



**CONTRACT ACADEMICS OF TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

**January 2025 Newsletter**

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**CUPE Social, Fall 2024**

Our first Fall Social since the pandemic was held on the afternoon of Tuesday, September 24. Approximately 90 members from all three bargaining Units enjoyed great food and drink, courtesy of CUPE 3904. Raffle prizes were awarded to Unit 1 members Kevin Konarzewski and Martin Mejia as well as Unit 3 members Justin Chen and Johann Kuruvila.

While the AGM and GMM provide formal occasions for members to engage with Union business, the Socials provide a more relaxed and informal atmosphere, allowing members to chat with colleagues as well the Executive Committee. The Socials offer a valuable opportunity for members to express their concerns to the Executive and provide the Committee with feedback that they might not otherwise hear.

**The CUPE 3904 WINTER SOCIAL will be held on Thursday, February 13th 3-6 pm at Oakham House! Save the date! Stay tuned for details!**



## CUPE 3904 Social, Fall 2024



Catherine Jenkins, President with Richard Deklerk, Treasurer (photo by Aiden Milroy)



Rob Denning, Unit 2 VP (photo by Aiden Milroy)



Nagina Parmar, Biology & Chemistry with Mohammad Manshouri, Geography (photo by Aiden Milroy)



Marla Spergel, Marketing (photo by Aiden Milroy)

## Joe Zboralski Teaching and Community Engagement Award Winner

The Joe Zboralski Teaching and Community Engagement Award is an annual TMU Award open to CUPE 1 and CUPE 2 members. Joe was the long-serving President of CUPE 3904. This award recognizes members' contributions to community building among students and colleagues at TMU and in the broader public. This includes academic and civic engagement through offering service to the community, supporting leadership skills, and creating positive change.

This year's 14 nominees all actively provide service to TMU and the community, often sharing their own experiences to teach civic responsibility to their students by involving their classes in these initiatives. Such projects allow TMU to work collaboratively with the community to everyone's benefit. Annual nominations for this award close in November. The award is announced in January and awarded at the Toronto Met Gala in May. See additional information [here](#).



Scott Sørli, Architectural Science, Unit 1 (uncredited photo)

The Winner of this year's Joe Zboralski Teaching and Community Engagement Award is Scott Sørli. As an architect, Scott brings a strong ethic for compassionate community building, environmental concerns, and social justice to everything that he does in the classroom and beyond, encouraging dialogue about the built world. This includes taking students to Allan Gardens for *both* the architecture and to engage with park inhabitants, as well as actively mentoring students on infrastructure and design review panels. In his speculative teaching studio, fourth-year students encounter anthropogenic scenarios, preparing them for future mass housing urban developments in contexts as different as St. James Town, Toronto and Jakarta, Indonesia. Scott has been active with a variety of communities outside the university too, including the Toronto Society of Architects, the City of Toronto, and Pride Toronto.

Scott is a long-time Unit 1 member in Architectural Sciences who has taken his union involvement to a whole new level in the last two years. Until recently, sessional faculty at the University of Waterloo were one of the few universities without union representation. Scott has worked tirelessly to change that. As an extension of his union member engagement with CUPE 3904, Scott organized Waterloo's sessional faculty, receiving union certification in January 2023 as CUPE Local 5524, and he is now actively bargaining their first collective agreement with the university. Subsequent to organizing Waterloo's sessional workers, he also organized the Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants, who were recognized in January, 2024. Congratulations, Scott!

## Unit 3 TA/GA Equity and Inclusion Awards

The Unit 3 TA/GA Equity and Inclusion Awards recognize and promote TA/GAs who exhibit excellence through effective teaching strategies and student engagement. Evidence of teaching excellence might include use of effective feedback and the incorporation of equity, diversity, and inclusion in teaching. Additionally, the nomination package must include a teaching philosophy, and letters of support from a supervising instructor and two students. See complete nomination details [here](#).

Up to five prizes of \$1000 each are awarded in both the Fall and Winter terms. Winners of the Fall competition will be announced soon. Winter nominations will open in March, allowing potential nominees time to gather evidence for their submission.

## Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) Conference

The annual OUWCC Conference provides an opportunity for 30,000+ university sector CUPE members to discuss our collective concerns. In addition to contract lecturers and academic assistants, OUWCC supports food and facilities workers from 39 CUPE locals at 17 different Ontario universities.

This year's conference will be held from February 27 to March 2 in Richmond Hill and will be attended by Kelly Train, Unit 1 VP and Catherine Jenkins, President of CUPE 3904. Scheduled presentations include a discussion on bargaining trends, sector threats and opportunities, and AI in bargaining, while workshops include building action networks for member engagement, solidarity with Indigenous workers, and conflict skills for union activists.

## CUPE Local 3904 Bargaining

All three units of 3904 are in the process of bargaining collective agreements (CAs) this year and are now at various stages of discussions. We anticipate that all bargaining will conclude by spring or summer of 2025. Bargaining teams are led by the Unit-specific VPs and composed of the President and Unit members who were elected during Stewards' Council meetings and at the May 2024 AGM. Thank you to all our members who completed the bargaining survey for your Unit as these shape the bargaining team proposals to prioritize member concerns. In alignment with CUPE National principles, we consistently work to improve our working conditions by negotiating improvements to our collective agreements for the benefit of our members.

**Unit 3**, representing Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants, bargained over the summer of 2024. The summary of settlement was forwarded to all Unit 3 members on September 24, and a ratification meeting was held on September 27, providing Unit 3 members an opportunity to clarify any outstanding questions. Online voting was held through Simply Voting, recognized by CUPE National, and the results, certified on September 29, showed an 87.1% vote to accept the new collective agreement.

Gains made in the Unit 3 CA included an 11% wage increase over the three-and-a-half years of the CA as well as improvements to the Graduate Assistant and Health Benefit Funds. Language changes were made to clarify definitions throughout the CA. Note that the term Teaching Assistant/Graduate Assistant (TA/GA) has been replaced by the unified term Academic Assistant (AA). Special thanks to the bargaining team of Rebecca Scenna (Unit 3 VP), Emma Dennis, Karen Penaranda, and Sina Rahimi for their diligent efforts on behalf of Unit 3. The new Unit 3 CA is available on the CUPE 3904 website [here](#).

**Unit 1**, representing TMU Contract Lecturers, began caucusing over the spring to review the existing CA and to develop proposals in alignment with the priorities expressed by Unit 1 members over the last three years, as well as in response to the bargaining survey. Our first meeting with the university was held October 2, and we met with management regularly throughout the fall. Negotiations on non-monetary proposals have now successfully concluded. The focus of these items has been to support job security and clarify language in the Collective Agreement.

We presented our monetary proposals and are awaiting management response, keeping in mind Ontario Premier Ford's cuts to university funding that has worsened in impact since 2018, the raise freezes of Bill 124 on the last round of bargaining, inflation, and new federal government restrictions on international students. These obvious financial concerns must be balanced against the need to protect meaningful work for Unit 1 members in light of TMU's current environment of fiscal restraint and restructuring that threaten member employment.

Meetings are scheduled for January and will continue throughout the Winter 2025 term until an agreement is reached. Once an agreement is in place, a Summary of Settlement will be emailed to all Unit 1 members, ratification meetings will be held online to answer member questions, and a ratification vote will be held online via the Simply Voting platform; voting instructions will be sent by email and announced at ratification meetings. Stay tuned for details in the coming months. Special thanks to the bargaining team of Kelly Train (Unit 1 VP), Valentina Capurri, Ross Fair, and Lisa Peña Sabanal for their ongoing efforts on behalf of Unit 1 members.

**Unit 2**, representing Chang School Continuing Education Contract Lecturers, has been caucusing throughout the Fall to review the existing CA and survey results in preparation for developing bargaining proposals. The Unit 2 bargaining team will continue to caucus during the Winter term until Unit 1 bargaining is completed and management is available to begin Unit 2 negotiations. Special thanks to the bargaining team of Rob Denning (Unit 2 VP), Bob Marshall, Anne Moorhouse, and Claude Sam-Foh.

## **Your CUPE Local 3904 Executive**

President: Catherine Jenkins

Treasurer: Richard Deklerk

Unit 1 VP: Kelly Train

VP Communications: Michael Dick

Unit 2 VP: Rob Denning

VP Campaigns & Equity: Michael Lapointe

Unit 3 VP: Rebecca Scenna

For more information, check our website:  
[Executive Committee | CUPE Local 3904](#)

