO:** *Kristy Bard*, **CREDIT:** *Kai Lai*

to know how it has changed. They might say: "That sounds like an org change, we have to do an org change instead." Since many managers don't understand the different terminology, they go along with it. Even if they try to object, there's not much they can do if HR is insistent. And once a member receives their org change notice, it's too late - you can't submit an EIR request after you've been notified that your position is being eliminated.

There have been instances where members have been strung along by their managers for years, believing a reclassification was in the works. Sometimes this is the result of a manager procrastinating or delaying the submission of a formal request. Sometimes it is the result of HR not supporting the request or dragging their feet on it. It is important to note that reclassification is not the same as a job description (JD) update. JD updates do not necessarily result in your payband being changed. Although an updated JD is included in the MIR process,

reclassifications only occur if the payband changes.

Even in instances where an MIR is successful, sometimes the member is not satisfied and believes the payband should still be higher. The only recourse is for our JE team to challenge it within the 20 days we have to review and respond, so you would need to contact us quickly so that we can prepare a dispute. With an MIR, we have no insight into the process. Our JE team is notified when an MIR is completed, but we have no input before this point.

Often, if we don't have any communication with the member, our only ability to object is if it has clearly been misplaced based upon the content of the job description and the manager's request. The University will often write the job description to the level they want it to be rated.

As a result, pursuing an EIR can be a better approach. With an EIR, timelines under the protocol are immediately triggered and can reduce the time spent waiting. It may also be easier to track how far back any entitlements to retroactive pay should go. With both EIRs and MIRs, if the payband is increased and you are entitled to retroactive pay, you may receive up to six months of retroactive pay prior to the date of the submission of the reclassification request. For EIRs, this is easy to track. But with an MIR, it can be difficult to know exactly when the manager formally submitted the request, and oftentimes they will delay doing so. While the process can also be long for an EIR if the University does not agree that the reclassification is in order (yes, years long), the timelines are triggered as soon

as the request is submitted and the member has more control over when this happens. We also have the ability to track where an EIR is in the process from the very beginning. With MIRs, because the request process is internal to the University, we have no way of confirming when or whether your manager has actually filed it. While it is not always the case, at times it appears that the manager may decide to use the mechanism of org change rather than reclassification. The status of an MIR is unclear until the Union is notified of the outcome.

A common perception is that if a manager likes you, they will reclassify you, but if they want to get rid of you, they will org change you out. While I have no doubt this occurs, it's not that common in my experience. Managers don't have that much power. It is often HR and Labour Relations who dictate to the manager what will happen and they are bound by the collective agreement and our job evaluation maintenance protocol. While we have a clear definitions of reclassification and org change, what we don't have is a clear understanding of when management will utilize one process over another. We've seen reclassifications move people up three or four paybands. The change in those positions was probably greater than 20%. So why weren't they done as org changes? HR and Labour Relations have never been able to provide the Union with a clear answer. We raise this in every round of bargaining as well as in improper org change and failure-to-hire grievances.

Even if you have a good relationship with your manager, schedule a time to talk to our Job Evaluation team by emailing [jec@usw1998.ca](mailto:jec@usw1998.ca) if you are thinking about reclassification. Don't count on your manager to advocate on your behalf the way the Union will. It's

been the experience of many members that their manager is appreciative of their work but may still be reluctant to proceed with a reclassification or be slow to initiate the process. This can lead to frustration for our members and a sense that promises were made to get more work out of them.

If you do decide to go the MIR route, the key takeaway is that you should not wait more than a few months for your manager and HR to provide clear written confirmation that the MIR has been submitted. Even if your manager is supportive of a reclassification of your role, we encourage you to meet with our JE team as they can provide confidential advice and information regarding the process.

Finally, even if you do receive that dreaded org change notice, all is not lost. What I often see happen is members get promoted through the org change process. The new job created is what the member thought their manager was going to reclassify them to. But with an org change, members have to apply to and interview for the newly created job. Despite not having redeployment preference for the new position because it's at a higher payband, you will still have an early opportunity to apply because the new job is first posted internally within your department only. Sometimes, your well-intentioned manager fully intends to rehire you since HR won't let them reclassify you.

Having to apply for a job you believe you are already doing is demoralizing. But you should not let that defeat you into believing you should not bother engaging the process with an application. If you are eligible for early retirement and prefer to take your

enhanced severance and retire, that's a good option. Too often though, I have seen people's hurt feelings get in the way of their career advancement and continued employment. U of T is a business, like it or not. You must play the game and go through the annoying bureaucratic processes that exist in all large organizations. So, apply for that job! This can be important even if the new job is at a lower payband. Remember that once you've been in a new position for six months, our JE team can help you complete the questionnaire to ensure you are being paid fairly. If you file an improper org change grievance, not applying to the new position can negatively impact the settlement we are able to get you. You have a duty to try to mitigate your losses, and a job is better than no job. We can try to get you appropriate redress through the grievance or job evaluation process, but it will take time. Patience, my friends! I know from years of personal experience the systems we have negotiated work if you have the persistence to see them through. I can assure you that your Union representatives, whether a Grievance Officer or Job Evaluation Analyst, will work hard on your behalf no matter what. As I always say, it's what your union dues pay for!

– **Kristy Bard,**

Committee on the Environment, Climate Change & Sustainability, with input from the USW 1998 Job Evaluation Team



# HEALTH & SAFETY UPDATE: RETURN TO WORK ON CAMPUS

**F**irstly, we must acknowledge our members that have been deemed essential workers and have been required to work on campus throughout the pandemic, regardless of the stage of the provincial government's reopening plans.

They have put both their personal health and safety and that of their families and communities at risk to ensure that University operations continue. We must also acknowledge the work of USW members on Joint Health and Safety Committees that have been meeting virtually and completing workplace inspections both virtually and in-person. We commend all our members for their efforts.

Throughout the pandemic, the Coalition of Campus Unions made up of the University's various Unions, the Faculty Association, and student groups have been advocating for better safety protections for the U of T community returning to campus throughout the various stages of reopening. In December, [a joint letter](#) was sent to senior management, and in February a phone zap was organized where community members phoned the University and Members of Provincial

Parliament demanding better safety protections at the University. Despite our efforts, the University has stuck to its plan and did not go beyond the safety protocols that had already been implemented.

The University started its most recent gradual return to work for non-essential workers in February with the assurance that the community spread of COVID-19 would be limited with the safety protocols that are in place. Much depends on community members adhering to the requirements specific to individuals as defined in the [12 Ways the University is](#)

### [Preparing for a Safe Return to Campus.](#)

However, members are still feeling anxious about a return to on-campus work, especially with the airborne nature and high transmissibility of the Omicron variant.

The majority of USW member concerns are around the University's ability to enforce and maintain capacity limits, social distancing, and masking requirements in line with public health requirements. There is high anxiety amongst some around the University's decision to not go beyond public health's requirements, allowing for staff working in offices and labs to remove their masks when a two-metre distance can be maintained. With the high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, this is a valid concern. While enforcing all the public health's mandates is not an easy task given the size of the University's campuses, when the Union has raised COVID-19 related concerns, the University has been responsive in resolving these issues in a timely manner.

There also is a lot of unease amongst the membership around the HVAC systems in University buildings and their ability to effectively filter the air, even with the recommended MERV-13 filters in place in most buildings. The reason is because the [University's HVAC Strategy](#) has concentrated substantial efforts on ensuring

that measurements of the air exchange rates and air flow in classrooms meets the recommended six air exchanges per hour and is supplemented with air purifiers where needed. Yet the majority of office spaces where most of our members work have had air exchange rates calculated which is not as precise a measurement. This unease amongst community members has prompted the University to conduct air exchange measurements of spaces upon request by contacting [ehs.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.office@utoronto.ca).

With the recent provincial government's announcement around lifting COVID-19 restrictions in late February and early March, there are many unknowns around what safety protocols and the density of the University community members on campus will look like in the Spring. It will take a joint effort of all USW members and the University community to ensure that we keep the spread of the virus to a minimum by adhering to all public health mandates and recommendations. We encourage members to bring their concerns to their managers, Joint Health and Safety Committees, and the Union.

– **Mark Austin**, Health & Safety Officer, USW 1998

“There is high anxiety amongst some around the University's decision to not go beyond public health's requirements, allowing for staff working in offices and labs to remove their masks when a two-metre distance can be maintained.”

– *Mark Austin*



# GRIEVANCE Committee **REPORT 2021**

Last year was a busy one for grievances in USW Local 1998. Whether members were working remotely, onsite, or switching between the two, there were still issues that needed to be addressed and violations of our Collective Agreements that needed to be fixed. Between our six units (Staff-Appointed, Casual, Victoria University, St. Michael's College, and University of Toronto Schools) your union staff were kept busy. Our sixth unit is the Residence Dons whose first Collective Agreement came into effect on January 1, 2022. In summary, for 2021 we:

## **Initiated 112 informal steps**

- 103 in the Staff-Appointed Unit
- 2 in the Casual Unit
- 7 in Victoria University

## **Filed 98 grievances**

- 80 in the Staff-Appointed Unit
- 4 in the Casual Unit
- 13 in Victoria University
- 1 in St. Michael's College

We were also able to work well to solve grievances, at various steps in the process or before filing a formal grievance. We:

## **Settled 51 grievances**

- 42 in the Staff-Appointed Unit
- 3 in the Casual Unit
- 5 in Victoria University
- 1 in St. Michael's College

## **Resolved or didn't proceed with filing grievances for 19 informal steps in the Staff-Appointed Unit**

## **Withdrew 23 grievances in the Staff-Appointed Unit and 1 in Victoria University**

Taking a look across all of our units, we can see the types of grievances being filed by our members.

## **Types of Grievances**

Some of the same issues like discipline, organizational change, and failure to hire still rank high. It must be noted that many of the accommodation and management rights grievances are directly related to the University's Joint Provostial and Human Resources Guideline on Vaccination which explains the significant presence of them in our year-end numbers.

We've also taken a look at where grievances



tend to be filed across the Staff-Appointed and Casual units.

The four areas in the Staff-Appointed and Casual Units where the most grievances were filed were:

- Arts and Science - 16
- Medicine - 14
- UTM - 13
- UTSC - 7

When we consider which areas have filed the most grievances, we need to take into account that we expect larger areas to file more grievances. So, we compare the percentage of grievances filed to the percentage of total membership in each faculty to get a better idea of where some problem areas might be.

That said, if an area of the University has a very small percentage of members, even one or two grievances can have a huge effect on how over- or under-represented an area is when it comes to grievances.

Taking this into account, the most overrepresented areas in the Staff-Appointed and Casual Units when you consider the outsized impact on small areas are:

## UTM

- 60% more grievances than expected, based on membership distribution

## Medicine

- 14% more grievances than expected

## Arts and Science

- 6% more grievances than expected

The most underrepresented areas in the Staff-Appointed and Casual Units are:

## CAHRS

- 74% fewer grievances than expected, based on membership distribution

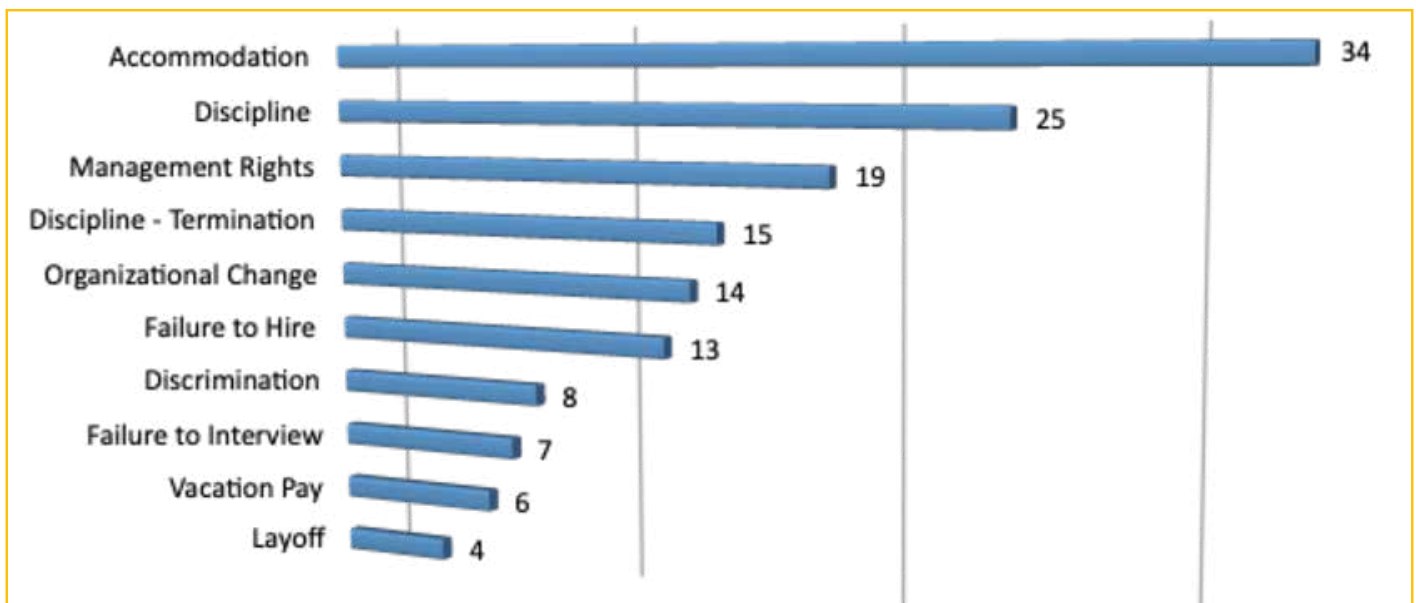
## Dentistry

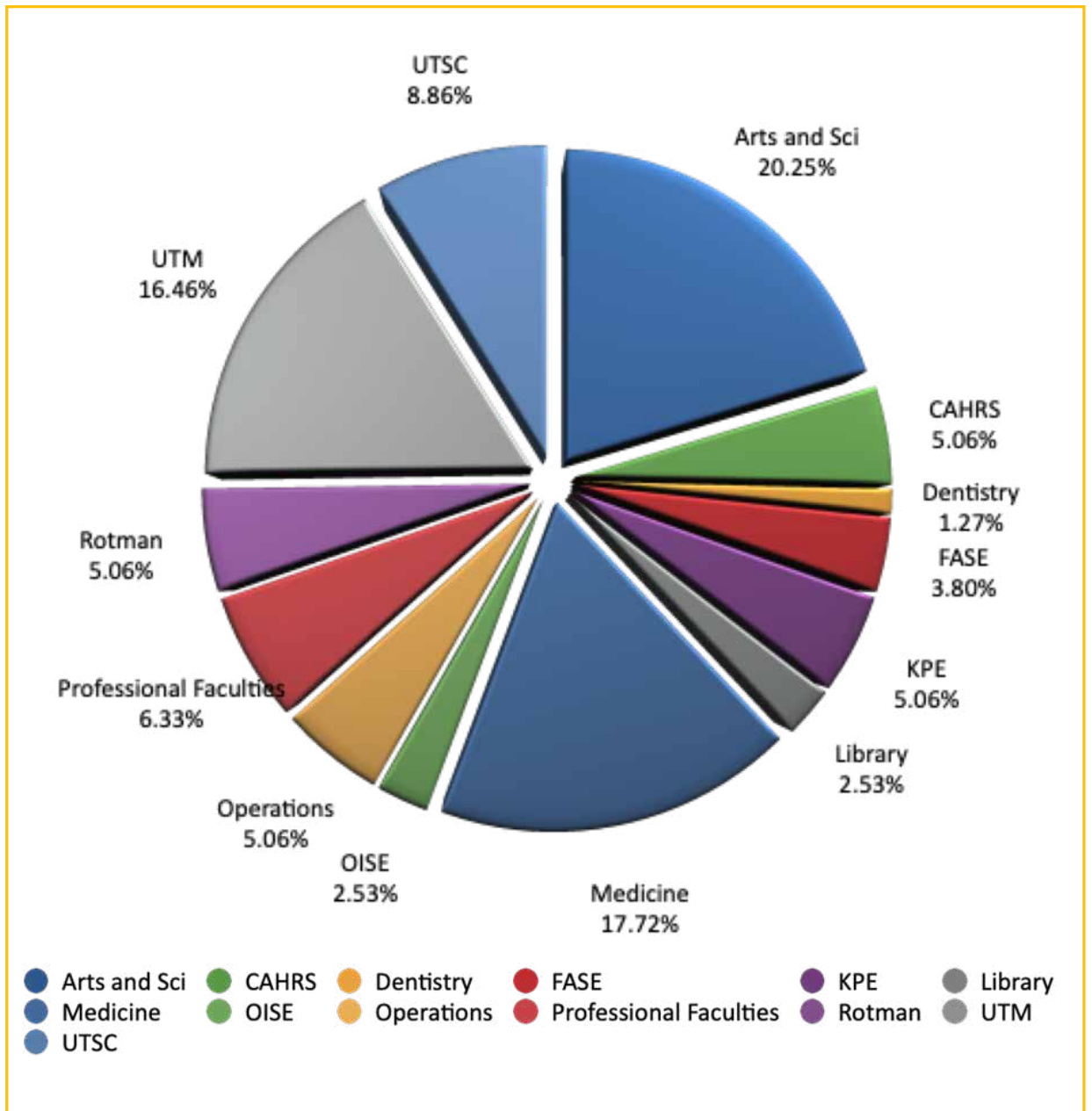
- 65% fewer grievances than expected

## Operations

- 37% fewer grievances than expected

## UTSC





- 13% fewer grievances than expected

Even though UTSC had the fourth-highest number of grievances filed, there are actually fewer grievances filed there than we'd expect when we consider the number of members at UTSC. It's always helpful to put those raw numbers into context to see which areas may need certain types of attention.

We also don't want to assume that areas which are underrepresented are doing

well because they're filing fewer grievances than we'd expect. It may be that members in CAHRS or Dentistry or Operations aren't as informed about their rights or feel afraid to speak to the union, not that there aren't violations happening there. (Which is also encouragement for anyone reading this in these areas to reach out to the union and ask about becoming a steward, so we can ensure members have people in those areas to reach out to and help share information about what rights we have as USW members.)

Area	% of Members	% of Grievances Filed	Difference
KPE	1.93%	4.76%	146.11%
Library	1.28%	2.38%	85.53%
FASE	1.93%	3.57%	84.58%
UTM	9.75%	15.48%	58.68%
Medicine	14.67%	16.67%	13.62%
Arts and Sci	17.97%	19.05%	6.02%
OISE	2.27%	2.38%	4.87%
Professional Faculties	5.92%	5.95%	0.50%
Rotman	5.23%	4.76%	-8.98%
UTSC	9.62%	8.33%	-13.33%
Operations	7.50%	4.76%	-36.53%
Dentistry	3.36%	1.19%	-64.53%
CAHRS	18.56%	4.76%	-74.34%

Ideally, we want fewer grievances and those grievances spread out evenly among our membership. That would show the University is doing better at adhering to the language in our Collective Agreement and other employment laws and codes. It would also support that all USW members feel informed of their rights and confident enough to reach out for support when they feel their rights are being violated. But, as we work towards that goal, it's helpful to take a look back at how we've done each year, where our problem areas are, and how we can work together to improve them for the future.

– **Justen Bennett**, Grievance Officer

“Even though UTSC had the fourth-highest number of grievances filed, there are actually fewer grievances filed there than we’d expect when we consider the number of members at UTSC.”

– *Justen Bennett*



PHOTO: John Ankerman sharing information at a Vic University member outreach event

# Victoria University Report: FEBRUARY 2022

## Collective Bargaining with the University

Negotiations for a new collective agreement began on Monday, February 14 and continued the next day. Several more dates for bargaining with the University have been confirmed. We are aiming to have a tentative agreement by sometime in the week of March 21.

To ensure that the Union's negotiating team has the most strength possible at the bargaining table, a strike mandate vote will be held in the coming weeks. Details of the vote will be announced soon. A strong strike mandate from the membership will be key to negotiating the best possible deal. Our Strike Committee is working with the negotiating team to build the solidarity and organizational structure necessary for a successful outcome.

As is our usual practice in collective bargaining, we are focusing on the non-monetary aspects of the contract before we switch our attention to monetary proposals such as across the board wage increases. Starting with non-monetary negotiations allows for that important part of bargaining to be looked after without it being overshadowed by the inevitable intensity that comes with negotiating for the best possible compensation package.

Of course, in this round of collective bargaining we have the added challenge of dealing with the Ford government's Bill 124. That legislation applies to us for the first three years following our July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020 collective agreement. During those years, the maximum across the board wage increase we are allowed is 1% and the maximum increase to the total value of all the

other components of our compensation package is also 1%. In the first year our unit came under the influence of the legislation, we were able to negotiate the maximum 1% allowable wage increase. There are now two more years in which the legislation blocks us from exercising our right to freely bargain with our employer.

With the current level of economic inflation, the damage being inflicted by Bill 124 is greatly magnified. Our union has joined others in a Supreme Court challenge of the legislation.

## **Grievance Updates**

### **VC 21-3 (individual - improper implementation of temporary layoff displacement provision)**

This grievance was settled at step 2 of the grievance procedure.

### **VC 21-4 (individual - improper coaching letter/performance plan)**

This grievance was settled at step 2 of the grievance procedure.

### **VC 21-5 (policy – improper unilateral scheduling of vacation time)**

The Union is waiting for the University's response to the step 2 meeting.

### **VC 21-6 (individual – failure to interview)**

The grievor decided to withdraw the grievance.

### **VC 21-7 (individual – failure to hire)**

This grievance was settled at step 2 of the

grievance procedure.

### **VC 21-8 (individual – failure to implement summer hours)**

The issue that would have led to the filing of the grievance was settled at the informal stage of the grievance process.

### **VC 21-9 (individual – improper distribution of overtime)**

The grievance was dismissed by the University at step 2 of the grievance procedure.

### **VC 21-10 (individual – improper unpaid leave)**

This grievance was dismissed by the University at step 2 of the grievance procedure. The Local's Executive is currently considered whether to advance the grievance to arbitration.

### **VC 21-11 (individual – unjust termination)**

This grievance was settled in mediation.

### **VC 21-12 (policy – improper contracting out) & VC 21-13 (policy – failure to post and fill jobs)**

The Union filed these grievances to address the University's decision to contract out work, including furniture moving, snow removal and some aspects of garbage collection and removal, normally done by USW members who work in the Groundskeeping Department. VC 21-12 uses the collective agreement language that directly deals with contracting out, while VC 21-13 addresses the problem by challenging the University's decision to bring in a contracted company instead of posting and filling bargaining unit Groundskeeper jobs. After the University dismissed the grievances at step 2, The Local's Executive voted in favour of advancing them to arbitration. The next step is for an arbitration date to be scheduled.

– **John Ankenman**, Unit President, USW 1998

# HUMAN RIGHTS Committee Report

**Since February 2021, the Human Rights Committee has been meeting regularly to discuss Human Rights issues.**



**PHOTO:** Scott Eldridge, Human Rights Committee Co-Chair

Some highlights over the past year include:

- Attending a rally to support the plight of seniors in long term care in January 2021
- Participating in the BIPOC/Racialized Workers for Anti-Racism Committee Black History Month event in February 2021
- In March 2021, the committee welcomed guest speaker Margaret Jenkins who wrote an article in the Globe and Mail entitled, "Muted Response". The article discussed the suspicious death of human rights activist Karim Mehrab (also known as Karima Balloch) who was a University of Toronto student. The Human Rights committee mounted a letter writing campaign calling for an active investigation into her death. Letters were sent to Chrystia Freeland, MP for University-Rosedale; Dr. Agnes Callamard, Secretary General Amnesty International; and to Bob Rae, Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations.
- Some of our committee members made personal donations to a GoFundMe that was setup for a union sister from Quebec who sadly lost her life to domestic violence, leaving behind five children. The UN reports that 50,000 women a year are killed by domestic violence.
- In April 2021, the committee hosted guest speaker John Crutch, Indigenous Training Coordinator at the Office of Indigenous Initiatives. John spoke to us about why his office is offering cultural competency training. [Learn more here.](#)
- In August 2021, the Human Rights Committee hosted a Bargaining Discussion Circle to collect feedback from members in the Local about priorities the bargaining committee should focus on such as internal hiring, accommodation needs, bullying and discrimination, health care benefits, and health and safety.
- In September 2021, the Committee hosted guest speakers Murwarid Ziayee, Senior Director of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan and Sarah Keeler, Engagement and Advocacy Coordinator for Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan. They spoke about the great work they are doing to address human rights and end oppression for Afghan women and girls through access to quality and gender-equitable education. [Learn more about their work here.](#)

If you are interested in getting involved with your Human Rights Committee to help us plan future events and initiatives, please email us at [info@usw1998.ca](mailto:info@usw1998.ca).

– **Liza Cote & Scott Eldridge**, Human Rights Committee Co-Chairs



**PHOTOS:** SteelPride Co-Chairs Emma Buajitti (left, eating ice cream!) and Dinah Thorpe (right, with her cat Flora, aka Boots!)

# STEEL PRIDE

## Committee Report

**In 2021, Steel Pride hosted a series of three virtual Pride events.** Trivia night was a hit, as was live music night featuring Noise Witch and Janice Jo Lee. The dance party was small but oh-so-mighty. Thanks to everyone who attended and brought some Pride fun into our homes!

Steel Pride also hosted two bargaining discussion circles—the first to collect 2SLGBTQIA+ members' broader input, and the second to specifically address gender-affirming benefits coverage.

The current Steel Pride co-chairs (Emma and Dinah) have only known the role in pandemic times, and we are so looking forward to planning some in-person events for 2022!

Please reach out anytime if you'd like to be added to the Steel Pride mailing list, if you have event ideas, or if you have 2SLGBTQIA+ specific questions or concerns. [steelpride@usw1998.ca](mailto:steelpride@usw1998.ca)

– **Dinah Thorpe & Emma Buajitti**, Steel Pride Committee Co-Chairs

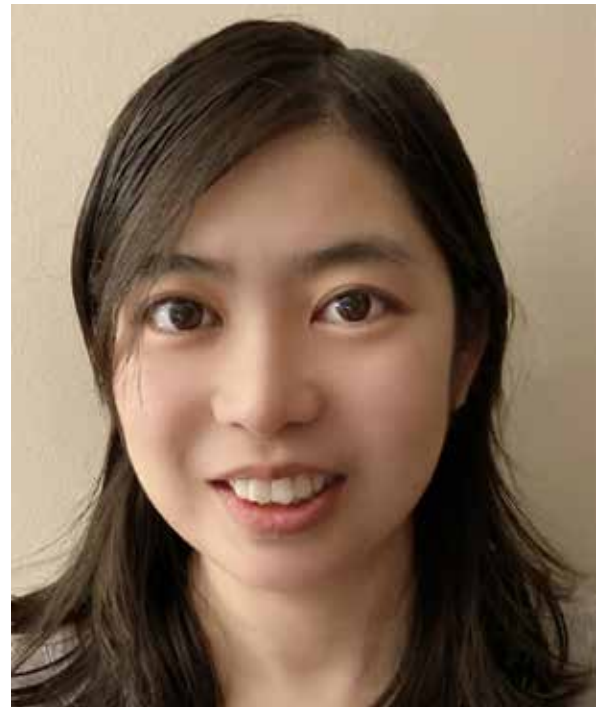
# BIPOC/ RACIALIZED WORKERS for ANTI-RACISM Committee Report

**The Committee of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC)/Racialized Workers for Anti-Racism is USW 1998's newest committee, established in 2020.**

In response to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the summer of 2020, the committee was created to advance racial justice, equity and inclusion at U of T, within our union, and the labour movement. It is important to committee members that our work recognize how the experiences of BIPOC are shaped by multiple, intersecting identities. Currently, the committee has five members.

Our present projects include:

- *promoting the group through different channels including the USW Local 1998 website and newsletter;*
- *creating content for a separate committee website to better advocate for our group. This website will be linked to the USW Local 1998 website;*
- *developing new training workshops and adapting existing ones, such as anti-bullying, to specifically address race;*



**PHOTO:** Bing Ye, BIPOC/Racialized Workers for Anti-Racism Ctte member & Research Manager at the Intelligent Assistive Technology & Systems Lab (IATSL), Dept. of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy

- *collaborating with other groups such as the Human Rights Committee to explore mutual topics of interest, such as environmental racism.*

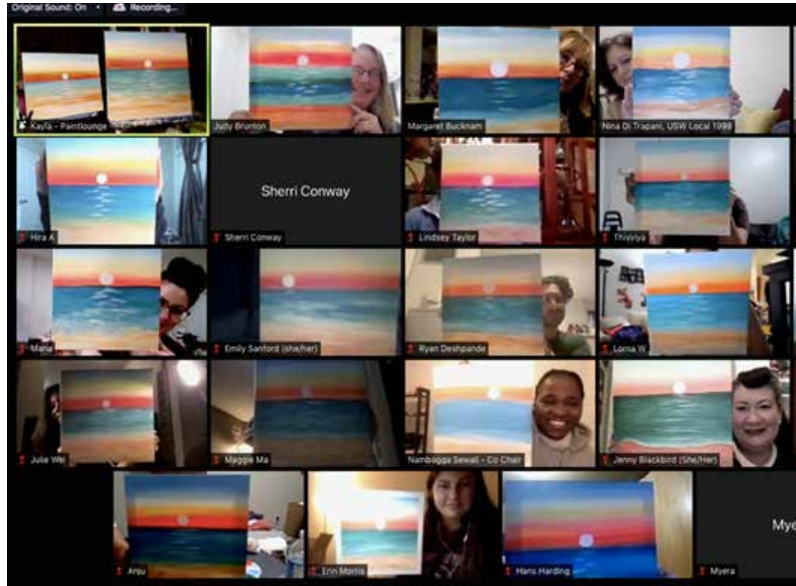
We meet monthly and have rotating chairs lead these meeting as well as a rotating notetaker. This provides each member an opportunity to develop their leadership skills and become fully involved in the group.

If you are interested in joining our committee, please email [antiracism@usw1998.ca](mailto:antiracism@usw1998.ca).

– **Bing Ye**, Committee of Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC)/Racialized Workers for Anti-Racism Committee Co-Chair



# WOMEN of STEEL Committee Report



**In May 2021, Kristy Bard and Mary-Marta Briones-Bird stepped down as co-chairs of the Women of Steel (WOS) Committee after serving for over five years. Nina Di Trapani, Liza Cote and Nambogga Sewali were nominated as the new co-chairs.**

**PHOTO:** All the beautiful Citrus Sunsets painted during the October 28, 2021 WOS Virtual Paint Night.

On August 25, 2021, we held a WOS Bargaining Discussion Circle to collect feedback from women in the Local about priorities the bargaining committee should focus on that affect women members. Topics included internal hiring, career advancement, and professional development, family and health related accommodation needs, discrimination, harassment and bullying, and health care benefits.

In the fall, the Committee hosted a virtual Paint Night Workshop. We purchased and mailed out the all the materials needed for the 36 members who had signed up to participate. Instructor Kayla from Paint Lounge then guided us all on how to create beautiful Citrus Sunset paintings. Members who participated commented afterwards on what a fun and relaxing evening it was, and how much they love their paintings!

Coming up in 2022 we are planning to hold a workshop on menopause in March. We have

also been discussing doing a donation drive for Dress for Success and holding conversations with women about health tips during the pandemic and into the future. Topics could include how to manage stress, benefits of nature in our workplace, self-community and staying connected, and possibly guided gratitude meditations for self-care, mindfulness, and coping strategies.

If you are interested in getting involved to help us plan these events, or if you have other ideas for WOS initiatives, please email us at [info@usw1998.ca](mailto:info@usw1998.ca).

– **Nina Di Trapani**, Women of Steel Committee Co-Chair

# HOW MENOPAUSE CAN IMPACT WOMEN in the WORKPLACE

**October 17, 2021 was World Menopause Day.** To mark the occasion the U of T Learning and Leadership Centre (LLC) hosted a lunch and learn with speaker Teresa Isabel Dias titled “Menopause: The Glass Ceiling No One Talks About”. With over 25 years’ experience in community pharmacy and a menopause practitioner certified by the North American Menopause Society, Teresa shared numerous tips for how women can effectively navigate this change in their lives, and what to look out for.

Although menopause is a normal physiological event that many women experience, Teresa talked about the frustration of many doctors not recognizing the signs. When women complain to their doctors about many of the symptoms of menopause, they are often misdiagnosed as suffering from depression or anxiety. As a result, many women don’t get the help they need and may not understand what is happening to them. This can translate into poor work performance, and sometimes progressive discipline if women don’t know to seek medical accommodations. Personal relationships can also be negatively impacted.



**PHOTO:** *Teresa Isabel Dias. Photo courtesy of [menopausED.org](http://menopausED.org)*

Given this, in 2013 Teresa founded [MenopausED](http://MenopausED), a health practice specializing in helping women navigate menopause to they thrive in their lives, relationships and careers.

Although menopause usually occurs to women between 45 to 55 years old, bothersome symptoms from perimenopause (the years leading up to menopause) can start for some women as early as their late 30s. Some symptoms can include hot flashes, night sweats, trouble sleeping, brain fog, anxiety, and low self-esteem.

So what is menopause anyway? It is the end

of ovarian function; the end of ovulation and fertility in a woman, marked by the cessation of a woman's period. Once a woman hasn't had their period for 12 consecutive months, they enter the postmenopausal phase.

In order to ensure women get the support they need if symptoms impact their work performance, it is important that organizations women work for are educated about menopause and sensitive towards the impacts. This is because workplaces have the duty to accommodate disabilities, which includes the duty to inquire if a manager believes that an employee's sudden poor work performance may be related to a health issue. At the same time, employees have the obligation to disclose medical information necessary to support an accommodation request. This can be difficult if their doctor doesn't properly recognize and diagnose what a woman is going through. For this reason, women need to advocate hard for themselves, and Teresa's MenopausED practice helps provide the tools for just that.

In the lunch and learn workshop, Teresa talked about how prescribing hormone medication can make a big difference in improving menopause symptoms. She also talked about other strategies that help reduce negative symptoms, such as regular exercise and eating whole foods (as opposed to highly processed foods that are high in refined sugars), and reducing alcohol and caffeine consumption. For myself, I found that when I changed my diet to eliminate spicy foods and started taking Yam Complex supplements, I was finally able to get my symptoms under control. Taking nature walks, and working near natural light and plants

also helped!

Having struggled with menopause in the workplace myself, and after listening to this highly informative workshop and talking with other women in the Local who have experienced similar difficulties, the Women of Steel Committee has decided to try to further raise awareness through hosting our own lunch and learn in collaboration with the Local's Health & Safety Committee. Since this is a women's health and safety issue, this can also be seen within the broader context of the United Steelworker's national [Raising the Bar on Women's Health and Safety](#) campaign.

Menopause and other effects of aging don't get much serious attention in our society, except as material for jokes. This can make it especially hard for women, and the men in their lives, to recognize the symptoms, and to feel confident enough to seek help. It's important for managers, stewards, and health and safety representatives to become familiar with menopausal symptoms, be aware of effective accommodation strategies, and feel comfortable enough to raise the topic with women who may be going through this change. Because if left unaddressed, it can result in silent suffering, damage to personal relationships, discipline for poor performance, and lost opportunities for promotion.

– **Nina Di Trapani**, Women of Steel Committee Co-Chair

**“Menopause and other effects of aging don't get much serious attention, except as material for jokes.”**



PHOTO: Students demanding divestment, Oct. 29, 2015.  
CREDIT: Milan Ilyckyj

# UofT Announces Plan to Divest from Fossil Fuels after NINE YEARS OF PRESSURE

On October 27, 2021, environmental activists across campus were surprised to hear [the announcement](#) from the President's Office that the University of Toronto (U of T) would be divesting from fossil fuels. Finally! This comes after many years of advocacy from our Local in solidarity with other student groups, unions and faculty pushing for the University to do more to reduce environmental degradation and take real leadership in the fight against climate change. In 2015, the President's Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Divestment from Fossil Fuels recommended the University

should at least partially divest overall—and immediately divest from Exxon Mobil. This committee was formed in response to the student-led campaign of Toronto350 and UofT350 advocating for U of T divestment, launched in 2012.

Instead of following the recommendation of his own hand-picked committee, President Gertler directed the University of Toronto Asset Management Corporation (UTAM), the body which manages pension and endowment funds at U of T, to pursue an investment approach that recognized ESG (environmental, social, and governance)

factors. This was detailed in a 14-point plan called [Beyond Divestment: Taking Decisive Action on Climate Change](#). Since “Beyond Divestment” didn’t actually move the University any closer to divesting, there was a great deal of disappointment from many in the campus community who had hoped the University would do better to actually lead global sustainability efforts, as it purports to.

When young people started mobilizing around global climate strikes and Friday for Future events in 2018, a group of progressive faculty got together wanting to help. Together with staff and students, we formed a coalition called [Divestment and Beyond](#). This name was a direct response to President Gertler’s call for us to go beyond divestment. Instead of not divesting, our approach was to emphatically say YES to divestment as a first step while advocating going beyond this to address other sustainability issues such as indigenous sovereignty, anti-racism, and worker rights. All of these issues are deeply interconnected under the umbrella of climate justice and waging an effective response to climate change. We pursued this work by strategizing together, hosting educational events, and making our voices heard in multiple articles published in campus media.

While we consider the recent announcement regarding divestment as a good first step, we must

acknowledge it doesn’t go far enough or fast enough to match the seriousness and urgency of the climate crisis. U of T commits to eliminating all direct investments in fossil fuel companies in the endowment fund within the next year. Indirect investments however – including those held by third-party fund managers – may not be divested until 2030! UTAM has also committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions no later than 2050. That’s a long time from now and we’ve already seen the rapidly increasing devastation caused by forest fires, heat domes, floods, record low and high temperatures and other extreme weather events that are becoming more common. Not to mention the numerous negative health impacts of polluted air and water.

Although the University cites the growing severity of

*Continued on page 36*



*PHOTO:* USW1998 members Justin Holloway, Kristy Bard and Natasja Vanderberg at the September 27, 2019 Climate Strike at Queen’s Park. *CREDIT:* Colleen Burke



# Embracing Your possibilities

## Finding Support & Fostering Hope through Therapy

When former Casual Unit member Allie Dainow worked at the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation at U of T, part of her role was to develop and analyze mental health surveys. Although it was fulfilling to look at the data and conceptualize trends, there was a part of her that knew she wanted to connect with these clients in a more meaningful and direct way. "I wanted to do more. Although I was contributing to mental health services, I felt far removed and disengaged because I was working on surveys and not really interacting with the clients." When a job opportunity became available to work at a family resource centre as a support worker, she pursued it. Since this role had direct client interactions with children, caregivers and parents, Dainow felt she was able to have a more immediate and direct impact. Dainow recalls: "many new parents, mostly mothers, would bring their children to the Centre to get a bit of a reprieve for an hour or so. These young working moms came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were not only juggling

multiple demands, but enduring traumatic life experiences." What Dainow soon discovered was many of these women were suffering from high levels of self-criticism, anxiety, depression, and isolation. They often couldn't meet the unrealistic demands they set for themselves or that others had placed on them. They needed more support in order to cope. It was these daily encounters and observations that compelled Dainow to complete a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at OISE and become a therapist so she could provide one-on-one support to others in similar situations.

Dainow acknowledges that initially, therapy can seem intimidating, but it's an important first step toward better mental health. Treatment can help improve your mood and relationships,

develop healthy self-worth, and feel confident in your ability to cope with challenges. "Mental health isn't something that is taught in schools," Dainow says. "We seem to learn at a very early age that certain thoughts and emotions can be unpleasant, and so many people begin to avoid them." However, through therapy one can educate themselves to understand and work through difficult thoughts and emotions rather than allowing them to go unacknowledged and fester. Therapy is a safe space to talk; discussing these concerns can bring a realization of what truly is going on and what to do about it. Dainow explains: "it's really important to feel like we have a place to talk about what's bothering us. It's not always easy for people to talk about their experiences, but it can be a reflective process and, in time, build self-awareness. It can help in reframing perceptions that are inaccurate or unhelpful and find ways to accept and cope with difficult aspects of our lives that can't be changed."

Dainow has started her own counselling practice treating people experiencing difficulties with anxiety, depression, self-worth, relationship struggles, communication issues and job dissatisfaction, including workplace bullying. She can work with patients to help them gain a greater understanding of themselves, as well as their experiences in their past and present context. She collaborates with patients to explore better coping mechanisms and practical strategies to make improvements with each individual's mental health. "It takes strength and commitment to acknowledge that there are parts of yourself and your life that you would like to change," Dainow says.

Her practice offers a number of different techniques such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment

Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), Psychodynamic, Mindfulness-Based, Compassion-Focused and Art Therapies. She has Master's degrees in Applied Social Psychology and Counselling Psychology, which have given her extensive knowledge in how to identify, understand and treat mental health concerns.

Dainow enjoys this work because "it's so interesting to hear about other people's lives and experiences. It's like stepping into someone else's world. I really like the fact that it gives us a chance to connect on a deeper, more authentic level than you often get in day-to-day interactions. Mental health challenges compromise people's potential." What she finds very powerful about therapy is that "it's about making people feel more hopeful, allowing them to rediscover and meet their utmost potential."

Dainow knows how important it is for clients to feel understood, heard and supported. She says that while therapy isn't exactly fun, she tries to make it more comfortable for clients by letting them know that it's okay to laugh and find humour in it. She uses creativity and flexibility to adapt different therapies to suit each client's needs.

For more information about her practice or to book a free consultation, please email [alliedainowtherapy@gmail.com](mailto:alliedainowtherapy@gmail.com) or call 647-918-7147. She offers sliding scale fees.

– **Margaret Bucknam**, Outreach & Communications Officer, USW 1998



# Songbird in our midst: A Profile of Heather Cherron

**A**dd a songbird to the list of talented people who are members of USW Local 1998.

Heather Cherron is the lead vocalist on the [Bills to Pay](#) song, commissioned for the Casual Unit bargaining video, [Precarity U](#). The song was played at the Local's December 16, 2020 holiday party and has been a hit opener for several Justice for Workers (formerly Fight for \$15 and Fairness) and Injured Workers Speakers School meetings.

Cherron says the song, which she arranged along with Melissa Morris, came out of her several years' experience working at U of T as a standardized patient on precarious casual contracts and the lead-up to the 2020-2021 round of Casual Unit bargaining, where the main issues were job security, improvements on low

pay and redress for not being granted benefits.

"I've always been eager to have some politics in my music," says Cherron. "Bills to Pay was a natural outcome of the work we've been doing to have workers on casual contracts at U of T be treated more fairly."

Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Cherron and her family relocated to Toronto when she was just a toddler. In high school, she started her lifelong interest in poetry, setting her poems to music. It was then that people told her she had a good voice and should sing. Then



came acting. The combination led her to study music theatre at Sheridan College, and years later she earned a Second City Scholarship.

### **Singing / songwriting career**

It was her singing and songwriting, however, where Cherron has had the biggest impact. While with the Big Shot Records label, she sang – and did some of the writing of – I Want to Take You Home, which was a top-40 song in Italy. She also sang Is That the Way You Love Me, which was a top-100 song in England. She also opened for Apollonia, an American singer and actor who, among other things, co-starred in the 1984 film Purple Rain.

Cherron says her singing/songwriting style follows no particular genre. “It’s a bit of what I hear and what I feel.” She calls it “verbatim” songwriting/singing.

This year, Cherron started a writing project headed by the University of Saskatchewan. She is workshoping her 10-minute play to be included in a collection of plays created by Act Three, a group of women writers. Production is scheduled for late March at the Akai Theatre pending COVID-19 restrictions. Cherron is hoping to have the script and the libretto for her musical Can I Get An Amen completed by the end of the year.

*(Notes: Heather Cherron is her artist name. Her married name is Heather Cherron von Atzigen. The original name of Bills to Pay was We All Have Bills to Pay. Here’s the link to hear the song: <https://bit.ly/3hZCRvr>. The other song on the record is You Can’t Change What You Don’t Know. For a select list of her work as a singer, songwriter and actor, see the sidebar on the next page.)*

### **Labour background**

In one of her first jobs, Cherron was injured after

being exposed to organic phosphates. Looking for the Workers’ Compensation office, she went to the Injured Workers’ Consultants (IWC) office on Danforth Street by mistake, and she has never looked back.

Even while recovering from an injury, Cherron was able to create and sing songs for the Justice Singers. “I found that I communicate better in song, and I’ve been doing it ever since,” says Cherron. She also became involved with the IWC’s Women of Inspiration, a group of mothers/daughters of those injured or of family who have been injured on the job. While with them, she took some of the labour issues and turned them into songs.

For her commitment to “improving the work environment and well-being of Ontario workers,” Cherron was presented with an award by the Workers Health & Safety Centre and the IWC. Today, she continues her association with IWC by facilitating classes of the Injured Workers Speakers School.

Cherron also has a long history with USW Local 1998, becoming a member at its founding in 1998 when she started working at U of T as a standardized patient in the Standardized Patient Program of the Faculty of Medicine. She is one of two stewards representing the more than 300 members who work as standardized patients.

– **Nick Marchese**, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education

## Heather Cherron'- Select Songs, Writings & Composing Credits

- **Bills To Pay** – Theme song composed for USW 1998 video **Precarity U (2021)**. [See the video here](#)
- **The Protest and The Roommates** – Co-wrote for Mixed Company Theatre
- Collaborated on writing scripts for educational videos and live teachings at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
- **Under Pressure** – For Mixed Company School Tour
- **Revi, Revi Alive** – For a musical workshop at the Alumni New Ideas Festival
- **Polk-o-dot Princess** – Co-wrote and performed at Word On The Street Festival
- **A Slice Of Life** – For a workshop at Page to Stage Festival held at A Space Gallery
- While under the Big Shot Records label, recorded and co-wrote **Is That The Way**, a top-40 hit in Italy, and **I Wanna Take You Home**, a top-100 hit in England
- Performed original songs with The Justice Singers at various events, including the annual June 1st Injured Workers' Day rally at Queen's Park
- Background vocalist for various artists, including The Nylons, 20th Century Rebels and Hi Bias

### Film/Television

- **Principal**, Mary Henderson, Toronto Fringe Theatre Short (2021)
- **Actor**, Mylan Centre for Collaborative Care (web series)
- **Actor**, Bonded Pairs (short)
- **Guest**, Degrassi: The Next Generation: Secret II
- **Guest**, Soul Food: What Women Want (TV series)
- **Actor/Dancer**, Blues Brothers 2000
- **Principal**, On the Other Side (short)
- **Principal/Co-host**, Polka Dot Door (TV Ontario)

### Theatre

- **Maizie** in DISS (Mixed Company Theatre, 2011 Dora nomination)
- **Donna** in Blue Suede Shoes (Showboat Festival)
- **Sister Robert Anne** in Nunsense II (Showboat Festival)
- **Parrot** in Birds of a Feather (Young People's Theatre Tour)
- **Chiffon** in Little Shop of Horrors (Stage Company & St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts)

**THE WORKER IN FILM** *Continued from page 9***Office Space (1999)**

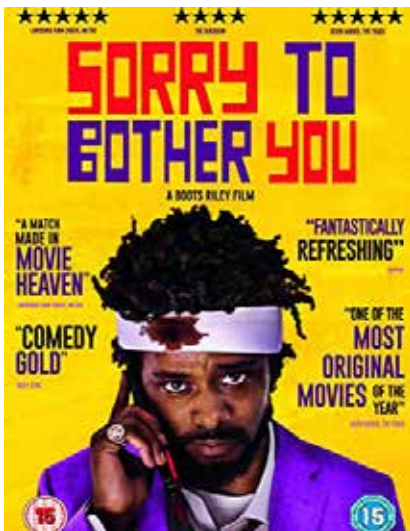
DIRECTOR: Mike Judge | CAST: Ron Livingston, Jennifer Aniston, Gary Cole, Ajay Naidu, David Herman, Stephen Root, John C. McGinley |

GENRE: Comedy | MAIN LANGUAGE: English

BRIEF SUMMARY: Being dissatisfied with their jobs, three white-collar employees decide to revolt against their greedy employer and micromanager. Inspired by his own experiences as a former engineer in Silicon Valley, the director-writer of this cult classic film has accurately captured the absurdities of corporate culture.

NOTABLE LINE IN FILM: *"Human beings were not meant to sit in little cubicles staring at computer screens all day..."*

STREAMING WEBSITE, as of Spring 2022:  
Disney Plus Canada

**Sorry to Bother You (2018)**

DIRECTOR: Boots Riley | CAST: Lakeith Stanfield, Tessa Thompson, Jermaine Fowler, Terry Crews, Steven Yeun, Omari Hardwick, Patton Oswalt, David Cross, Danny Glover | GENRE: Surrealist Dark Comedy | MAIN LANGUAGE: English | ACCOLADE: Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature

BRIEF SUMMARY: After a telemarketer (Lakeith Stanfield) discovers the secrets for achieving success in his workplace, he must choose between climbing the corporate ladder and helping his friends unionize against his employer.

NOTABLE LINE IN FILM: Cassius: *And, what I'm doin' right now won't even matter. Detroit: Baby, baby, it will always matter,*

STREAMING WEBSITE, as of Spring 2022: Netflix Canada

**Parasite (2019)** DIRECTOR: Bong Joon Ho | CAST: Kang-ho Song, Sun-kyun Lee, Yejoong Cho, Choi Woo-sik | GENRE: Dark Comedy Thriller | MAIN LANGUAGE: Korean | ACOLADES: Academy Award for Best Picture, Academy Award for Best Director, Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, Palme d'Or Award at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture



## UofT Divests from Fossil Fuels

*Continued from page 29*

the climate crisis as the reason for making this announcement now, we can't help but suspect it may have more to do with pressure from donors and the \$4 billion Defy Gravity fundraising campaign that was launched in December 2021. See for example this [opinion piece](#) written by our Divestment & Beyond colleagues.

While the University could have taken a much bigger leadership role had it made this announcement back in 2015, it is important to acknowledge that substantive positive social change happens almost exclusively through the struggles carried out by workers and their allies. While pressure from donors and the biggest fundraising campaign by any university ever were certainly factors, divestment from fossil fuels never would have happened were it not for the many students, alumni, faculty and staff working together for nearly a decade to push reluctant and

reticent senior administrators at the University in this direction. You can read a detailed [U of T Fossil Fuel Divestment Timeline](#) prepared by Anthropology graduate student Amanda Harvey-Sánchez as part of the Discovering University Worlds Working Paper #9, 2022 here. The fight for climate justice at U of T continues. We still need to get the managers of the University Pension Plan (UPP) to commit to divestment as well. We want the University to also work much faster towards achieving even more ambitious environmental goals for the future, so that we can have a future to enjoy the environment we share and the pensions we've worked so hard to earn. If you are interested in getting involved, please message [divestmentandbeyondUofT@gmail.com](mailto:divestmentandbeyondUofT@gmail.com) requesting to be added to our email list. Doing so is a simple step towards joining many others in helping to build the next chapter of the climate justice movement at U of T.

– **Kristy Bard**, Committee for the Environment, Climate Change & Sustainability, & **Justin Holloway**, OISE

## Workers in Film *Continued from page 35*

**BRIEF SUMMARY** Struggling to make ends meet, the Kim family begins to work for the wealthy Park family. Due to discrimination and socioeconomic precarity, however, their mutually beneficial relationship starts to deteriorate as their dog-eat-dog mentalities lead to unexpected outcomes.

**NOTABLE MEAL IN FILM:** Ram-Don, also known as Jjapaguri with Hanwoo | Jjapaguri with Hanwoo is a meal that consists of inexpensive instant noodles (a mixture of Chapagetti instant ramyun noodles and Neoguri instant udon-style noodles) and premium Korean beef (Hanwoo). In the context of Parasite, the Ram-Don dish can be viewed as a symbol for the friction between the rich and the poor.

**STREAMING WEBSITE**, as of Spring 2022: Netflix Canada

### Steel Drum

NEWSMAGAZINE

is published by

USW Local 1998

at the University of Toronto.

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SteelDrum is a member of the United Steelworkers Press

Association & the Canadian Association of Labour Media.

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