

# STEELD RUM

USW1998 NEWSMAGAZINE

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## Making Herstory: Achieving Pay Equity at St. Mike's



**Also inside:**

*District 6 Human Rights Committee's  
Black History Month Celebration 2023*

*Woman, Life, Freedom -  
the Struggle in Iran*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



## **Collective Bargaining**

The members of the U of T Staff-Appointed Unit's Negotiating Committee have now been elected, and preparations for bargaining with the university administration have kicked into high gear. The Committee has met to finalize the questions for the bargaining survey, distributed the surveys and held town halls to get more input from the membership. Next steps include the creation of bargaining proposals to present to the University of Toronto and the activation of the Staff-Appointed Unit's Communication Action Team and the Strike Committee.

Negotiating Committees for the Operations and UTM Dons have also been elected. Bargaining for these two groups has been delayed due to the negotiations bottleneck at U of T caused by the lockdown conditions of the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. The good news is that negotiating sessions with the University for the Dons in the Operations group are scheduled for April 6, 11, 13 and 18. We expect to start bargaining in September for the UTM group.

I am working with Tamara Vickery (Local 1998 Vice-President and Staff-Appointed Unit President) and Colleen Burke (International Union Staff Representative) to plan the scheduling of negotiations for other units - Staff-Appointed, U of T Casuals, U of T Dons, U of T Schools (UTS) and Victoria University. This coordination is critical

to creating pattern bargaining that will support the interests of the members of all our units and includes close collaboration with the Unit Presidents. More information on the upcoming round of bargaining in the Vic unit can be found in the Victoria University Report on page 40. See also the Staff-Appointed Unit 2023 Bargaining Timeline on page 10.

## **The Local's Bylaws**

In January, a reconstituted Local 1998 Bylaws Committee was struck with a mandate to review the Local's bylaws and propose changes. The Committee met several times in January and February and through that work agreed on a number of proposed changes to put forward to the membership.

According to the rules of the International Union, the proposed changes must be presented in three general membership meetings (GMMs). In the first meeting, the proposals are read without debate. In the second meeting the proposals are debated and in the third meeting members vote on them. So far, the proposed changes have been read in the March GMM. They will be debated in the April GMM and then voted on in the May GMM.

## **The Local's Financial Documents**

In the January GMM, I announced that the Local 1998 Executive had decided that there was a need to implement measures to increase the security of the Local's financial documents while still giving members of the Local access to them. All our financial statements were (and still are), completely exposed to scrutiny by people who are not members of the Local. This allows management to have access to the details of our finances. Members attending the January GMM provided constructive feedback on the plan and I committed to implementing a review of it through the lens of those comments. That review is ongoing and, while it is, the processes we have followed for the past several years will remain in place. The Executive is hoping to have a revised plan announced at the May GMM.

*John Ankenman, USW 1998 President*



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# Making Herstory:

## Achieving Pay Equity at St. Mike's



From left to right: St. Mike's members Fatima Lima, Santiago Vasquez, Vanessa Gonzalez, and Lisa Ou. Photos by Vanessa Gonzalez.

**In the early hours** of November 2, 2022, USW Local 1998 accomplished what once seemed like a Herculean task: the successful negotiation of a pay equity settlement for members of the University of St. Michael's College (St. Mike's) bargaining unit. The historic settlement, which was ratified by the membership last December, was led by Colleen Burke, USW 1998 Staff Representative; Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, USW 1998 Job Evaluation Coordinator; John Ankenman, USW 1998 President and myself, a member of the USW 1998 Job Evaluation team. In some ways, it felt a bit like crossing the finish line after anchoring a relay race except that it was no relay: the process had been almost a five-year long marathon.

While pay equity was implemented in the Staff-Appointed and Vic units in 2011 and 2013, respectively, the Job Evaluation (JE) process did not begin at St. Mike's until 2018, despite [Ontario's Pay Equity Act](#) coming into effect on January 1, 1988. In July 2018, management and the union agreed to distribute the joint JE questionnaire to members of the bargaining unit, which comprises approximately 60 employees at any given time. At the time, I worked as the Special Collections Library Technician in the Kelly Library at St. Mike's. When I reflect on that time, I recall that I was keenly aware that completing the questionnaire was an important part of JE. I could not have deeply understood then how monumental the impact of this process would be, or, more precisely, how it would achieve pay equity



*When I reflect on that time, I recall that I was keenly aware that completing the questionnaire was an important part of JE. I could not have deeply understood then how monumental the impact of this process would be.*

for so many St. Mike's members who work in female-dominated jobs.

But what is pay equity (PE)? You may have heard the term but what exactly does it mean? By the simplest definition, Ontario's Pay Equity Office and other sources define it as "equal pay for work of equal value". While the *Pay Equity Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.7* sets out the scope, implementation, methods, enforcement and administration of pay equity, legislation is often subject to legal interpretation. Indeed, during the later stages of negotiations with St. Mike's management, we consulted with one of

Canada's top legal experts, Jan Borowy, co-chair of the [Ontario Equal Pay Coalition \(EPC\)](#) and partner at Cavalluzzo LLP. Her decades of experience in the areas of employment/pay equity and labour law helped the Local navigate the murkier territory of the *Act* and advocate for our members in female-dominated jobs.

According to the *Ontario Human Rights Commission*, the provincial government passed the Pay Equity Act in 1987 "to recognize the value of women's work and eliminate gender discrimination" and that "this recognition is an intentional focus on the disparities of the pay between women and men for work of equal value, where the work requires equal or more skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions." In other words, the *Act* acknowledges what is known as the gender pay gap, which is not simply about inequitable compensation practices, but also about fundamental human rights.

In addition, there is evidence that the gender pay gap widens significantly for women who also identify as racialized, Indigenous, immigrant or migrant, elderly, 2SLGBTQ+, or as having a disability, since they may already face additional forms of discrimination. PE aligns with the elemental principles of human rights as enshrined in [Ontario's Human Rights Code](#), which prohibits discrimination,



Elmsley Place Gates, St. Mike's. Photo by Liesl Joson.

including gender-based discrimination, in the area of employment. This is a familiar refrain I recall Borowy stating time and time again and it is one that I take to heart, especially since I have been working as a Job Evaluation and Pay Equity Analyst at the Local since 2021. After all, the purpose of the Act is “to redress systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work performed by employees in female job classes.”

Based on Statistics Canada average annual earnings data, female employees in Ontario earned \$0.75 for every dollar their male counterparts earned in 2020. This represents a gender pay gap of 25%. Prior to the Local’s pay equity settlement with St. Mike’s, the gender pay gap was most evident in the facilities department where there were more than a dozen members who worked as cleaning staff - namely housekeepers and janitors, with the former being a female-dominated job. Until the JE process, there was no method to determine how large the gender pay gap was between female and male jobs at St. Mike’s. The evaluation process allowed the union and management to objectively assess any wage gaps across the entire bargaining unit. By jointly rating all the positions using the gender-neutral [SES/U JE system](#), both parties were able to clearly see the value of each position at St. Mike’s. We were now able to compare apples to apples.

In simple terms, if a male-dominated job and a female-dominated job are deemed to be of equal value, but the female-dominated job is compensated

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at a lower pay rate, the Act requires that an adjustment be made to the pay rate of the female job. Given that the union and management jointly determined that the housekeeping and janitorial positions were of equal value, it was incumbent upon St. Mike’s management to align the pay rate for housekeeping staff with that of their janitorial counterparts. Equalizing pay rates for these and other female-dominated jobs in the unit provides a necessary remedy to historical, systemic gender-based discrimination in compensation.

For members of St. Mike’s, the pay equity settlement is a momentous win, not only for the housekeeping staff, but also for 13 other female-dominated jobs that will receive pay equity adjustments. In concrete terms, 48.2% of the female jobs in the St. Mike’s bargaining unit will



Liesl Josen at a St. Mike’s College JE Presentation. Photo by Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.





Mary-Marta Briones-Bird giving a JE presentation to St. Mike's members. Photo by Liesl Josen.

*For members of St. Mike's, the pay equity settlement is a momentous win, not only for the housekeeping staff, but also for 13 other female-dominated jobs that will receive pay equity adjustments.*

receive pay equity adjustments, which accounts for 28.6% of the total number of jobs that existed in 2018 when the questionnaires were completed.

In addition to achieving PE, the union successfully negotiated a retroactivity period dating back to 2014 which will significantly impact long-time members as well as some who have moved on. Colleen Burke, the Local's Staff Representative, says enthusiastically, "I'm so pleased that we have finally implemented Job Evaluation at St. Mike's. This process has taken a long time. Current members and those who have retired are getting long overdue retro pay to close the

gender wage gap. We'll also have a fair wage grid going forward which will ensure equal pay for equal work at St. Mike's." Vanessa Gonzalez, who has worked as a housekeeper since 2018, remarks that the retro payment represents an opportunity to save money for her future goals like saving for a down payment on a home. Gonzalez and her colleague, Santiago Vasquez, add, "Both of us are feeling grateful to the union for their invaluable support." Isabel Louro, who retired after 17 years of service then returned to her housekeeping position part-time says, "I am feeling grateful because the retro payment is a big help as a support, along with my pension."

Despite this successful and hard-won settlement, it is imperative to keep things in perspective: pay equity adjustments are a result of female-dominated work having

been traditionally undervalued or underpaid, which is not a cause for celebration. The part worth celebrating is that the employer recognized, with no small amount of skillful negotiation and persuasion from the union, that 14 female-dominated jobs had been undercompensated and took the necessary actions to remedy the injustices. The other piece worth celebrating is that we have also negotiated

*Although we have achieved something monumental, we cannot afford to simply rest on our laurels. If our long-term objective is to eliminate systemic gender-based discrimination in compensation, it will take experience, persistence, vigilance and a principled approach. We are ready.*

a pay equity maintenance protocol which sets out procedures and processes for assessing positions in the bargaining unit, ensuring that the union and the employer commit to maintaining pay equity and, in doing so, upholding the fundamental human rights of all members. Reflecting on the union's pay equity win, Borowy states, "The Local's thorough preparation was critical to their success at the pay equity table. The technical aspects of pay equity require attention to details of wages, the job evaluation scores, hours worked and the collective agreement terms. By working together, preparing and staying focused on the goal to redress systemic discrimination, the pay equity committee was very successful."

As of the writing of this article, we are actively engaged in the second phase of JE at St. Mike's. Since the questionnaires were first distributed in 2018, several new positions have been created while others have changed substantially, requiring further evaluation and negotiation. Our Memorandum of Settlement with St. Mike's details the timelines for this work so that all positions at St. Mike's will be evaluated in a timely way, to maintain pay equity and guard against the emergence of new gender pay gaps in the future.

Although we have achieved something monumental, we cannot afford to simply rest on our laurels. If our long-term objective is to eliminate systemic gender-based discrimination in compensation, it will take experience, persistence, vigilance and a principled approach. We are ready.

**Note to readers:** The author has used some gendered language in this article—men, women, male, female, etc.—due to the terminology used in the *Pay Equity Act* and when paraphrasing sources of pay equity information. The author recognizes and supports the full diversity of the Local's membership, including those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

### **Acknowledgments**

Many people have contributed time and effort over the years to ensure that pay equity came to fruition for USW 1998 members at St. Mike's. We gratefully acknowledge the work of current and former members Manda Vrkljan, Steven Koschuk, Matt Doyle, Steven Craig, Astrida Ezergailis and Angela MacAloney. Without the willingness of St. Mike's members to engage in this process by completing the job evaluation questionnaire, none of this would have been possible. We also extend our gratitude to Jan Borowy from Cavalluzzo LLP and to Mary Lou Scott, former Staff Representative for USW 1998. Thank you!

*Liesl Joson, USW 1998 Job Evaluation & Pay Equity Analyst*

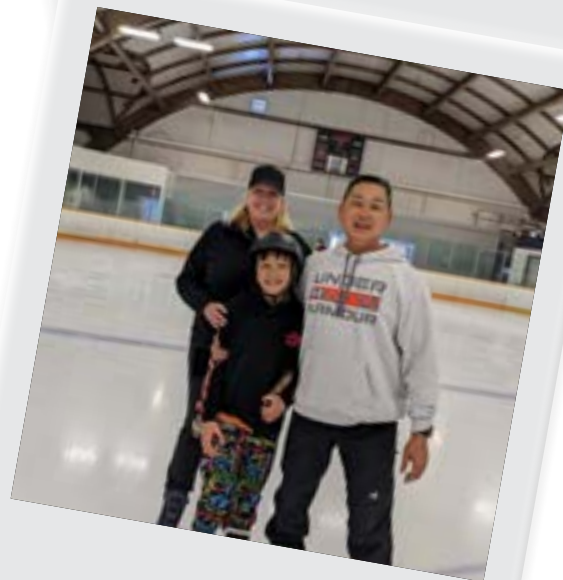


# USW Skates to Success: Sunday, Feb 12, 2023

**W**hat a great turnout for our first ever family skate event at Phil White Arena! This was the brainchild of our Vice-President and Staff-Appointed Unit President, Tamara Vickery. We had close to 70 members and their families in attendance. Ages ranged from 65 to our littlest learner at two years old. We had a couple of Timbits hockey players donning their favourite team jerseys. It was nice to see a variety of skill sets on the ice. There were a few adult learners who preferred the indoor rink to an outdoor one as it was smoother, warmer and it came with music! We offered up some union swag as well. The adults received camper-style enamelled mugs and double layer winter slouch hats. The kids collected a stress ball hockey puck and mini stick to continue the fun long after they left the arena. After a successful event, we hosted an online colouring extravaganza where kids could colour a picture and upload it to our Facebook page for a chance to win one of four \$25 gift cards of their choice.

We hope to hold more family-friendly events like this for members in the future.

*Margaret Bucknam, USW Local 1998 Outreach and Communications Coordinator and Communications Committee Co-Chair*



*USW 1998 kids and their parents enjoying our first family skate event.  
Photos by Richard Waters.*

# U of T Staff-Appointed Unit

## 2023 Bargaining Timeline



Our 2023 Staff-Appointed Negotiating Committee. Back row (Left to right): John Ankenman, Zack Sholdra, Justen Bennett, Victoria Simpson, Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Aziz El Mejdouby, Rabia Nasir. Front row (Left to right): Ruxandra Pop, Colleen Burke, Richard Waters, Audrey Fong, Katrina Marshall, Tamara Vickery, Sukhpreet Sangha. Photo by Margaret Bucknam.

### The Bargaining Process

The collective bargaining process is a negotiation between the Union and the University. The goal is to reach an agreement that suits both parties, known as the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). We negotiate our contract every three years, and our current contract is set to expire on June 30, 2023. Until a new agreement has been reached, the most recent collective bargaining agreement remains in effect.

The CBA determines the terms and conditions of our employment and spells out compensation, work schedules, benefits, entitlements and our rights as U of T employees, so it is important to get the strongest contract possible.

### Electing your Negotiating Committee

One of the first steps in the process is for members to elect their Negotiating Committee. Our committee was elected by in-person and electronic voting from February 9 to 13, 2023. Your 2023 Negotiating Committee is made up of the following members:

- Justen Bennett, USW 1998 Grievance Officer; Rotman School of Management
- Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, USW 1998 Job Evaluation Pay Equity Coordinator; Faculty of Information
- Aziz El Mejdouby, Steward; Central Administration
- Audrey Fong, Steward; School of Graduate Studies
- Katrina Marshall, Chief Steward; Faculty of Dentistry
- Rabia Nasir, Steward; University of Toronto Scarborough
- Ruxandra Pop, USW 1998 Grievance Officer; Faculty of Law
- Sukhpreet Sangha, Faculty of Law
- Zack Sholdra, USW 1998 Financial Secretary; Kinesiology & Physical Education



- Victoria Simpson, Cardiovascular Sciences Collaboration Specialization in The Temerty Faculty of Medicine
- Tamara Vickery, USW 1998 Staff-Appointed President and USW 1998 Vice-President; Accommodated Testing Services
- Richard Waters, USW 1998 Administration & Outreach Assistant; University of Toronto Mississauga
- Colleen Burke, USW 1998 Staff Representative
- John Ankenman, USW 1998 President

The Local has sent out a survey to the membership to collect your bargaining priorities. The local has hosted town hall meetings to review the issues that are important to members. Through the town hall consultations and survey results, and with input from our Health & Safety Coordinator and Grievance Officers, the Negotiating Committee will come up with a list of proposals to bargain. Typical issues are wages, alternative work arrangements, job security and improvements to the benefits package. Over the years, the Union has consistently bargained contracts improving upon wages, benefits and working conditions for our members.

### **Communication Action Team (CAT)**

We will reignite the CAT by asking members to join the committee. The goal of this committee is to share information about bargaining activities with members and get members more engaged with the bargaining process. This can be done by attending union functions, putting up information on union bulletin boards and having conversations with colleagues to help get the information out to members. CAT members also bring back information to the Local's leadership and are critical to building solidarity and union power.





### **Summer Bargaining Events**

During the summer months, there will be plenty of opportunities to attend the Union's solidarity events. We will host ice cream pop-ups, share information on bargaining at our summer BBQs and hold other information sessions as needed.

### **Bargaining**

Even before the Union and the University meet at the bargaining table, there is a research phase that takes place. The Negotiating Committee

# ✓ BARGAINING TIMELINE

- 1 Election of the Negotiating Committee**  
Members elect their Negotiating Committee to conduct negotiations on their behalf. 
- 2 MEMBER SURVEY & TOWN HALL MEETINGS**  
You will receive a survey to let the Union know what your bargaining priorities are and areas you would like your Negotiating Committee to focus on. Survey results are then presented to each campus. 
- 3 Empowering Members & Building Solidarity**  
The Local's Communication Action Team (CAT) is mobilized to support negotiations by facilitating the building of membership solidarity. The Strike Committee works to create a plan that leads the Local to be prepared for the possibility of job action, because the best way to avoid job action is to be fully prepared for it. 
- 4 Creation of Bargaining Proposals**  
Your Negotiating Committee will take into account your input and draft a number of proposals. 
- 5 BARGAINING WITH THE EMPLOYER**  
Negotiations between the Union and University usually take several weeks of bargaining. Both sides present their rationale behind their proposals. 
- 6 STRIKE MANDATE VOTE**  
A strong **YES** strike mandate vote shows the University that members are united and support the demands of their Negotiating Committee.
- 7 RATIFICATION VOTE**  
Members vote to either accept or reject the new tentative agreement that was negotiated. 
- 8 RATIFYING THE CONTRACT**  
Approving the contents of the new Collective Bargaining Agreement. A deal is struck! 

## BARGAINING 2023!



will review our current and past contracts, look into specific grievances, go through the survey material and listen to members at town hall meetings, in order to prepare to negotiate with management. Once that is done, both the Union and the University exchange proposals. Each party can suggest amendments, deletions or additions to the collective agreement.

### **Strike Mandate Vote**

A strike mandate vote invites members to authorize job action up to and including a strike if the University refuses to bargain a fair collective agreement. A strong strike mandate does not mean we will go on strike, but actually is the best way to avoid one because it shows the University that members are serious about the Union's proposals and willing to take job action if necessary. If there is a weak strike mandate, the University will likely try to take advantage of that by more strongly resisting improvements to the

contract and by pushing harder for concessions. A strong strike mandate vote empowers the Negotiating Committee at the bargaining table.

### **Ratification Vote**

The ratification vote is when members vote on our tentative agreement and if approved, the agreement is ratified, and we will have a new collective agreement in place.

Throughout the collective bargaining process, one of the most important things members can do is to stay informed of what is happening. Watch for bargaining updates in the e-newsletter and sign up to receive important text messages from your Negotiating Committee by sending a text to **32323 and entering 1998**.

*Margaret Bucknam, USW 1998 Outreach & Communications Coordinator*

# **Profile: Kevon Stewart,** **Assistant to the Director of District 6**

**O**n **March 7, 2023**, USW Local 1998 Human Rights Committee Co-Chairs Scott Eldridge and Gary Horenkamp interviewed Kevon Stewart on behalf of Steel Drum. Kevon is part of the USW District 6 leadership as the Assistant to the Director of District 6, Myles Sullivan. Kevon is regarded as a pioneer in the Steelworkers and we are honoured to have had this opportunity to interview him.

Kevon was born in Jamaica and moved to Canada with his family when he was just seven years old. He studied Kinesiology and Geography at York University with plans on becoming a teacher. After he graduated, he started working at Samuel Strapping, a steel plant in Scarborough's Warden Ave. and St. Clair Ave. East area. The plan was to work at the steel plant for five years - max. He had a vision of working towards opening his own community centre. But an invitation from his local union president to get involved sparked something and



*Kevon Stewart, Assistant to the Director, District 6. Photo by Lorei De Los Reyes.*



he hasn't looked back since. Twenty-nine years later, he is still a proud Steelworker.

At his Local union president's invitation, Kevon's first involvement was participating in a USW course and providing feedback on his experience. He didn't know what to expect - up until that point, he only had a "narrow view of what the union was about." But as he stepped into 25 Cecil St. for his first USW course, he was amazed by the quality of education that existed within the union.

Afterwards, he took all the union courses available to him to further his knowledge and experience in the union. At a *Bargaining to Win* course, Kevon was fortunate to meet former District 6 Director Harry Hynd, who was facilitating the course. Director Hynd and other union leadership saw something special in Kevon and asked if he wanted to pursue other avenues in the union. Eventually, at Director Hynd's recommendation, Kevon was called up by the District 6 Director at that time, Wayne Fraser, to be mentored. Although Kevon wasn't sure what he would be mentored for, he agreed and came out on a three-month union release to work with Stuart Deans, the USW Area Coordinator for Toronto.

He thought he'd return to the plant after the three-month release, but his term kept being extended. By February 2004, Kevon was hired as a permanent, full-time Staff Representative. He would go on to service USW local unions in Toronto and Pickering, with members working in sectors such as steel, nuclear energy, service, health care and much more. In 2019, he moved to the District 6 office and became the District 6 Coordinator, eventually becoming Assistant to District 6 Director Myles Sullivan in 2022.

### **SD: How would you articulate the benefits of being a Steelworker?**

KS: There's several benefits. When you come into a unionized shop, you have the collaboration of all the members there willing to work and support you. You have a voice. You might not have full knowledge of all the health and safety concerns at the plant, but you have a health and safety committee there willing to talk to you and guide you. No one comes into a job looking to

cause trouble. But if something does happen, the grievance process is there so you don't have to take on the employer by yourself. There's a dispute mechanism that's in place that allows you the opportunity to be represented. Unionized members also have negotiated wages, benefits, pension plans and job security.

Steelworkers can also have opportunities to influence the union itself at higher levels. That's not to say that what happens at a local level is not as important as what's happening higher up, but the players and dynamics are different. At the District level, we need to strategize to ensure that what we do, regardless of what level you are at, the message is the same. It's not a one-way street. Myles and I can do whatever we want at this end, and we might think it's the greatest idea in the world - but if we can't get the local union and area council leadership to buy into it, it's a moot point. We take on this responsibility to make sure that whatever we do from the union side is up, down and down, up. It's not just a one-way street and we look to and rely on members for support. If something doesn't benefit our members in the end, what good are we doing? So, the rallies we do, the lobbying we do, the collective bargaining we do, it's all to ensure the bottom actually gets an opportunity to move up and grow. At the end of the day, we can't do this by ourselves.

*We see what happens when you don't have unions. Workers are attacked, stagnated, and terminated. Benefits don't grow. Coming into a unionized workplace means everything.*

### **SD: Looking at the big picture of the United Steelworkers, what could be done differently or better in the future?**

KS: There are opportunities no matter what level you look at. We want to get the labour

movement back to where it should be – this means that our members come first. There’s this big battle between social and union issues, but we don’t see them being different. What we see differently is how we approach them. In our minds, if we could allow access to organizing certification where people could join unions without fear of repercussions, then it would be easier to get jobs that pay better wages and benefits so people can afford housing and food and so much more in life. That then deals with the social issues. For us, that is paramount. That’s what we need to keep improving on.

But, at the same time, we have some work to do internally as well. We’re doing everything we can to the best of our abilities, but we’re not perfect. One of the things I am proud of is to have the opportunity to speak about being the first Black person in a USW leadership role in Canada. It’s not only for me, but so others can see it’s possible. There are valid concerns about the leadership of the union and how it is not reflective of the members that we represent. People say, “You’re only one,” and they’re right. But, that’s where it starts and people now see it’s possible. You don’t have to be the Director, the Assistant to the Director, or a Coordinator. You could be a Local President or Vice-President. It just means that opportunities now exist because it’s been done and people are seeing it.

Another thing I think we could do better is find ways to communicate and work with each other. That is the key focus for us right now because although District 6 includes Ontario and the Atlantic provinces, we find that we’re still very Ontario-focused. That is not to say that we would ever alienate our Atlantic members, but we need to find a better way to include them. Until we do that, those challenges will be there. Some locals are machines in terms of communicating with their members, but others are not. It happens at the local and district levels. We’re trying to find better tools and mechanisms to communicate with our members. Part of that is something Myles said, which I really respect, is that instead of being in the office, let’s try to get out as often as we can. So, we’ve been hitting the road doing that, travelling to meet with members wherever they may be.

### **SD: What is involved in your position as**

### **Assistant to the Director of District 6?**

KS: It’s a huge but rewarding position. We basically try to run the District. We are 78,000 members strong. We are a union that’s involved in every sector of the economy. We are viewed by many as leaders. Myles and I don’t take the credit because this doesn’t happen without the members. But it’s a lot of interacting with affiliates,

*One of the things I am proud of is to have the opportunity to speak about being the first Black person in a USW leadership role in Canada. It's not only for me, but so others can see it's possible.*

political leaders and employers at higher levels to ensure labour disputes are resolved. We have the ability to work with committees and reach out to upper management to address important issues. For example, Myles was just in St. John’s, Newfoundland meeting with the RCMP about the flash fire at a refinery, which killed one worker and injured seven others.

It’s hard to say what we do day-to-day because it changes by the minute. We manage staff and local unions and area councils to ensure that policies are being followed and everything is in place for local unions to function. There are constitutional and local union bylaws that we ensure are abided by, for example, through commission hearings. It’s rewarding because no matter what decision is made, we know it directly impacts somebody’s life. And everything that we try to do from this end is to have a positive outcome on somebody.

### **SD: Where do you see yourself in the future?**

KS: The good thing now is we’ve kind of broken the ceiling, haven’t we? Since the ceiling has been broken, the sky’s the limit. There was never



a time in my 19 years as USW staff or my 29 years as a USW member, when I thought I wanted to be the Assistant to the Director or I wanted to be the Director. But I'm here now. Wherever my path leads me, I will follow.

**SD: What was the most rewarding day you ever had as a Steelworker?**

KS: The first one was my first rally in Ottawa. I remember leaving my plant in Scarborough, driving down to 25 Cecil St. to meet a group of people and take a bus to Ottawa. It was unbelievable because there were so many people coming together to travel to Ottawa to rally. I'd never rallied or participated in a protest like that in my life. We got off the bus with our big flags and chanting and I thought, "I finally get to dispel the negative connotations of what the media portrays unions to be." For me, that first rally will always be priceless.

The second was my first arbitration award. When you become a Staff [Representative], the expectation is you're going to win every single arbitration that you embark upon. Realistically, we all know that's not reasonable. For me, I got my butt handed to me six times in a row before

I got my first victory. And it wasn't the first victory that was so memorable. It was getting beaten, kicked down six times prior to that. My first victory happened to be for an individual that had been off work for a long time. He wasn't fabricating his illness and we were successful in proving that. And the happiness and the joy that came out of that individual's face was a positive reinforcement of the work that we do. Him getting his job back after that is something I'll never forget. There is nothing better than that.

**SD: On February 18th, the District 6 Human Rights Committee held their first formal Black History Month Dinner and Dance. What are your thoughts on that event?**

KS: I applaud the committee for organizing it. The theme of "The Firsts" was unbelievable. The Honourable Jean Augustine, who was the first Black female Member of Parliament (MP) and who introduced the motion for Canada to recognize Black History Month in 1995, was there. Roxanne Brown, the first Black International Vice-President at Large was there. And I am also a 'first.' When I think about 'the first,' I think opportunities. Being on the same stage with all



*Roxanne Brown, International Vice-President at Large (left) and Kevon Stewart, District 6 Assistant to the Director (right) speaking at the February 18, 2023 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photos by Kai Lai.*

these 'firsts,' you get to see a window into a struggle of a whole community. It's not about me anymore. It's about whoever else has aspirations and can now see it's possible.

I'll never forget being on that stage talking about being the 'first' alongside those others. Being the first of something comes with a lot of responsibilities. The responsibility that I will embark upon is to make sure I'm not the last. I think that needs to be made loud and clear. I think we have an obligation, a duty to not be a unicorn. There's more that exists. We just need to keep working to make sure that people are given the equal opportunity to succeed. And you know what? If I'm that person to break that glass, I'm humbled, I'm honoured and I appreciate it. But there's so much more work to do. And I know for a fact, we will do it.

Not every district has that kind of celebration. Our district can continue to be leaders and inspire other districts and the International Union. When you have a guest like Roxanne Brown showing up and participating, it speaks volumes.

*I'll never forget being on that stage talking about being the 'first' alongside those others. Being the first of something comes with a lot of responsibilities. The responsibility that I will embark upon is to make sure I'm not the last.*

The union is truly the greatest place. I love what I do, I love the people who I meet and work with and the opportunities that come up every day. It's different. It's challenging. And I think honestly, one of the best things for me. We're all wired differently and you can't really prepare for everything. Like this interview today, I didn't



*Kevon Stewart (left) and Earl Samuels received an award in the category of "In recognition of your outstanding Contributions to the Advancement and Inclusion of Equity Seeking Groups" at the February 18, 2023 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kai Lai.*

know the questions in advance, but I came and I participated. That's how it is here. You don't know what's going to happen, but you must react and fix it because people are relying on you for an answer. Our answer is always what's best for our members. No matter what we do, it's about what's best for our members.

Want to watch this full interview? Check out the video posted on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYZCSVqpCe4>

Scott Eldridge and Gary Horenkamp,  
Standardized Patient Program and Human Rights  
Committee Co-Chairs

## District 6 Human Rights Committee's **Black History Month Celebration 2023**



*The Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine and Mark Austin at the February 18 District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kai Lai.*

**On February 18**, the District 6 Human Rights Committee (D6 HRC) hosted its 4th Annual Black History Month (BHM) Celebration, Dinner and Dance, which was its first in-person event since the onset of the pandemic. The event was generously funded by the USW Family and Community Education Fund (FCEF). Additional sponsorship was provided by USW at all levels, and other labour affiliates. I would be remiss to not mention the sponsorship of a table for Local 1998 members by Rhonda McEwen, the "First" Black President of Victoria University.

Some of the sponsors provided additional gifts for door prizes, which were presented by Mayson Fulk, D6 HRC co-chair. The [Coalition of Black Trade Unionist \(CBTU\)](#) provided two ice level tickets to a Toronto Maple Leafs Game. [Union Savings](#), an organization that provides Union members with



discounts on a wide range of products and services, provided \$500 in Visa gift cards. Paris Entertainment provided two balloon columns. Lastly, Sylvia Boyce, the new USW National Office Health and Safety Manager, personally provided a \$100 gift certificate for The Keg restaurant. We are grateful to all our sponsors for their generous donations.

In October 2022, a subcommittee made up of Black and Latino members of the D6 HRC was formed to plan the celebration based on their lived experience and culture, which included West Indian, African, and Latino backgrounds. Subcommittee members were Raul Gutierrez, Local 7536; Sheku Koroma, Local 5296; Earl Samuel, Local 2787; and Mark Austin, Local 1998. The subcommittee asked that the non-Black or Latino members of the D6 HRC be allies and assist in implementing its visions for the celebration.

The welcoming address at the celebration was presented by [Myles Sullivan](#), District 6 Director, who stressed the need to not only celebrate BHM in February, but all year around. He also spoke of the need for USW and organized labour to continue the struggle for equality. The



*Andria Babbington speaking at the February 18 District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kai Lai.*

subcommittee thought it would be beneficial to implement Sullivan's vision by having all the District's committees present and to work in collaboration and/or provide assistance at their respective events. A special thank you to all the various D6 committee members who assisted.

The subcommittee named the theme of the event the "First". All of the speakers were the first Black or Latino people in their respective, and substantial, positions of leadership and influence. The keynote speakers were the [Hon. Dr. Jean Augustine](#), the "First" female Black woman elected to the House of Commons, and the person who solely championed the legislation that created Black History Month across Canada; and [Roxanne Brown](#), the "First" Black female USW International Vice-President at Large who has done exceptional work for the advancement of equity-seeking groups in the United States. Other speakers included:

- Andria Babbington, the "First" Black, female, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.
- Kevon Stewart, the "First" Black USW Assistant to the District 6 Director.
- Andrea Vásquez Jiménez, the "First" female Latino member of the ONDP to run for office in the York Centre riding.

All of the speakers gave powerful speeches about their plights and lessons learned as youth, in adulthood, and throughout their labour and/or political careers as immigrants to Canada on their journeys to their positions as "First".

The subcommittee was unanimously in favour of presenting trophies inscribed with the wording, "In recognition of your contributions to the advancement and inclusion of equity-seeking groups" to all the speakers. Additional trophies were presented to Janet Moffat, D6 HRC Chair, for her continued work on D6 committees; to Brian Champ, one of many members of the [Toronto East Anti-Hate Mobilization \(T.E.A.M.\)](#), which includes Local 1998 members Christine

*All of the speakers gave powerful speeches about their plights and lessons learned as youth, in adulthood, and throughout their labour and/or political careers as immigrants to Canada on their journeys to their positions as “Firsts.”*

Beckerman and Irshad Osman, for their ongoing advocacy around social justice issues; to Myles Sullivan, D6 District Director, and [Marty Warren](#), USW Canadian National Director, for their ongoing commitment to hiring staff from equity-seeking groups and advocacy on behalf of these groups.

Setting a precedent and not following the status quo of Black events that often offer the same types of food and entertainment was a goal of the subcommittee. Food such as Trinidadian Chinese-style chicken, fried rice, chow mein noodles, roti, and pholourie was provided by [Island Mix Restaurant and Lounge](#); King fish and callaloo veggie mix from [Rasta Pasta](#); Caribbean desserts provided by [Wholesome Foods](#); as well as Latin American dishes such as ceviche from [Lacevecheria](#) and empanadas from [My Empanada](#) were served at the event. Beverages included those that are made and commonly consumed in the West Indies, Africa, and Latin America.

Again, showcasing the diversity of Black and Latino culture, local artist and budding rap and R&B star [O’Deriic](#) sang the Canadian and Black National Anthems. International comedian and actor [Patrick Hays](#) had attendees in gut-busting laughter. [Kolor Brown](#), a multi-talented artist, and the Vivid Kolors Band provided a performance of original pieces set to the smooth backing sounds which incorporates R&B, House and Neo Soul

music. [Maractu Mar Aberto](#) provided an Afro-Latino drumming performance which is deeply rooted in Brazilian culture. [Alpha Rhythm Roots](#) provided an interactive West African drumming performance that had the entire 300+ attendees on their feet singing, dancing and clapping. [DJ Dave Rankin](#) played his specialty music known as Afro House, not to be confused with Afro beats. Jamaican dancehall pioneer and legend [Ian Master Mixx](#) (DJ) played Soul music from the Motown era, as well as Reggae, Hip Hop, R&B, and Calypso.

Limited-edition original art prints created by [Art by Kolor](#) were given away as door prizes. Kolor also painted a “one-off” art piece that was presented to Myles Sullivan and Kevon Stewart that will be placed on display at the District 6 office. The painting features the image of a Maasai Warrior from Kenya draped in authentic traditional “Shuka cloth,” often known as the ‘African blanket’, that was gifted to Kolor a few years back. The piece also incorporates a traditional Maasai wooden stick used to signify power and leadership that are only presented to men by women who make and bead them by hand after carving them out of one large piece of wood.

A USW T-shirt given to all attendees of the event featured an outline of the map of Africa with words of the former Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie’s October 4, 1963 [address at the General Assembly of the United Nations \(UN\)](#). Selassie’s 1963 UN address is often mistakenly attributed to Bob Marley, who used it as the lyrics of his song titled [“War.”](#)

Local 1998 members attended the event in full force making up over 10% of the 300+ in attendance. I would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions of current, past, and retired members of Local 1998 that were instrumental in the success of the D6 HRC BHM celebration.

P.C. Choo, Local 1998’s former Vice-President and Job Evaluation Coordinator, arranged for the Hon. Dr. Jean Augustine to speak at the

event. Their friendship spans over three decades dating back to the onset of Dr. Augustine's political career, which he spoke about while introducing her at the event.

Margaret Bucknam, Local 1998's Outreach and Communication Coordinator, who worked with me, usually at 6 am in the morning, or after work hours to create the flyer for the event and order swag, among many other things.

Gabriele Simmons, former Local 1998 Casual Unit member, who is now the Coordinator of the FCEF at the USW Canadian National Office. She was active in liaising and providing expert advice to the subcommittee from the funding application process, straight through to the overwhelming success of the event.

Candace Zinkweg of Local 1998's Vic Unit's Food Services Department, who coordinated the elegant place settings and worked on the details of the food service in collaboration with Brampton's [Catering by Gregory's](#), the catering company that she worked with straight out of high school and helped build into the successful business it has become today. Catering by Gregory's took the left-over food and donated it to Brampton's ["Night's Table"](#) that for over 29 years has served the needs of people dealing with issues of poverty and homelessness in the Peel Region.

Toni Eyre, Local 1998's former Financial Secretary, did not hesitate in accept my invitation and offer to assist in selling raffle tickets. She sold over \$1700 in raffle tickets, with the help of Scott Eldridge, Local 1998's HRC co-chair and member of the D6 HRC.

In my opinion, and based on the feedback provided by attendees, the D6 HRC BHM Celebration was a resounding success and unprecedented for a District 6 committee event. I look forward to a bigger and better D6 HRC BHM Celebration in 2024 for its 5th anniversary milestone event!

*Mark Austin, USW 1998 Health and Safety Officer and Recording Secretary*



*Kolor Brown presenting his art at the February 18 District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kolor Brown.*





# Steadfast: The Jean Augustine that I Know

*Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine speaking at the February 18, 2023 District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kai Lai.*

**On February 21, 2023**, USW Local 1998 screened the documentary “Steadfast: The Messenger and the Message” - an uplifting and heartwarming story of the life of the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine.

The film began with Jean’s childhood dreams of becoming a teacher back in her native Grenada. It traces her humble beginnings to 1960, the year she chose to emigrate to Canada. The film focuses on her many achievements after she landed in Canada. Throughout her journey, she remained steadfast in her ideals and passions.

I have known Jean Augustine for a long time - 30 years to be exact. I first met Jean when I volunteered on her campaign in 1993. She had just been nominated as the Liberal candidate for my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I was inspired by what she stood for.

One of the many things I learned from Jean is that you do not allow adversity to define who you are. The first instance was when Jean applied to come to Canada. Although Jean was already a qualified teacher, she was only allowed to come to Canada as a domestic servant under the Canadian-Caribbean Domestic Program in 1960. However, she was steadfast in her goals and was determined to make good in her new country.

Once she settled down, she tried to enroll at OISE to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree but was met

with fierce opposition from the educators there. Again, she remained steadfast in her aims, and she eventually prevailed and was admitted into the program. She then became a teacher at the Metro Separate School Board. After obtaining a Masters in Education, she was promoted to Principal. Despite her busy schedule, she served on the boards of Sick Kids, the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and the Harbourfront Corporation before becoming the Chair of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority.

In 1993, Jean was tapped by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien to be the Liberal candidate for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. For those of us living in the riding, we knew that history was about to be made. If elected, Jean would become the first African-Canadian woman to be elected to the House of Commons. We knew that there was another Black woman, Hedy Fry, who was running in a Vancouver-area riding. But we also knew that Vancouver was three hours behind Toronto, so we were determined that Jean would make history by becoming the first Black woman to be elected to Parliament. The rest, as they say, is history.

Even before Jean was elected M.P., the racists began to come out of the woodworks. I remember the campaign office receiving hate mail. One in particular stood out in my mind: a photo of Jean with both her eyes burnt out accompanied with a threat of violence. However, once again, Jean remained steadfast and did not allow adversity to define her. Years before Michelle Obama uttered those famous words, "When they go low, we go high", Jean was already practicing it. She ignored all those naysayers and instead, worked harder with greater determination and devotion. She went on to greater heights of success - from Member of Parliament to Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet Minister and later, Deputy Speaker, while those tired old racists were left twisting in the wind, wallowing in their own wounded pride.

Among Jean's many achievements, in 1995, she introduced a motion in Parliament to officially recognize February as Black History Month across Canada. It was a fitting tribute to Jean's determination and steadfastness that her motion received unanimous consent in the House of Commons.

I was one of those who was inspired by Jean's success in 1993 to run as a Public School Trustee in Etobicoke in 1994. With Jean's help and encouragement, I won in a landslide of just 31 votes!

In recognition of all her contributions, the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario were conferred on Jean in 2009 and 2020, respectively.

Jean, you have inspired so many of us, not only among members of the Black community, but among all Canadians. Thank you for all that you have done. Canada - indeed the world - is a much better place because of you.

*P. C. Choo, former USW 1998 Vice-President and Editor of Steel Drum*



*P.C. Choo speaking at the February 18 District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance. Photo by Kai Lai.*

# Grievance Committee Report 2022

**O**ur **Collective Agreement** (Article 9) provides a procedure if a member believes the University has violated the Agreement. In the first step, the member and Union informally try to resolve the complaint with the University. If the complaint is not resolved at the informal step, the member can decide to file a formal grievance (in some circumstances the Union can file a grievance on its own behalf). Both the informal and formal processes are **time-sensitive**; if you believe the University may have violated the Agreement, **don't wait—reach out to the Union for advice as soon as possible**.

Overall, the number of informal complaints and grievances for 2022 and 2021 are as follows:

Step/Outcome	2022	2021
Informal Step Initiated	53	112
Informally Resolved/Not Filed	16	19
Grievances Filed	91	98
Grievances Settled	34	51
Grievances Withdrawn	29	24

These numbers tell only part of the story. Among other ways of looking at the data, here are two which provide useful information: looking at types of grievances, and looking at grievances by area within the University.

## Grievances by Type

Unjust termination, non-probationary and probationary, together accounted for about 22% of all grievances filed in 2022. This type only accounted for 10% in 2021, down from 17% in 2020. Earlier annual reports indicate that this type represented only 8% of grievances filed in 2019, and even fewer in 2018. This appears to indicate a significant increase. In general, where it is reasonable for the University to impose discipline, the discipline should be progressive. However, members should know that being found lying, stealing (regardless of amount), insubordinate, or in breach of confidentiality has a high chance of the University resorting to termination even if there is no prior discipline on record.

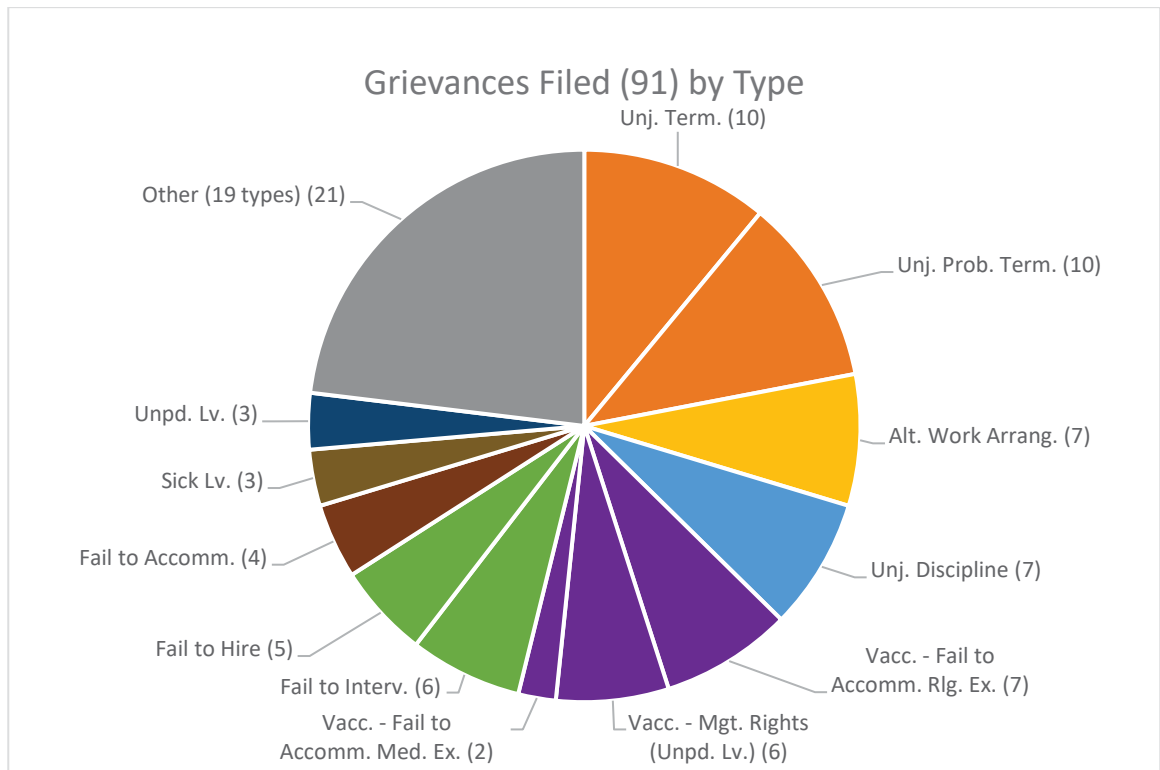
Three types of grievances were tied for second place, at around 7.5% of grievances filed: Alternative Work Arrangements, Unjust Discipline, and Failure to Accommodate – Religious Exemptions to Vaccine Guideline. Alternative Work Arrangements are shaping up to be a “hot button” issue for members in upcoming bargaining; this type of grievance was not even reported as a separate category prior to the pandemic. On the other hand, Unjust Discipline is an ongoing area of concern; it accounted for 25% of grievances filed in both 2021 and 2020, and 19% in 2019.

The University of Toronto, Victoria University, St. Michael's College and University of Toronto Schools implemented unprecedented policies during the first couple of years of the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, improper denial of religious exemptions to vaccine guidelines were one of the second most filed grievances; other grievances related to vaccine guidelines came in at third (Management Rights – Unpaid Leaves Under Vaccine Guideline) and seventh



place (Failure to Accommodate - Medical Exemptions to Vaccine Guideline). Together these totalled around 16% of grievances filed. Many of the grievances based on religious accommodation are awaiting arbitration (scheduled to begin December 2023) or are in abeyance awaiting the results of this arbitration.

Other types of grievances each accounted for less than 7% of grievances filed, but it is worth noting that together, Failure to Interview and Failure to Hire grievances accounted for about 12%. In 2021, these two types together accounted for 13% of grievances and 14% in both 2020 and 2019, which suggests that there are long-term concerns in these areas.



### Grievances by Area

Each area within the employers covered by Local 1998 collective agreements has a different number of members working there, so it makes sense that different amounts of grievances would be filed within each area. But, if the University were applying the Collective Agreement fairly and consistently across all areas, it would be reasonable to expect that each area's percentage of the total membership and its percentage of the total grievances filed would be similar. This leads to interest in two kinds of areas.

First, an area with a high percentage of grievances compared to its percentage of members may warrant a closer look by the Union to raise specific concerns with the University. Areas with high grievances per capita in 2022 were (excluding areas that have fewer than 1% of our members):

- Victoria University with 1.7% of members and 9.1% of grievances filed.
- University of Toronto Operations with 6.0% of members and 9.09% of grievances filed.
- Medicine with 12.5% of members and 15.9% of grievances filed.

Second, an area with a low percentage of grievances compared to its percentage of members may genuinely have happy, well-managed members. But this could also indicate that members are uninformed about their rights or feel uncomfortable or unsafe about exercising their rights or contacting the Union. Areas with low grievances per capita in 2022 were (excluding areas that have fewer than 1% of members):

- KPE with 4.2% of members and 0.0% of grievances filed.
- UTSC with 8.6% of members and 4.6% of grievances filed.
- Arts and Science with 18.5% and 11.4% of grievances filed.
- Professional Faculties with 6.9% of members and 4.6% of grievances filed.

*Anil Purandaré, USW 1998 Grievance Committee Co-Chair, with data compiled by Justen Bennett, USW 1998 Grievance Officer*

# CUPE 3261 Gears Up for Another Round of Bargaining, Fights to Keep Good Jobs on Campus

## **Preamble to the CUPE 3261 Article**

Below is an article written by Luke Daccord and Stanley Treivus, two members of the CUPE 3261 in the University of Toronto. Luke and Stanley are active in their local's fight against the University's plan to eliminate fairly paid caretaking jobs by contracting that work out to for profit, outside cleaning companies that compensate their workers with low wages and with little to no health care benefit coverage. Over the past 10 years, U of T has contracted out at least 150 caretaking positions on the St. George campus.

During their most recent round of bargaining, our local pledged \$10,000 to CUPE 3261 to support them if they ended up on strike or if they were locked out. That support was offered in the spirit of solidarity and because CUPE's fight is our fight too. We know that in a number of areas of U of T and Victoria University, management's decision to contract out work threatens USW jobs. We also know that even jobs that are not likely to be contracted out are threatened, because contracting out weakens the strength of the entire bargaining unit.

CUPE's fight against contracting out continues. They will be in collective bargaining later this year and we will once again stand in solidarity with them.

*John Ankenman, USW 1998 President*



CUPE 3261 members in the Fall of 2022 before delivering their End Contracting Out petition to the President's Office. Photo courtesy of CUPE 3261.

## **Who We Are**

CUPE 3261 represents over 1,200 workers at the University of Toronto across all three campuses. Our members provide essential services to the university community, in a diverse range of positions and departments, including food service, caretaking, athletics, building patrol, maintenance, parking, grounds, veterinary and animal technicians, recycling, and much more. In total, we have seven units, with our largest being the Full-Time & Part-Time unit, made up of nearly 800 workers. We also represent nearly 300 Casual workers (many of whom work alongside full-time & part-time members), as well as workers at the U of T Press, 89 Chestnut Residence, and the Faculty Club.

## **The Work We Do**

Our members (as with Steelworkers!) work behind the scenes to keep the university running. Our food service workers work tirelessly to ensure that students, staff, and faculty have access to healthy and nutritious meals. Our athletic staff work hard to ensure that U of T students have access to safe and healthy opportunities for exercise and physical activity. Meanwhile, our caretakers have been on the front lines of the pandemic, working to keep the campus clean and safe. Our members are an essential part of the U of T community and continue to provide

the vital services that keep our campuses running and ensure the health and safety of all those who work, study, and live on campus.

When the pandemic began in March of 2020, our members were some of the hardest hit at U of T. Many were laid off temporarily or even permanently. Meanwhile, many others, such as our caretakers, continued coming into work despite the threat of COVID-19. Unfortunately, buildings cannot be cleaned remotely. Those who worked did not receive additional hazard or 'hero' pay, and due to Bill 124, virtually all of our members have been limited to a 1% annual wage increase for the last three years. Despite the essential nature of our work, we remain some of the lowest-paid workers at U of T. Combined with past layoffs, Bill 124, and the growing cost of living, the challenges facing our members continue to pile up.

*When the pandemic began in March of 2020, our members were some of the hardest hit at U of T. Many were laid off temporarily or even permanently.*





Bus shelter ads that were part of CUPE 3261's Stop Contracting Out campaign. See more at [www.goodjobsuoft.com](http://www.goodjobsuoft.com). Courtesy of CUPE 3261.

## Contracting Out

On top of all this, in the first year of the pandemic, U of T took the opportunity to accelerate the contracting out of our caretaking work. Contracting out initially began in 2015 when U of T decided to stop filling caretaking positions. Instead, they waited until there were not enough members to do the work, then relocated those members to a new building. The now-empty building would then be contracted out to a private, for-profit cleaning company. At the same time, new buildings were and continue to be automatically contracted out. It is a process of attrition.

For a few years it was 1-2 buildings every year, until fall of 2020 when it jumped to 18 additional buildings under the guise of necessary "specialized cleaning." U of T assured us that this phase of contracting out was temporary. However, three years later, there are no signs of stopping. Of the roughly 100 buildings on St. George campus managed by Facilities and Services, over 50 of them are now contracted out. Similarly, the number of caretakers on St. George campus in our main unit has plummeted

from over 300 in 2015 to approximately 150 today. During this time, we've also witnessed increasing privatization in other areas that our members work, like building patrol, grounds, or elevator maintenance.

*Of the roughly 100 buildings on St. George campus managed by Facilities and Services, over 50 of them are now contracted out. Similarly, the number of caretakers on St. George campus in our main unit has plummeted from over 300 in 2015 to approximately 150 today.*

While we have language in our collective agreement that protects our members from losing their jobs, contracting out represents a larger threat to overall working conditions across U of T. Through attrition, it weakens our member's collective strength and reduces our power to bargain for better working conditions. It also lowers the standard for wages and opens the door to further privatization across other departments.

Furthermore, a majority of these contracted out workers are women, Black or racialized, and immigrants - workers who already face a wage gap and other employment disadvantages. These private companies pay workers close to minimum wage and offer few to no benefits - certainly none that compare to those our caretakers receive as U of T employees. As an institution purportedly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, U of T continues to contradict its own mission and values by actively contributing to the growth of systemic inequality.

### **2022 Bargaining and the End Contracting Out Campaign**

Our local has been vocally opposing this contracting out of cleaning services since it began in 2015 - but in 2022 our members made it clear that we needed to step up the fight and turn it into a key issue at the bargaining table. During the lead up to our last round of bargaining in the Fall of 2022, we organized an

unprecedented campaign for good jobs at U of T. We had more than 500 members hand-sign a petition to end contracting out, and thousands more online from allies in the community. We put out advertisements on the radio, newspapers, social media, TTC bus shelters, and even at Yonge-Dundas square. We held an action at a governing council meeting, delivered a petition to Meric Gertler's office, and bombarded U of T's administration with thousands of emails from allies supporting our cause.

***These private companies pay workers close to minimum wage and offer few to no benefits - certainly none that compare to those our caretakers receive as U of T employees. As an institution purportedly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, U of T continues to contradict its own mission and values by actively contributing to the growth of systemic inequality.***

*Former CUPE 3261 President Allan James at the microphone intervening in a Fall 2022 Governing Council meeting. Photo courtesy of CUPE 3261.*







*CUPE 3261 members at a Fall 2022 bargaining rally. Their contract expires June 30, 2023 and they are anticipating being in bargaining again this year, just like the USW 1998 Staff-Appointed Unit. Photo courtesy of CUPE 3261.*

Meanwhile, we worked hard to prepare for a real strike. While all of the above was important for getting the word out and building vital community support, we understood from the beginning that none of it could compare to the power of our members themselves. For nearly a year leading up to negotiations, we were building a network of stewards and leaders in workplaces, helping to keep members informed and aware of the stakes in this fight. We recruited and trained picket captains and set up committees that would help facilitate a strike. By the time our strike deadline was one week away we were on the verge of passing a bylaw amendment to top-up members' strike pay and had a super-majority of our members already signed up to receive strike pay.

*Our members remain extremely grateful for all the support USW – and many other locals and organizations – gave our local at this time.*

As our campaign and bargaining ramped up, there were a number of ways that USW 1998 members helped support us. Many signed our online petition and sent emails to U of T's administration urging them to give our members a fair deal and to end contracting out. Even better, some joined us in an action where we crashed a governing council meeting! As we were approaching our strike deadline, we began asking for pledges from other locals for the purposes of topping up our strike pay in the event a strike became necessary. USW 1998 members generously pledged \$10,000. Your network of stewards also helped to prepare a response in the event that your members were asked to perform our work during a strike. Our members remain extremely grateful for all the support USW – and many other locals and organizations – gave our local at this time.

However, it did not come to a strike last round. The tentative agreement that our negotiating committee reached, and our members ratified, did not include limits to contracting out. However, important gains were achieved in other areas, such as the guaranteed creation of new jobs in our main bargaining unit and new training and promotional opportunities.

Though we didn't achieve our maximum goals



of ending contracting out in our last round of bargaining, we knew a fight this big would take more than one round. We still learned and demonstrated to ourselves that by organizing in the workplace and building solidarity across our membership, we could make meaningful improvements in our working conditions. For us, it is more clear now than ever that these improvements cannot be attained solely at the bargaining table. Our ability to achieve real change rests on the strength and unity of our members.

### **Bargaining this year**

Contracting out will no doubt remain a top concern for our main unit this upcoming round of bargaining, and we are committed to continuing the campaign for good jobs at U of T and achieving meaningful gains on this front at the bargaining table. Of course, due to the limitations imposed by Bill 124, the majority of our members (as with USW 1998) have only seen a 3% total wage increase in the last three years. With inflation and the rising cost of living eating into our earnings as well, wages will undoubtedly be a top priority for the next round of bargaining. Other units such as the Casual unit also face significant challenges, with members not seeing a wage increase since 2018. As a result, many casual workers are now making the minimum wage, despite doing similar work as their full-time & part-time colleagues.

**“For us, it is more clear now than ever that these improvements cannot be attained solely at the bargaining table. Our ability to achieve real change rests on the strength and unity of our members.”**



We look forward to continuing working with Steelworkers in the fight for good jobs at U of T, and finding ways that our locals can support each other in our upcoming bargaining rounds this year.

*Luke Daccord and Stanley Treivus, CUPE 3261*

*Luke and Stanley are CUPE 3261 members working on St. George campus in the athletics department. Luke is the Recording Secretary for the Local as well as a shop steward and serves as the lead organizer for the ongoing campaign against contracting out. Stanley sits on the Local's executive as the representative for the Casual bargaining unit, is also a steward, and assisted in the contracting out campaign.*

Add your voice to CUPE 3261's End Contracting Out petition at [www.goodjobsuoft.com/action](http://www.goodjobsuoft.com/action)

See also the related Varsity article at [The fight for good jobs at U of T's campuses](#), and the article on 'Top Employer' for Whom? Mapping Contracting Out found in this issue (p. 56 - 58).



# How to Get More Deep Sleep: Tips that Actually Work

**M**y fitness tracker gives me a sleep score each morning, telling me how well I slept the night before. I usually get 7-8 hours of sleep each night, so I was surprised to see a poor score most mornings. This prompted me to have a closer look at why my sleep score was poor and what I could do to improve it. According to the report from my tracker, I was getting very little deep sleep. What is deep sleep and how do we get more?

## The Stages of Sleep

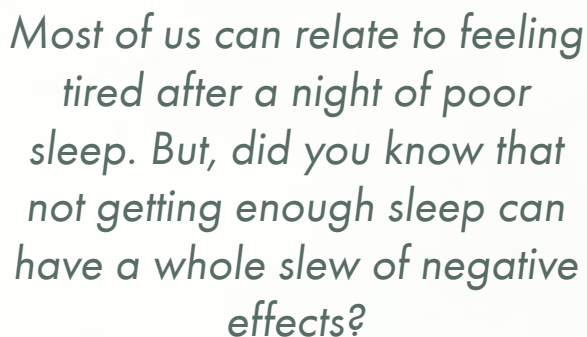
We cycle through several stages of sleep each night. The first is a brief transition between being awake and being asleep. Next, we enter light sleep where our breathing and heart rate begin to slow. Light sleep accounts for about half of our total sleep each night. After light sleep, we transition into deep sleep, where our muscles relax and our breathing, heart rate and brain waves slow. These stages are all non-REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. Then we move into REM sleep, where our eyes quickly move beneath our eyelids and our brain waves are similar to when we're awake. This is the stage when dreams occur. We cycle through these stages anywhere from 4-5 times each night, spending less time in deep sleep and more time in REM sleep as the night wears on (Pacheco, 2023).

## The Importance of Sleep

Most of us can relate to feeling tired after a night of poor sleep. But, did you know that not getting enough sleep can have a whole slew of negative effects? For example, when we don't sleep enough, our immunity can become compromised, making it harder for our body to fight off illness and infection.

Our metabolism can temporarily go into a prediabetic state and we can also have difficulty remembering things (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023). Most adults should aim for 7-9 hours of sleep overall (Pacheco, 2023).

Importantly, the length of time we spend in each of the various sleep stages can have a significant impact on how we feel the next day, regardless of how long we sleep overall. Each stage has its own unique purpose, helping the body with various functions (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023) including our ability to process information, make memories, physically recover from exercise, and even remove waste from the brain (Pacheco, 2023).



*Most of us can relate to feeling tired after a night of poor sleep. But, did you know that not getting enough sleep can have a whole slew of negative effects?*

### **The Importance of Deep Sleep**

Deep sleep helps to restore and repair our bodies physically, including muscles, bones, and tissues. It helps keep our immune system healthy and may help us to regulate glucose metabolism and replenish our energy stores. Additionally, it's important for cognitive functioning and memory, and it may help with learning a language and motor skills (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023).

It's recommended that somewhere between 13-23% of sleep should be deep sleep. If you sleep seven hours, that's anywhere from 55 to

97 minutes. When we don't get enough deep sleep, we feel groggy and have difficulty paying attention, staying alert, and learning new things. We may also crave high-calorie food (Pacheco, 2023).

### **Tips for More Deep Sleep**

Various factors can impact the amount of deep sleep we get, such as certain health issues (Pacheco, 2023), medications (Langmaid, 2021), stress, and age (as we get older, we get less deep sleep in general) (Pacheco, 2023). Regardless, there are several things we can do to improve the total amount of sleep we get and specifically, the amount of deep sleep we get.

### **Optimize the Bedroom for Sleep**

It's important to ensure that we have a quiet, dark, and cool environment to sleep in. Ear plugs, white noise machines, room-darkening shades and a fan may help to create a restful sleep environment (Summer, 2023).

### **Have a Consistent Sleep-Wake Schedule**

Having an inconsistent sleep-wake schedule can throw off our circadian rhythms (Summer, 2023). Circadian rhythms are built-in mechanisms that regulate our sleep; at night, our circadian rhythms tell the body to release melatonin, a hormone that helps us sleep (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023). Getting up and going to bed at the same time every day can also help us to fall asleep faster (Summer, 2023).

### **Exercise Regularly**

Making physical activity a regular component of our day can help us to sleep better (Pacheco, 2023), as long as it's more than 3 hours before bedtime. Exercising too close to bedtime can increase our core temperature, adrenaline, and heartbeat, all of which can negatively impact our sleep (Capritto, 2023).

### **Manage Stress**

When we are stressed or anxious, we can have trouble falling asleep which can reduce our total overall sleep. Moreover, stress and anxiety reduce the amount of deep sleep we get. To help



*Importantly, the length of time we spend in each of the various sleep stages can have a significant impact on how we feel the next day, regardless of how long we sleep overall.*

manage stress before bed, we can develop a calming bedtime routine (Pacheco, 2023) which may include things like relaxation techniques, meditation, and deep breathing (Summer, 2023).

### **Eat a Healthy Diet**

Consuming caffeine or alcohol in the afternoon and evening can reduce deep sleep (Summer, 2023). It's also best to avoid heavy or large meals within a couple of hours of going to bed as this too can interfere with our sleep (Mayo Clinic, 2023).

### **Take a Warm Bath**

Our core temperature naturally falls before we sleep. Taking a warm bath 1-2 hours before going to bed lowers our core body temperature, mimicking the body's normal process. This not only helps us to fall asleep faster, but also promotes increased deep sleep. Interestingly, in older adults, there's even evidence to suggest that a warm bath before bed can lower blood pressure (Pacheco, 2022).

After implementing these tips for a couple of days, I noticed a significant improvement in my sleep scores as well as increased amounts of deep sleep. Personally, having a consistent sleep-wake schedule and taking a warm bath or shower before going to bed seems to have made the biggest difference in the quality of my sleep. Try these tips out and see what works best for you!

*Sarah McMahon, Department of Physical Therapy*

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*A protester holds a picture of Mahsa Amini during one of the many demonstrations demanding justice for her death by the Islamic Republic's morality police. Photo by Ozan Kose/AFP via Getty Images.*



# Zan, Zendegi, Azadi

## Woman, Life, Freedom

*The following is an edited version of the speech given by USW 1998 member Roza Roozbehan at the December 20, 2022 Human Rights Committee social at Lakeview Restaurant.*

**On September 13, 2022,** Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old young Iranian woman, was arrested by Iran's morality police for not wearing a "proper hijab." A couple of hours later, she was lying in a hospital bed suffering from trauma to her head. Three days later, she was dead. An eyewitness described Mahsa telling her while in detention that an officer had hit her on the head. Police claimed she had died of heart failure, but the Iranian people weren't convinced. After years under a regime relentlessly harassing women and depriving them of most basic human rights and freedoms, Mahsa's death sparked the longest and most popular protest in 43 years.

Since her brutal murder, tens of thousands of people have protested in the streets of cities across Iran. The regime's response, as always, has been suppressing protesters with extreme violence. As a result, at least 469 people (including 63 children as young as 8 years old) have been killed, thousands have been injured, and 14,000-16,000 have been arrested as I write this in December 2022. Yet these figures, as horrible as they are, do not depict the true numbers. There are many more dead and poisoned, but out of fear of the





*Roza Roozbehan speaking at the December 20, 2022 USW 1998 Human Rights Committee social about the situation in Iran. Photo by Joshua Heuman.*

government, their loved ones do not dare release their names.

In addition to the brutal murder of protesters on the streets, the Islamic Regime of Iran has started to execute imprisoned young protesters. So far, two people have been executed and news has emerged of the killing of several other detainees under torture.

Dear Union Members,

Systematic oppression against Iranian women started the day after the Islamic regime took power in 1979. Under the leadership of Khomeini, they enforced mandatory hijab on women despite earlier claims that men and women would have equal rights. Women were forced out of workplaces. They were deprived of the right to file for divorce and lost custody of their children if their husbands divorced them. Women who were allowed to remain in the workforce received less pay for doing the same job as men. This put tremendous pressure on women in general, and on women workers especially. Eight years of meaningless war with

*“An important aspect of freedom is the ability of the working class to organize themselves into unions. Without unions, the fight against oppression will not succeed.”*

Iraq left many families with a single female head of household. The implementation of US and European economic sanctions has worsened the situation. Women in Iran are considered second-class citizens. Government propaganda encourages medieval rules that are imposed on women such as child marriage and “honor killings.” Iranian people have been made impoverished, women even more so.

The 43 years of oppression against women needed a spark to ignite the fire under the ashes. At Mahsa Amini’s funeral, women removed their hijab and chanted, **“Woman, Life, Freedom.”** This slogan has turned into a global feminist movement. It originated in Syria during fighting between Kurdish female guerillas and Islamic state terrorists who attacked Kurdish regions in Syria and Iraq. They killed men and forced women and young girls into slavery. In response, Kurdish women organized into military groups and fought for their freedom. Their slogan was both encouraging and strategic. “Woman” stands for women’s freedom, “Life” represents men’s freedom, while “Freedom” is the freedom of society. The slogan means that a truly free society cannot exist without the freedom of both men and women.

An important aspect of freedom is the ability of the working class to organize themselves into unions. Without unions, the fight against oppression will not succeed. The Iranian Islamic regime knows this and that is why they have spent 43 years detaining and killing union activists. In the last decade, Iranian workers have held thousands of strikes, gatherings, and marches every year.



*USW 1998 members at the December 20, 2022 Human Rights Committee social after Roza spoke about the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran. From left to right: Nick Marchese, Human Rights Committee Co-Chairs Gary Horenkamp and Scott Eldridge, Joshua Heuman, Kristy Bard, Roza Roozbehan, and Rebecca Chua. Photo by Lakeview Restaurant server.*

There are many reasons for the strikes. The most important is dissatisfaction over low wages and dangerous workplace conditions. Inflation and repression of independent union organizing are other reasons for the unrest. Apart from Islamic labour organizations, which are completely dependent on the government, there are several independent unions formed by workers and teachers, but they are not allowed to operate freely. The leaders of these unions are constantly prosecuted and imprisoned, charged with “acting against the country’s security.”

By systematically suppressing union rights, the regime keeps wages below the poverty line and forces 95% of workers into three-month temporary contracts. This way, they can be fired whenever their employers want, for any reason.

Yet still, on December 18, 2022, oil industry workers went on strike in six different cities. Before that, during the three months since Mahsa Amini’s murder, nearly 100 labour strikes have been held in support of and in solidarity with this movement.

Workers and their families have a large role in this movement. In the two big strikes that were directly carried out to defend the revolutionary movement, 230 workers were arrested. They were also demanding the return to work of their fired co-workers during previous petrochemical strikes.

Solidarity with the revolutionary movement is increasing day by day. The decades-long disastrous economic policies in conjunction with US sanctions have brought poverty, environmental crisis, inflation, and an unstable market. The value of the country’s currency is in free fall. According to official statistics, more than two-thirds of the country’s 86 million people live below the poverty line.

These crises have provoked anger and protest from business owners as well. Due to deep, widespread and unprecedented dissatisfaction, they participated in the nationwide strike that was called by the leaders of the revolutionary Woman, Life, Freedom movement. There were three days of national strike in December. As a result, the capacity for protests is increasing, and the hope is that if the current revolutionary

***At Mahsa Amini’s funeral, women removed their hijab and chanted, “Woman, Life, Freedom.” This slogan has turned into a global feminist movement.***

*Women, workers, religious and ethnic minorities, university students, environmental activists, human rights activists - the majority of Iranians have endured so much over the last 43 years.*

movement can use it well, it may finally bring about a democratic revolution. We are trying to provide the conditions for a general strike by encouraging workers to strike more and organize strike committees to deliver the last blow to the Islamic regime.

Women, workers, religious and ethnic minorities, university students, environmental activists, human rights activists - the majority of Iranians have endured so much over the last 43 years. Imprisoned, tortured, forced to leave the country, and too often executed. As an example, in the summer of 1989, several thousand political prisoners, many of them belonging to leftist organizations, were massacred in the prisons of the Islamic regime. The government denies the massacre despite concrete evidence. Union workers are persecuted just for fighting for better living and workplace conditions.

Dear Members of the Union,

The brave Iranian people are fighting a just battle in the streets of Iran. You can help them by supporting their cause. As a feminist, a worker rights activist, and a human rights activist, I hope you do what you can to support the freedom fight of Iran. They will win the battle eventually, but your support will help them achieve their goals faster, with fewer victims. There are political prisoners on death row, but if they are sponsored by Canadian politicians, it will be harder for the Iranian government to kill them. Write to your federal MP and urge them to take action to support this movement.



#### **Further Information:**

- Support the fight for justice for the flight PS752 victims' families by visiting <https://www.ps752justice.com/>. Eight U of T community members were among the 176 victims killed on this Ukraine International Airlines flight that was shot down by the Iranian military on January 8, 2020.
- This powerful video created by PS752 Justice details more of the history of this movement: <https://www.facebook.com/PS752Justice/videos/918421492487736>
- USW 1998 members can support the U of T Students for a Free Iran (UTSFI). They organize vigils, rallies, and other events on campus to mobilize support for Iran's fight for freedom. <https://www.utsfi.com/>

*Roza Roozbehan, Standardized Patient Program*





Spencer Ki tabling for the Casual Unit at a March New College Community Fair. Photo by Chris Ramsaroop.

## Casual Unit Update

**A**s the Casual Unit President, I have spoken at two Casual Unit New Member Orientation Sessions over the last six months: one in September for lifeguards at the KPE Athletic Centre, and one in December at Hart House. We are also planning an 'Ask Me Anything' virtual orientation in May or June.

In November, I represented the Casual Unit at a Community Fair at New College, where Richard Waters and I were tabling to provide information on our Local and casual member benefits. Spencer Ki attended another one of these Community Fairs on behalf of the Local on March 2nd. It's important for us to have a presence at these Community Fairs because many members of our Casual Unit are students, and seeing us at a fair like this may be their only interaction with the Union.

On Monday, November 21st, I attended the Celebration of Life for Casual Unit member Mark Burgess. We published Mark's obituary in the last Steel Drum. He worked as a Standardized Patient in the Standardized Patient Program,

and I worked alongside him at the McCaul Street Vaccination Clinic during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as well. His Celebration of Life was well attended and held at Opera Bob's Public House. He will be sorely missed.

I have also been representing the Casual Unit on the USW 1998 Local Bylaws Review Committee, which has met a total of five times so far since the beginning of 2023. Reviewing the Local bylaws is an important process that needs to be done every few years to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the Local and its members, and that they are updated accordingly. One example of how updating the bylaws has previously benefitted casual members directly is that we got clarification that when casuals lose shifts at the University in order to conduct union business, they will be compensated via the white-paper rate.

*Scott Eldridge, Casual Unit President and Human Rights Committee Co-Chair; Standardized Patient Program*



Victoria College. Photo by Shanna Hunter, The Varsity.

# Victoria University Unit Report

## March 19, 2023

### **Preparations for Negotiating for a New Collective Agreement**

In our February 9 unit meeting, we took the first step in preparing for negotiations with management for a new collective agreement. The agenda of the meeting included nominations for the Union's bargaining team. Wanda Hughes was acclaimed as the representative for the salaried employee members. The position of representative of part-time hourly-paid employee members still needs to be filled. The Unit's leadership is actively recruiting for the position. Given that the collective agreement allows us to have three elected members on the Union's bargaining team and one of those members must be the Unit President, I will serve as the representative of the hourly-paid employee members.

Recruitment for our unit's Communication Action Team (CAT) and our Strike Committee is ongoing.

We will soon be able to announce the members of both of those committees.

The next step towards being ready for negotiations is to finalize the survey questions that will be distributed to the membership so that they can share their bargaining priorities with their Negotiating Committee. Following that, town hall meetings will be held to continue the conversation about our bargaining priorities.

Planning for how our unit's negotiations fit into the negotiations of the Local's other units (U of T Staff-Appointed, U of T Casuals, U of T Dons, and University of Toronto Schools) has taken place. The plan is to start our negotiations in July with the goal of having the non-monetary bargaining finished shortly after the Staff-Appointed Unit has ratified their new collective agreement in September. Our goal is to present a tentative agreement to the Vic membership sometime in the second half of October.

## **Grievance Updates**

### **VC 23-1 (individual – failure to pay overtime)**

This grievance was filed by a member after they were directed to attend a meeting with management that started fifteen minutes before their regular start time. During the meeting, management told the member that they would be paid for their shift, but they would not be allowed to work it. The University refused to pay overtime for the fifteen minutes the member had to work before their regular start time. After the grievance was filed, the University paid the member fifteen minutes of overtime and the grievance was withdrawn.

### **VC 23-2 (Improper use of temporary agency workers)**

### **VC 23-3 (Failure to post and hire for a First Cook position(s) and/or a Cook position(s) and/or a Food Service Production position(s) and/or Dishwasher/Porter position(s).**

### **VC 23-4 (Failure to fill specific short-term staffing requirements with Casual Category A employees instead of temporary agency workers.)**

### **VC 23-5 (Failure to hire Casual Category B employees instead of temporary agency workers)**

The above four grievances were filed as a result of Food Services management's overuse of temp agency workers since the beginning of September. The Union raised this issue with management in November and we were assured that almost all of the temp agency workers were being used on a short-term basis to replace absent USW members. We let management know that we were skeptical of their explanation and of the data they had presented to us and that we would continue to monitor the situation. Our observations had led us to understand that Food Services management has created a parallel workforce of temp workers and that the University should have posted and filled USW positions to do the work being done by many

of the temp workers. We kept a close eye on the situation during the next three months and in February we decided that there was a viable argument to be made that the University had improperly used temp agency workers instead of posting full-time and part-time continuing USW jobs and casual USW jobs.

In addition to making that argument during the step 2 meetings for the four grievances, the Union highlighted its serious concerns about the relationship between the temp agency that management was predominantly using and a senior Food Services manager. A social media post by that manager that ridiculed a union member and disparaged the Union. We are mostly satisfied by what transpired after we expressed those concerns. That said, we are disappointed that the University decided to respond to the step 2 meetings by dismissing the grievances. The Local's Grievance Committee and Executive have voted in favour of advancing the grievances to arbitration and Human Resources has been notified of that decision.

*John Ankenman, Victoria University Unit President*



*John Ankenman speaking with the members of Victoria University. Photo by Richard Waters.*



# HUMAN RIGHTS

## Committee Report

**O**n December 20, 2022, the Human Rights Committee hosted a social at Lakeview Restaurant. The attendance was small, but the presentation by one of our members on the Iranian freedom movement was powerful. An edited version of Roza Roozbehan presentation, titled “Woman, Life, and Freedom” can be found on page 35 of this issue.

On February 14, I attended the 18th Annual Strawberry Ceremony, held in front of the Toronto Police Services Headquarters. Understand, my perspective on the event is that of an old, White, non-Indigenous, gay man, who is not a Canadian citizen. My earliest careers were in U.S. law enforcement, the U.S. military, and later, as an ordained Interfaith minister in the U.S. who mostly performed ceremonies. I found this event which raised awareness and memorialized Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirit people to be moving, informative and appropriate to the advancement of Reconciliation. The ceremony combined elements of ritual and mutual concern for those attending. I plan to attend this event annually.

On February 21, we hosted a screening of [Steadfast: The Messenger and the Message](#) at the Innis Town Hall. The film is a documentary about the life of Jean Augustine, former MP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the first Black woman elected as a member of Canadian Parliament. USW 1998 Outreach & Communications Coordinator Margaret Bucknam helped us organize the screening, which included a



*Around 500 people gathered for the annual Strawberry Ceremony, held every year on Valentine’s Day to honour missing and murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans, and Two-Spirited. Photo by [Tyreike Reid](#), courtesy [humbernews.ca](#)*

delicious Caribbean meal beforehand. USW 1998 Health & Safety Officer and D6 Human Rights Committee Co-Chair Mark Austin gave opening remarks to introduce the film. Mark also had the pleasure of welcoming Jean at the District 6 Human Rights Committee Black History Month Dinner and Dance, held on February 18 at the Leo Gerrard Union Centre in Mississauga. See Mark’s article about the event on page 17 of this issue, as well as photos in the USW 1998 Happenings section on pages 52 and 53.

On March 14, the Committee meeting had USW 1998 member Elizabeth Leman as our guest speaker via Zoom. She delivered an interesting and informative presentation on neurodiversity. We had 36 attendees with several questions and answers at the end of the presentation.

*Gary Horenkamp, Standardized Patient Program and Human Rights Committee Co-Chair*

# STEEL PRIDE

## Committee Report



*USW 1998 members celebrating the Winter Solstice at a Steel Pride Committee campfire event on December 16, 2022. Photo by Dinah Thorpe.*

**To mark** the longest night of the year, Steel Pride hosted a campfire in Christie Pits Park on December 16, 2022, a few days before the winter solstice. There were vegan marshmallows for roasting, delicious Indian snacks from Banjara, and a giant glass bottle of what was supposed to be apple cider...but turned out to be apple cider vinegar! Songwriter and harmonica aficionado Catriona Sturton offered up a hilarious and heartwarming set of live music. We were all left with healthier spirits and healthier guts (from the apple cider vinegar shots).

Stay tuned for 2023 Pride plans!

*Dinah Thorpe, Institute of Health Policy, Management & Evaluation, SteelPride Committee Co-Chair.*

# WOMEN of STEEL

## Committee Report



*USW 1998 Women of Steel delegates at the October 2022 Women's Conference in Québec City. USW 1998 WOS Co-Chair Nina Di Trapani (left). Other delegates Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Liesl Joson, Malisa Zhou, Laura Patterson, and Nina Di Trapani (right). Photos by Nina Di Trapani.*

**In October 2022**, the Local sent delegates to attend the National Women's Conference in Québec City. The focus of the conference was the USW campaign Raising the Bar on Women's Health and Safety. There were panel discussions on women in leadership activating Women of Steel (WOS) committees, and workshops on women's health and safety that were divided by industry, such as education, health care, and heavy industry to name a few.

A lot of safety issues for women were discussed, including, but not limited to, proper fitting uniforms, harassment at work or at home, exposure to chemicals and safety during pregnancy, repetitive strain injuries, mental health and stress, and caring for dependents. Delegates were encouraged to get more involved in Health and Safety in their Locals, to participate in Health and Safety training and on joint Health and Safety committees, and to understand the role that women can play in improving health and safety in the workplace.

Delegates also participated in a morning rally on the historic Plains of Abraham in support of ending violence against women. Speakers at the rally shared firsthand experience growing up with domestic violence in their households, the impact it had on them, and the importance of working to eradicate gender-based violence. See the USW 1998 Happenings section of this issue for more photos from the conference.



USW Action Guide on Raising the Bar on Women's Health and Safety:  
<https://www.usw.ca/resources/usw-action-guide-for-raising-the-bar-on-womens-health-and-safety/>

Contact 211 for resources and support relating to gender-based violence:  
<https://211ontario.ca/search/>

Contact Lifeline for Counselling and Referral services:  
<https://www.usw1998.ca/services/lifeline/>



*Image courtesy of USW Local 1944 Women of Steel publication on Burnout, Anxiety, Stress and Depression.*

The Local WOS Committee met on February 3, and discussed adapting a [series of publications on burnout created by the Local 1944 WOS Committee](#) for Local 1998 members. These four publications raise awareness about burnout and how it can affect people at work. Local 1944 created these resources for their members in the telecommunications industry. Working in call centres, their members can face a tremendous amount of abuse from customers, which they drew attention to in their [Hang Up on Abuse campaign](#). Dealing with this kind of abuse on a regular basis can contribute to burnout, as can other types of prolonged work stress.

Although these publications are geared toward USW 1944 members, we thought women and others in our Local could also benefit from them. We contacted the Local 1944, President Donna Hokiro, to obtain her permission to adapt their publications for our members, and she happily agreed. The USW 1998 adapted versions can be found at the links below. If you are struggling with burnout or have questions about any of the details you read in these, please reach out to a USW 1998 steward or Grievance Officer.

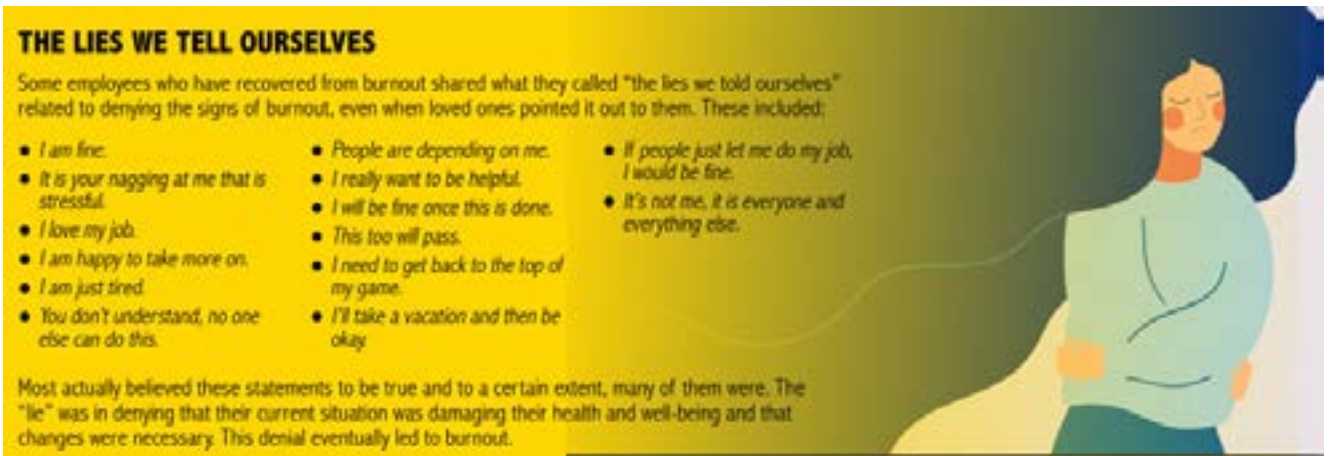
We would like to acknowledge the passionate and hard-working group of WOS advocates in Alberta who created the original Local 1944 publications.

- [Publication #1: Burnout, Anxiety, Stress and Depression](#)
- [Publication #2: Living with Burnout – Self Care](#)
- [Publication #3: How burnout could affect you at work - The evolution of burnout from an individual's responsibility to responsibility of employers as contributors](#)
- [Publication #4: When self-care isn't working, what's the next step?](#)

The 1998 WOS Committee will plan a lunch and learn meeting in the coming months to promote these adapted publications and speak to members about the issue.

Sharon Clarke, the coordinator of the USW Lifeline Foundation, sent us the below e-resources she often refers to when talking to members about stress and burnout:

- <https://bouncebackontario.ca/> - online self-help, skills-building – no-fee program
- <https://cmha.ca/brochure/stress/> - CMHA printable brochure addressing stress
- <https://ontario.cmha.ca/take-15-minutes-just-for-you/> - CMHA printable booklet
- <https://cmha.ca/brochure/mindfulness/> - CMHA mindfulness brochure



*The Lies We Tell Ourselves, from Image courtesy of USW Local 1944 Women of Steel publication on Burnout, Anxiety, Stress and Depression.*

Need to talk to someone about stress and burnout? In addition to contacting a USW 1998 steward and/or Grievance Officer, you can also contact Sharon Clarke confidentially at Lifeline at 416-977-6888 or [life\\_line@bellnet.ca](mailto:life_line@bellnet.ca). U of T employees can also access the University’s Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP), where members can access counselling, work-life services, online resources, and referrals for longer term counselling. Visit <https://people.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/> to learn more.

USW 1998 members who believe they may be suffering from burnout or other mental health struggles should talk to their doctors, or get a referral through Lifeline or EFAP. You can learn more about accommodation and sick leave options by reviewing articles 20:06 and 27 of the [Staff-Appointed Collective Agreement](#), and/or searching the [U of T HR Service Centre](#). The accommodation process at U of T is described on this [Human Resources website](#). Members can also access wellness services, supports and other resources available to U of T employees via the [U of T Wellness Hub](#).

In addition to planning a lunch and learn session and gathering information to share with members about burnout, the WOS Committee is also considering organizing another paint night and hosting health walks around the St. George campus. We are looking for another Co-Chair, so if you are interested in helping out with these initiatives, or have other ideas for WOS activities, please contact Nina at [nina.di@usw1998.ca](mailto:nina.di@usw1998.ca).

*Nina Di Trapani, USW 1998 Women of Steel Co-Chair; Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, USW 1998 Pay Equity/Job Evaluation Coordinator; Kristy Bard, Committee for the Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability.*

# How to Solve the Housing Crisis: A Thought Experiment



The cost of housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable. What is to be done? Graphic courtesy of [What is happening to the prices of new houses in Canada? \(Statistics Canada\)](#).

**To begin** solving the complexities of the current housing market, it might be helpful to adjust how society frames this issue. The purpose of building a house should be to provide shelter for anyone living there. Yet in recent years, the cost of housing has become increasingly unaffordable to the average person and family living in Ontario.

To properly examine housing affordability (or lack thereof), building stock and supply, the impact of mortgage interest rates, and recent political decisions to build on the Greenbelt, we need to consider what the current reality is if you pay rent or a mortgage.

Historically, the rule of thumb for any household budget was to allocate one third of your income toward housing and this still applies today. But what happens now that over the last 30 years, incomes have not even kept up with the rate of inflation, and the cost of housing (whether you are renting or buying) has doubled within just the last few years? Surely, this calculation is out of date.

According to a [recent article in the Toronto Star](#) published in March 2023, the average one-bedroom listing in Toronto is \$2,500 per month and a two-bedroom unit is \$3,300 per month (Gibson, 2023). This is an increase of 21.5% from the previous year. The average Toronto salary

in September 2022 was \$52,700 per year, as noted by the [Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey \(WOWA, 2022\)](#). If you factor in the rule of thumb noted above, the average Torontonian should only be allocating \$1,463 per month towards housing.

If you are looking to buy a home in Ontario, at today's mortgage interest rates, that is increasingly

**Historically, the rule of thumb for any household budget was to allocate one-third of your income toward housing and this still applies today. But what happens now that over the last 30 years incomes have not even kept up with the rate of inflation, and the cost of housing (whether you are renting or buying) has doubled within just the last few years?**



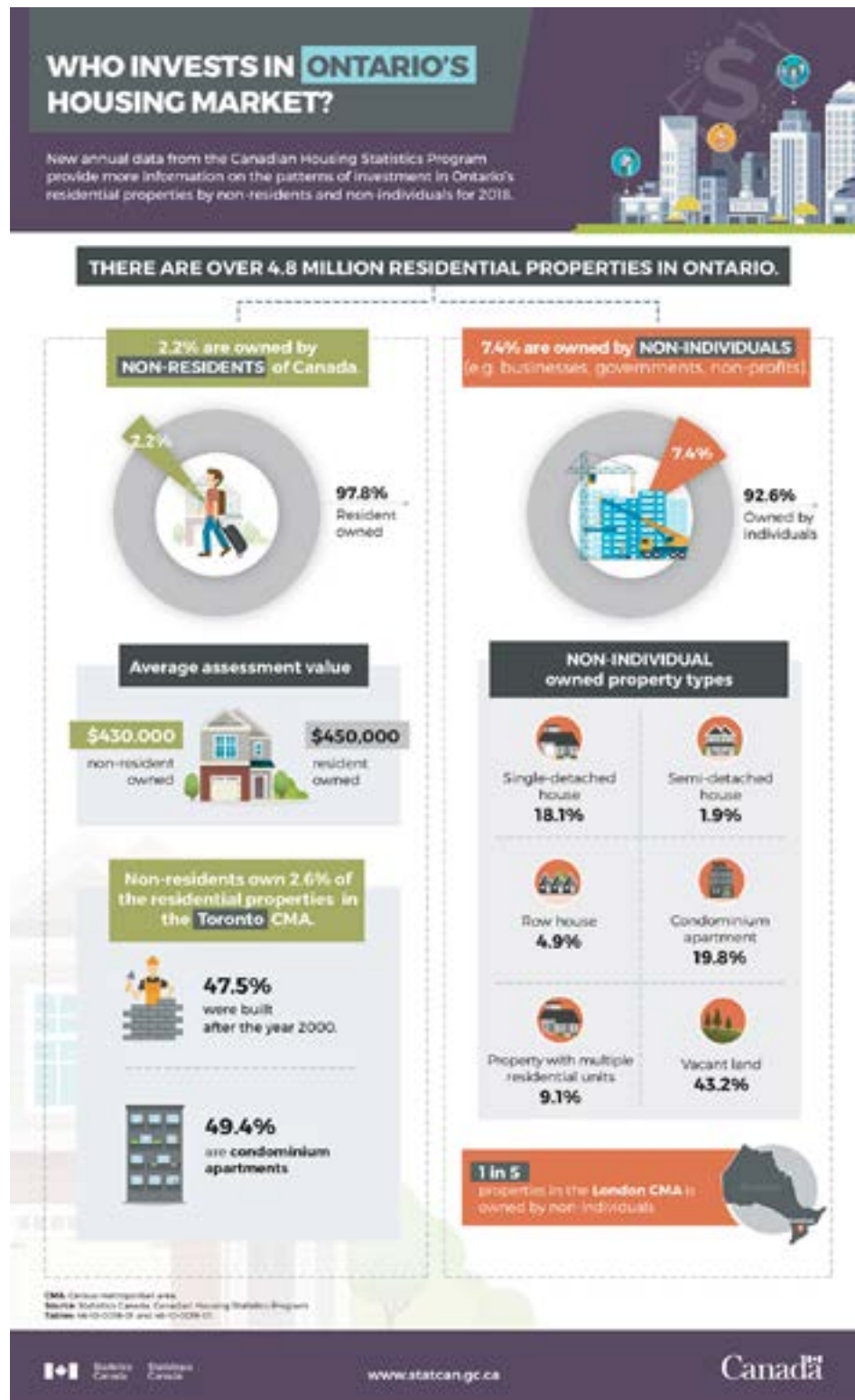
difficult. Using a standard mortgage affordability calculator available online through an A rated lender, someone earning \$80,000 a year with \$100,000 toward a down payment (calculated with a 5.62% mortgage rate) qualifies for a property listed for sale at \$360,000. It would be difficult to find a studio condo for that price in Toronto, as they typically start in the mid \$400,000s and up.

Even with house prices expected to drop 12% or more this year according to some experts, affordability remains an issue for most people looking to enter or stay in the market with mortgage rates tripling over the last year (Purohit, 2023).

Whether you rent or buy, the housing market is increasingly unpredictable and unaffordable – some may even say unattainable. Join me in this thought experiment as I share some ideas on how we might change the conversation from problem identification to potential solutions.

### Foreign buyers ban

Continue to protect houses built in Canada for people who live and work in Canada and extend the ban on foreign buyers beyond the current two-year timeline. According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, non-residents owned 2.6% of residential properties in Toronto. Of these, just under half were built after the year 2000 and were condominium units.



Stats Canada Infographic on Housing Market Investments. Courtesy of [Who Invests in Ontario's Housing Market? \(Statistics Canada\)](#).

## Residential vs. commercial zoning

Ban corporations, numbered companies and trusts from owning residentially zoned land or buildings. Limit them to investments in commercially zoned areas. In other words, make the price of residential properties affordable for Canadian wage earners and not investors or speculators, foreign and domestic. In 2022, the share of condominium units held by long-term investors in Toronto grew to 36.2% (CMHC, 2023).

## Mortgage rules

Consider lifetime mortgages (30-year term) that ensure long-term stability for homeowners and renters where the mortgage rate remains fixed for the life of the mortgage. This was common practice in the past.

Alternatively, could mortgages be structured so that 50% of the value is locked in a lifetime mortgage at posted rates at the time of purchase, and 50% remain open and subject to the fixed/variable short-term rates?

What if mortgages were structured like income tax brackets? Depending on your salary and the mortgage that you qualify for, mortgage rates could follow a sliding scale.

Another consideration is to adjust the ratio for equity refinancing from 80/20 to 40/60 to help curb speculation in the market and overleveraging borrowers.

Or could we look to the United States and mimic their system of allowing interest paid on a mortgage to be a tax write-off?

## Rent

Impose rent controls on all residential units, across the board – for landlords and developers.

Short-term rentals such as Airbnb could run on a lottery system where each city has a regulated number of units and owners would be eligible to bid for two-year terms.

## Greenbelt

Protect the Greenbelt and the natural habitat. Consider redeveloping and repopulating

destitute townships in the surrounding areas of larger cities.

## Affordable housing

What impact would it have on housing costs (and increasing homelessness) if governments began investing in affordable housing again? Affordable housing budgets have been chronically underfunded for decades, and it is rare to see new construction of rental units because they aren't profitable for developers. It's not enough to just build more houses, especially over important farmland and critical ecosystems. Building more houses won't help anything if no one can afford to live in them.

If you are concerned about the cost of living, read more ideas brought forward by the Ontario Federation of Labour's "[Enough is Enough](#)" campaign.



*Enough is Enough campaign image courtesy of [wesayenough.ca](https://wesayenough.ca)*

If you have ideas, comments or reactions to this article, email the Political Action Committee at [v.sladojevic-sola@usw1998.ca](mailto:v.sladojevic-sola@usw1998.ca).

*Valeria Sladojevic-Sola, Political Action Committee Co-Chair*

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## It Feels GREAT to be “Normal”

**G**rowing up in China, I had always been viewed as “ugly” within its beauty standards. In China and many places in East Asia, someone must be skinny, big-eyed, tall, and have fair skin to be considered beautiful. The standards are quite narrow, needing near-impossible body dimensions, such as pointed noses and a perfectly oval face. Unfortunately, I don't meet any of these standards.

I remember that something I absolutely hated growing up was shopping. I always expressed tiredness or boredom when my mom went to the shop, hoping that we could go home early. This trick could work on a regular day, but it never worked on the days before the Chinese New Year as it is the tradition to get new pieces of clothing for this biggest holiday of the year.



Yvonne Yang with the shirt she won at Orientation as a grad student at UNH. Photo by Yvonne Yang



As the sizes are generally quite small in China, I barely fit into any girls' clothing sizes or even women's sizes. It was always quite embarrassing to keep going to different stores, putting on their biggest sizes, yet not being able to fit into any of them. As Chinese culture also tends to be quite explicit, people routinely commented on my body shape in front of me, telling me to go on a diet. These experiences were quite torturous; I really wished that I could be one of those "normal" skinny girls.

Fast forward a few years later, and I was fortunate enough to be admitted to a graduate school in the U.S. It was there that I felt I was "normal" for the first time in my life, and it felt great! At the start of the school year, I went to participate in a TA/RA orientation. There I won a shirt. When I went to get the shirt, I was asked what size I wanted. I was feeling embarrassed to say my size out loud, so I said it quietly: "2XL".

The guy who was distributing shirts looked at me and asked again, "Sorry, what size?"

I raised my voice a little and repeated, "2XL."

"Okay I guess you want a pyjama. They are over there." He pointed to a pile near the end of the table. "A pyjama? What did he mean?" I asked myself in my heart and felt confused. After I pulled out the 2XL shirt, I immediately understood. The shirt was so huge on me that I felt I could fit my entire body in it.

As I wasn't familiar with the Western sizes back then, I started to grab different sizes and put on each to find the one that fit me the best. After a round of trying, I finally found my size and I was an M. I was almost crying as I couldn't believe that was my size as it has never happened in my life before! I was at least a 2XL or sometimes 3XL in China. I was exhilarated as it was the first time ever in my life that I could fit in a regular girls' size. I felt "normal" and the feeling of being normal is amazing!

Now I have been living in the West for a decade, the anxiety I felt from my body shape

**For everyone out there who strives to be a normal individual like me, remember that though we may not be given the ideal body shape or appearance that society forces on us or expects, and we may not meet unrealistic societal standards, it doesn't mean we are doing anything wrong or should be ashamed.**

and appearance has dwindled. I learned the concept of body positivity here in the West for the first time. I picked up knowledge about nutrition and the different types of physical exercises one can do to help keep fit, and I've never had anyone around me or in the store comment on my body shape. I've started to be more confident and secure in myself and my looks and have learned not to worry that much.

I have always been against the idea of being "normal." I have always wanted to stand out, whether it means achieving the highest score or receiving the best scholarship. I was shocked that one day I would be eager to be just "normal." For everyone out there who strives to be a normal individual like me, remember that though we may not be given the ideal body shape or appearance that society forces on us or expects, and we may not meet unrealistic societal standards, it doesn't mean we are doing anything wrong or should be ashamed. We always need to love ourselves and celebrate our life events and journeys. We all are unique, normal human beings and everyone deserves to be treated equally.

Yvonne Yang, Centre for International Experience

# USW Happe



Mary-Lou Scott (L) and Mary-Marta Briones-Bird (R) at the D6 BHM event. Photo by Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.



Financial Secretary Zack Sholdra speaking at the USW International Convention in Las Vegas, August 2022. Photo courtesy United Steelworkers.



Laura Patterson and Nina Di Trapani at the D6 WOS Conference, with Anita Bryan. Photo courtesy of Nina Di Trapani.



Mary-Marta Briones-Bird took her Leadership in Action course to the rally at Queen's Park in support of nurses on March 2, 2023. Photo courtesy of Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.



Former USW 1998 Vice President and Editor of Steel Drum P.C. Choo giving a speech at the D6 BHM event. Photo by Kai Lai.



D6 WOS Committee table at the USW National Women's Conference. Front (L to R): Rachelle Teves, Candace Zinkweg, Donna Wingrove, Diane Medina, Janet Moffat. Back [L to R]: Jennifer La Porte, Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Nadia Crystal. Photo courtesy of Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.



# 1998 nings



P.C. Choo and Mark Austin the D6 BHM event. Photo by Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.



Delegates at a rally against domestic violence during the USW Canadian National Women's Conference. (L - R) Nina Di TraPani, Laura Patterson, Liesl Joson, Karen Hampson, Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, Ruxandra Pop. Photo courtesy of Mary-Marta Briones-Bird.



Vice-President Tamara Vickery and Richard Waters at USW 1998 Family Skate Event. Photo by Richard Waters.



Jason Singh at the D6 BHM event. Photo by Mark Austin.



USW 1998 Health & Safety Coordinator Mark Austin giving a speech at the D6 BHM event. Photo by Kai Lai.



President John Ankenman, Vice-President Tamara Vickery and Staff Rep Colleen Burke at USW 1998 Family Skate Event. Photo by Richard Waters.





Students from Climate Justice U of T organized a Fossil Free Research banner drop in November 2022.  
Photo by Mathis Cleuzio.

## Fossil Free Research Campaign

**S**hould fossil fuel companies be funding climate change research at U of T and other institutions of higher education? Students from Climate Justice U of T don't think so. I attended their Fossil Free Research Teach-In on February 2, 2023, to learn more about their campaign.

Initially, I thought that big companies that have made billions by causing and prolonging the climate crisis very much should be investing into research that might help alleviate some of the worst outcomes. However, I learned that U of T banned tobacco companies from funding cancer research in recognition of the dangers of compromising academic freedom. It would have allowed tobacco companies too much influence over research outcomes. Imagine where we might be if this policy had not been enacted. People would probably still argue smoking doesn't cause cancer because of bunk science, and the tobacco industry would surely be making billions more, laughing all the way to the bank.

In the same way, fossil fuel companies fund climate research in order to greenwash their own reputations, to make the public believe they are part of the solution when in fact they have been complicit in preventing governments from implementing known solutions for decades. The disinformation this industry has fostered is in part why some people still believe climate change isn't real or isn't caused by human activity.

As I write this, over 800 signatories and 130 academic institutions in the US, UK, and Canada have already signed the [Fossil Free Research Open-Letter](#), encouraging their universities to stop accepting fossil fuel financing for climate and energy research. As members of the Fossil Free Research International Coalition, the students behind Climate Justice U of T launched a [separate petition](#) to try and convince U of T to do the same. U of T staff, faculty and students can sign this petition.

One of the documents mentioned during the teach-in was [Complicity in the Climate Emergency: An Investigation into the Links Between the University of British Columbia and the Fossil Fuel Industry](#) by Anna Brookes, Joshua Emsley, Tova Gaster, Michelle Xie, and Husna Zaidi. By analyzing donor lists, student awards, research funding data, and other sources, they found that despite UBC's fossil fuel divestment strategy ([which is similar to U of T's](#)), significant links persisted through "fossil fuel-funded donations, student scholarships, and research" (p. 5). Among other things, the report authors recommend UBC "develop an ethics of engagement policy to avoid implicitly promoting the fossil fuel industry, similar to policies implemented by institutions... in the early 2000's towards the tobacco industry" (p. 6).

As Climate Justice U of T moves forward with their campaign, which has included a banner drop on the downtown campus in November, they are looking to expand their research team and collaborate with professors and staff who may be able to provide useful information. With these efforts, they hope to produce a similar report for U of T as was done at UBC.



February 2, 2023 Fossil Free Research Teach-In poster.  
Courtesy of Climate Justice U of T.

[A copy of the presentation](#) from the February 2 teach-in is available online, as well as this [one-pager](#) that answers commonly asked questions.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact [climatejusticeuoft@gmail.com](mailto:climatejusticeuoft@gmail.com), [@climatejusticeuoft on instagram](#) / [@cjuoft on twitter](#)

Kristy Bard, Committee on the Environment,  
Climate Change and Sustainability (CECCS).



# 'Top Employer' for Whom? Mapping Contracting Out at U of T

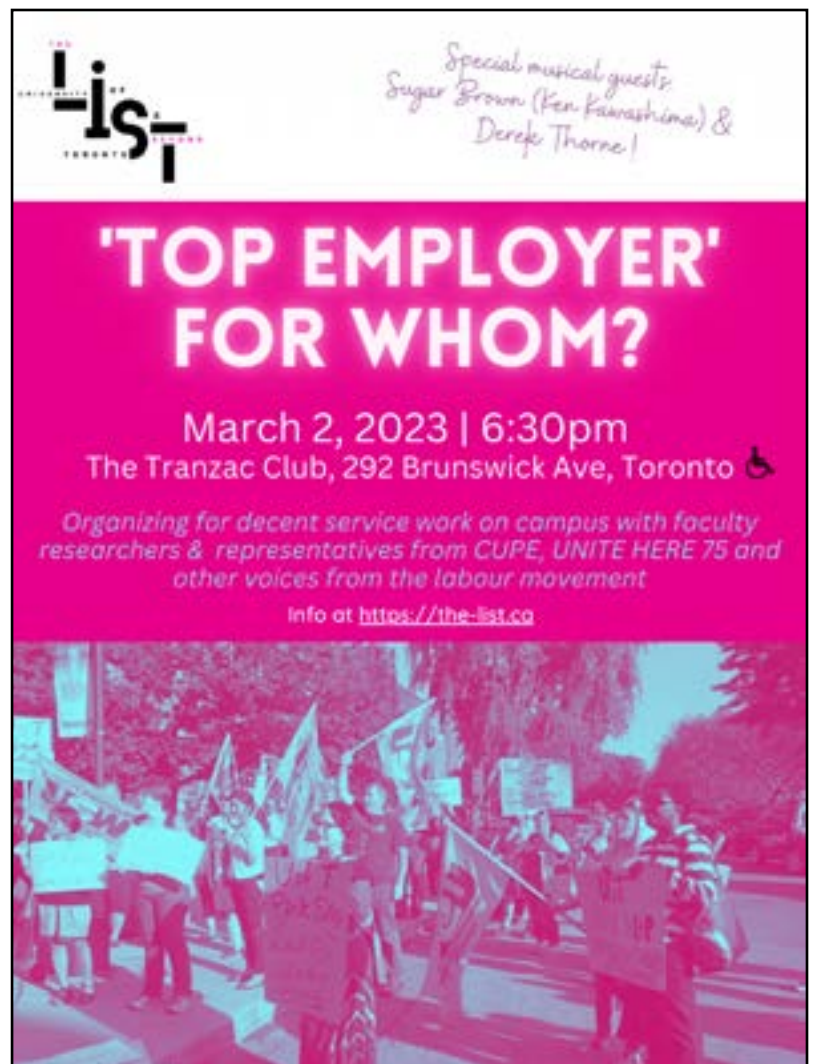
**O**n March 2, 2023, myself and two other USW 1998 members attended an event at Tranzac Club organized by [The List](#), a network of progressive faculty and friends at U of T that was formed during the 2015 CUPE strike. The List was an email list created by faculty at the time fighting for a more equitable University. They have continued to host events ever since, providing a forum for students, faculty and staff to come together and talk about issues that impact us all, and work in solidarity to fight for a better university.

The event was on the topic of 'Top Employer' For Whom? and featured speakers from CUPE, UNITE HERE 75 and UTFA. One of the panelists was former USW 1998 member and OISE steward and health and safety activist Justin Holloway, who is now working on his PhD at OISE and as a Graduate Assistant as a member of CUPE 3902.

Justin spoke about his research team's work, under the supervision of Michelle Buckley and Kiran Mirchandani, that resulted in the publication in January 2023 of [Service Work at the University of Toronto: A Summary Report](#). The team included graduate and undergraduate students Sheldon Bromfield, Sarah Petersen, Ali Saleh and Waleed Ishak. Their research details the working conditions and different employment relationships of caretaking, food services and security services across the University - a portion of which is contracted out as opposed to being directly employed.

In his presentation, Justin detailed how difficult it was to obtain information related to third-party contractor agreements.

There is no publicly available list of contracts held, and the University has delayed providing copies of vendor contracts. The researchers had to resort to a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) request to get this information, at a cost of \$2,700. Over a year later they have only received some of the contracts requested, and many of those are heavily redacted given that third-party vendors



Poster for The List event on 'Top Employer' For Whom? Held on March 2, 2023. Courtesy of <http://the-list.ca>.



*This is indicative of how the University behaves as an employer. It raises important questions about transparency when it comes to labour practices of a public institution espousing themselves as one of the best employers in Canada.*

consider their wage rates, number of employees and contract values to be competitive, and therefore confidential information.

At the event, we heard about how the lead researchers Kiran and Michelle have had to spend hours in mediation meetings with these subcontractors and vendors appealing their FIPPA request. It was remarkable to learn just how difficult it was for a team of well-resourced researchers to obtain what should be public information at a publicly funded institution.

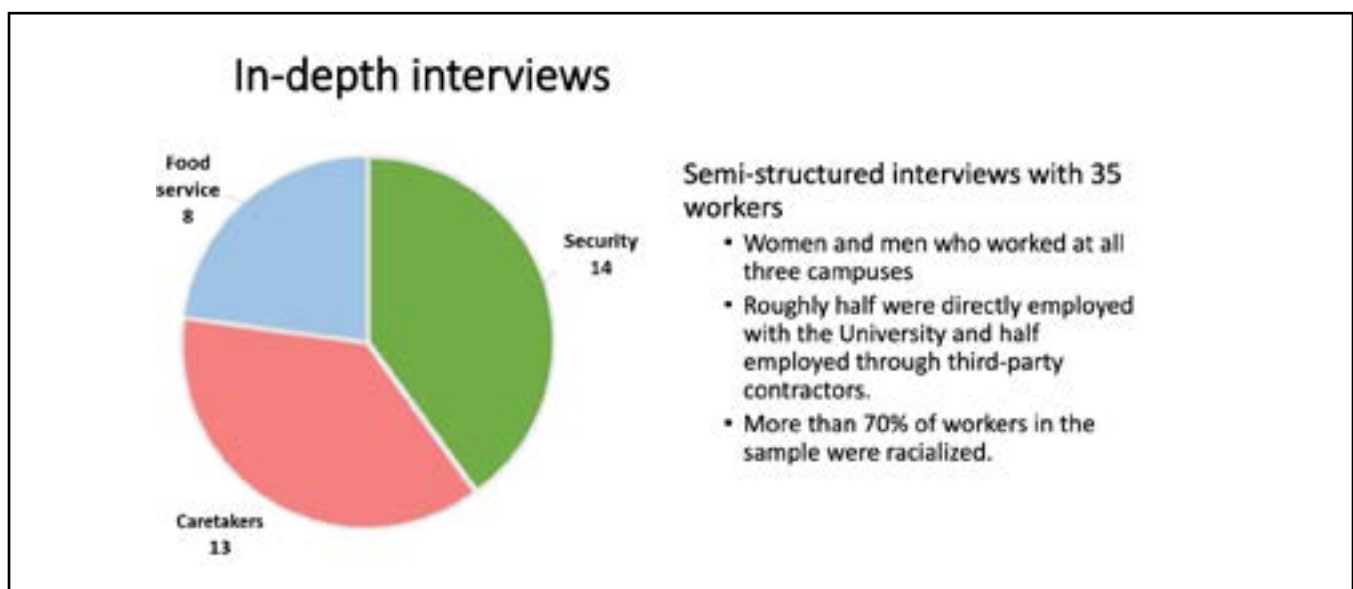
This is indicative of how the University behaves as an employer. It raises important questions about

transparency when it comes to labour practices of a public institution espousing themselves as one of the best employers in Canada.

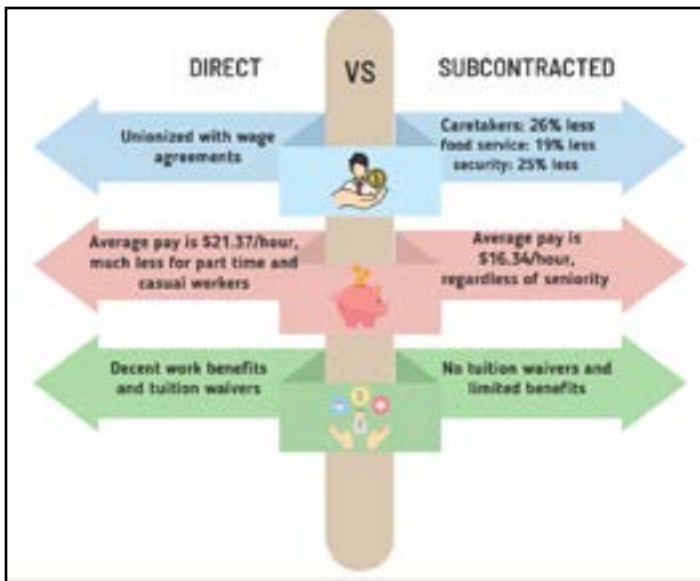
In the absence of accessible and public information about the extent of subcontracting on campus, the researchers decided to map what data they were able to obtain through the FIPPA request, in addition to walking from building to building to publicize the study and invite staff to participate in interviews. They interviewed 35 staff in total, approximately half of whom were subcontracted staff and over 70% racialized. At the March 2 event, Sarah Pettersen, another OISE PhD student and Graduate Assistant who was part of the research team and had a major role in the interviews, read out some first hand accounts by these subcontracted workers.

The result, in addition to their publication, is [an online map](#) that shows where subcontracted workers are employed at U of T. The University community can use these maps to find out if the service staff in their building are unionized or not, and since the maps are a work in progress additional data can be emailed to the research team.. Check out the maps of all three campuses at <https://campusserviceworkers.ca/>

These maps compel us to ask what kinds of employment relationships are in place in the buildings where we work? Who is providing the caretaking, security and food services that are so



Slide from Justin Holloway's presentation showing how many interviews were conducted as part of the study. Courtesy of Justin Holloway.



The difference between being directly employed by U of T and being a subcontractor. Slide courtesy of Justin Holloway.

integral to U of T operations? Are they unionized, or are they being paid low wages with no benefits and no paid sick days?

If contracting out is allowed to continue to increase, as has been the pattern over the years with subcontracted caretakers in every new building constructed on campus, then what does that mean about changing work conditions? Do subcontracted staff not deserve the same working conditions as those doing the exact same work, but lucky enough to be directly employed by the University?

The hope of these researchers, in addition to shedding light on the current situation, is that continued progress on the campus service

***U of T will never achieve its sustainability goals or be a real leader in employment or sustainability until the contracting out stops once and for all.***

workers map will serve as a starting point for others to continue this work and identify important trends.

For more on how contracting out is impacting CUPE 3261, see the related article on p. 25 - 30. In that article, the CUPE 3261 authors correctly note that the practice of contracting out directly contradicts the University's mission of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As I was listening to the panelists at the event, it occurred to me the practice also contradicts the University's sustainability mission. Since I started working in sustainability at U of T over a year ago, I have come to learn that sustainability is not just about reducing environmental harm. Guided by the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#), U of T promotes the idea that sustainability also includes poverty reduction, health and wellbeing and good jobs. We celebrate when the University constructs a LEED-certified sustainable building, but then we staff that building with contracted-out caretakers making poverty wages with no benefits. It's a tragedy, and I can't help but feel that the hard work of myself and so many of my colleagues to achieve our sustainability goals is being undermined. U of T will never achieve its sustainability goals or be a real leader in employment or sustainability until the contracting out stops once and for all.

*Kristy Bard, Committee on the Environment, Climate Change, and Sustainability (CECCS), with input from Justin Holloway, CUPE 3902 and Kiran Mirchandani, UTFA and OISE Leadership, Higher & Adult Education.*

# Welcoming Our New Pay Equity Job Evaluation Analyst, Anil Purandaré



Anil Purandaré is joining our JE team as our new Job Evaluation Analyst. Photo by Elizabeth Callaghan-Purandaré

**W**e are so pleased to have Anil Purandaré join the Job Evaluation Team. Many of you may already know Anil. For those who don't, Anil has been a union activist for many years and is deeply committed to principles of social justice and serving the membership in a thoughtful and respectful way. In the role of Chief Steward for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) and as Grievance Committee Co-Chair, Anil has contributed immensely to supporting our membership and we are thrilled to have Anil join our Job Evaluation team and help support members in this important capacity. Below is a quote from Anil about why job evaluation is so important:

*"As a U of T student in the 1990's who became a staff member a bit before we voted to join USW, I've seen firsthand how this finally gave staff a voice and tools to improve our working standards. One of the gains that was most memorable to me was the pay equity project. It resulted in retroactive pay for many of our members, whose work had been chronically undervalued by the University. It's heartening to see job evaluation language included in the recent Collective Agreement for members at St. Mike's, and it speaks to the fact that when it comes to equity, including pay equity, the work is never done. I'm so happy to join our Local's Job Evaluation team and I'm looking forward to working with members towards everyone being treated and paid fairly."*

*Mary-Marta Briones-Bird, USW 1998 Pay Equity/Job Evaluation Coordinator*



# Tips from Our Trip to Australia and New Zealand

*Nick Marchese in a Hobbit Hole. Photo by Nadia Marchese.*

**I**n late January through to the middle of February (their summer), I travelled with my wife to Australia and New Zealand, making stays first in Sydney, then Melbourne and on to Wellington and Auckland. Aside from an excursion to the Hobbiton Movie Set (see details below) and a ferry ride to South Island, NZ, we limited our travel to the big cities. So, no encounters with sea life off the Great Barrier Reef or hikes through the Tasmania rainforest or on the glaciers of South Island. (That's our next trip.)

*Tip #1: You (Canadians) need a visitor's visa to enter each country, and there is a fee for each (about AUS\$25 and NZ\$52 per person).*

The flight to Sydney was tough. Flying time from Toronto to Sydney was 20.25 hours (4.5 hours to Vancouver, and 15.75 hours from Vancouver to Sydney). We also flew from one city to the next. The return flight from Auckland was, of course, a bit shorter, with the flight to Vancouver being 13.5 hours and about four hours from Vancouver to Toronto.

*Tip #2: If you're able to, take some Gravol or other medication that will knock you out during the plane ride. (I didn't, and I regret it.)*

## Australia

Our trip 'Down Under' sure had us looking up a lot. Sydney and Melbourne each already has about five million people, but population growth seems unabated, as evidenced by the skylines of their downtowns dotted with cranes atop soon-to-be-completed condominium towers, as well as office skyscrapers.

While Sydney is known to most for its spectacular harbours, unlike Toronto, the city also has such an impressive variety of architecture that it reminded me of Chicago's famous skyline. In addition, the city's botanic garden is right in the downtown core, and it's free to visit!

*Tip #3: The Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Museum, both in Sydney, are free to visit.*

Melbourne is the more cosmopolitan of the two cities, boasting the top-rated university in the country and one of the top hundred universities in the world - the University of Melbourne, which has a downtown campus that, unlike U of T's, is designed to limit car-through traffic. Like Sydney, the core is very walkable, with paths along the waterfront, the Yarra River that runs through it, and the Olympic Park grounds.

*Tip #4: Melbourne has free tram (i.e., streetcar)*



*Part of Sydney's Central Business District (CBD) skyline from the harbour. Photo by Nick Marchese.*

service throughout its downtown core.

## Life in the Big Cities

Like in Canada, where about 80% live within 160 kilometres of the border with the United States, people in Australia are concentrated in a relatively small portion of the country. About 80% of the 27 million people live along the southeast coast, and more than a third live in Sydney and Melbourne.

Like in the big cities of Canada, the cost of living is high in Australia's big urban areas. In Sydney, we stumbled across a building, housing the New South Wales state offices of some trade unions. I chatted with the owner of a lunch kiosk in the building's inner courtyard. When I told him about how expensive housing was in Toronto (noting the average home price reached \$1.2 million in 2022), he didn't blink, countering that the average home price in Sydney had topped AUS\$1.5 million. He added that inflation is also a concern for Australians, as it is in Canada. They seem to be a bit more progressive when it comes to labour legislation to offset the impacts of the cost of living, though. The minimum wage in Australia is AUS\$21.38 and set to go up with an inflation-adjusted increase in July 2023. What's more, the average wage for restaurant staff in Sydney is even higher. One of the reasons for this is tips are usually included in the price of menu items.

*Tip #5: Similar to the practice in European countries, most restaurants in Australia and New Zealand already include the tip and sales tax in their menu prices.*

Since the removal in the late 1970s of racially based immigration rules, people from other Oceania countries and Southeast Asia in particular have flocked to the country. The restaurant scene in Sydney and Melbourne is reflective of this with plenty of Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Korean, Japanese and Chinese food restaurants competing with more traditional establishments for prime downtown locales.



The author at the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney, which is free to visit. Photo by Nadia Marchese.



*Tip #6: Adding a surcharge for payment by credit card is more common in Australia and New Zealand than in Canada. Some merchants tell you this, but best to ask, and best to carry cash as well as cards when out and about.*

## New Zealand

*Tip #7: When in Australia, the currency exchange outlets won't convert your Canadian dollars to New Zealand dollars. Rather, they convert them to Australian dollars and then to NZ dollars. Best to buy some NZ dollars before leaving Canada.*

Like Australia, people in New Zealand are concentrated in a few places. Of the approximate 5.1 million residents, 1.5 million live in just one city, Auckland. And, another half million live in the capital, Wellington.

While each city has accessible and well-maintained waterfronts, my preference was for the less-hectic core, varied neighbourhoods and more progressive vibe of Wellington. The city is also home to the country's parliament building, botanical garden and its fabulous Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (which are all free to visit).

*Tip #5: Similar to the practice in European countries, most restaurants in Australia and New Zealand already include the tip and sales tax in their menu prices.*





Entrance to the archipelago of smaller islands in Cook Strait, just north of Picton, South Island, where the ferry from Wellington docks. Photo by Nick Marchese.

*Tip #8: If you like the vibe of Toronto's Roncesvalles, Queen St. West, Annex, Leslieville or Annex areas, you should pay a visit to the Te Aro area (especially Cuba Street) in Wellington and Ponsonby area in Auckland.*

*Tip #9: The ferry from Wellington on NZ's North Island to South Island's northern tip is slow (3.5 hours) and pricy. (We paid NZ\$125 per person for a return trip). If coming from Australia and going back to Canada from New Zealand, better to fly to South Island (regular service to Queenstown and Christchurch), tour the picturesque island, and then fly to the North Island (Wellington or Auckland).*

### **An Excursion to the Hobbiton Movie Set**

Okay, I admit being somewhat skeptical of the value of paying to visit a rebuilt movie set long after the film's, or in this case, film series', release. A touch touristy? For Tolkien fanatics only?

But after having experienced Hobbiton, the movie set of The Shire village that was home to the Baggins and other hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and its prequel series *The Hobbit*, I can say that reserving a day of one's New Zealand itinerary to see this wondrous creation is well worth it.

Located on a 1,250-acre working farm in the idyllic rolling hills of North Island near Matamata (about 2.5 hours from Auckland), Hobbiton, which opened in 2002, has attracted fans from around the world. On the day of our visit, we had people from Canada, the United States, Australia

and Norway.

The 75-minute guided walking tour takes you by 41 Hobbit Hole exteriors (all but one are only front doorways) set into the hills, past flora and fauna, over stone and wood bridges and eventually to the Green Dragon Inn for a "complimentary" refreshment (included in the entrance fee).

There is no public transit that takes you to Hobbiton. Private tour bus operators charge a hefty fee for transport there and back. We paid NZ\$150 each for a return trip from Auckland. If you can swing it, share a rental car with others to reduce the cost per person. Entrance to Hobbiton was NZ\$89 per adult (17 or older).

*Tip #10: If you are planning a visit soon, note that there is speculation the entrance fee will go up with an expansion of the site, and tour time length, so as to have time to explore the interiors of a newly built Hobbit Hole. Tours will continue*



The Hobbiton Movie Set is worth a visit, even if you aren't a Tolkien fanatic. Photos by Nick Marchese.







A barrel of Delving & Oatlock Southfarthing fine ale on the left and the idyllic Hobbiton includes this beautiful scenery on the right. Photos by Nick Marchese.

during construction, set to begin in April 2023 and run through the rest of this year.

### **The Ugly Tourist: Our Experience in the Eye of a Cyclone**

They say tourism is illusory. You're not really connected to the places you go to unless you live there for longer than a few days. They're right.

Cyclone Gabrielle is estimated to have affected at least a third of New Zealand's population, mostly in the far north and east coast of North Island, which is where we were when the storm hit. At least 11 people were killed, and thousands were cut off from the rest of the country due to washed out roads and power outages. And, for a while, all I could think about was how it would impact our getting back home.

Yes, our transpacific flight was postponed a day and five hours, and we had to dish out another hundred bucks to stay in a small hotel room another night in downtown Auckland, which experienced very little flooding and little destruction. Our troubles were so minor, they don't meet the test of comparison with the families who lost a loved one and/or have to spend the next year or more rebuilding their homes and communities.

Tip #11: For transpacific flights to Australia and

*The stories of Indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand are much the same as those in the Americas.*

New Zealand, add a buffer of at least a day before you have to return to work or make a scheduled appointment.

Tip #12 - Vocabulary: Rubbish, not garbage disposal; tomato sauce, not ketchup for the table condiment; and toilet, not restroom/bathroom.

### **Relations with Indigenous People of Australia and New Zealand: A Comparison**

The stories of Indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand are much the same as those in the Americas. Europeans came. Their armies and settler colonists brought disease and a conquering mentality. Hundreds of years later, they offer modest reparations.

Land claims and battles for reparations for the few remaining Indigenous peoples of Australia go on. A somewhat better story can be told for the Maori peoples of New Zealand. Maori is an official language of New Zealand and the Maori have dedicated representation in the country's parliament. There are currently 15 Maori Members of Parliament (MPs) out of a total of 120 MPs. Maori make up approximately 17% of the country's population.

We were in Wellington on February 6, a national holiday that marks the signing of a treaty between British rulers and Maori for the founding of New Zealand. Celebrations were low-key, and calls for full reparations continue.

Nick Marchese, Casual Unit steward for KPE



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Want to contribute to the next issue? Email submissions to [kbard@usw1998.ca](mailto:kbard@usw1998.ca) by September 15, 2023.


Special thanks to all our contributors!

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