



June 23, 2021.

Results from the CUPE 3904 Pandemic & Back-to-Campus Survey

Dear members and colleagues:

Thank you for taking the time to complete our Pandemic and Back-to-campus Survey earlier this month. We received an unprecedented response about member experiences during the lockdown, your wellbeing, and your concerns moving forward into the coming school year. We should note that while most of our CUPE members have been teaching safely from home, others have continued to teach on-campus throughout the pandemic.

Key statistical findings from this survey revealed:

- **80% of members prefer to continue teaching remotely for Fall 2021** (84% of unit 1 and 2 members; 74% of unit 3 members)
- 65% of members rated the campus as *very unsafe* to *unsafe* for Fall 2021 reopening (70% units 1 and 2; 60% unit 3)
- 72% of units 1 and 2, and 44% of unit 3 members, indicated their dependent care obligations (children, parents, partners, other family), added to their concerns about returning to campus

As well as providing statistical data, hundreds of you also shared personal comments, some of which indicate the level of distress experienced over the past 16 months. We thank you for your trust and candour. Know that you are not alone.

Key concerns expressed by members in their write-in comments:

- **Vaccines:** many instructors will not be fully vaccinated or protected by Labour Day and the larger community will not have reached herd immunity; although vaccines are effective, they are not 100%, so outbreaks will still occur; the evolving threat of potentially vaccine-resistant variants; exposure risk from students and others on campus who may not be vaccinated, or who may be vaccine hesitant or resistant
- **Overcrowding:** classrooms which are at or beyond capacity do not allow physical distancing; hallways, food services, washrooms, and common areas become overcrowded between classes; shared office spaces
- **Ventilation and cleaning:** old and poor-quality ventilation systems, which will not protect from the virus; need for increased cleaning protocols in classrooms between classes and in washrooms; lack of preparation around transition back to campus
- **Commuting:** instructors and students risk exposure on public transit; some travel from high-risk areas, potentially bringing COVID-19 to campus
- **Health and safety protocols:** are lecturers and teaching assistants expected to police and enforce health and safety protocols, rather than focusing on the work of teaching?
- **At-risk groups:** some members, or their dependents, are in high-risk groups due to existing health concerns (physical and/or mental) or age, making a return to campus inequitable



Although a few members expressed that the virus poses little risk, the overwhelming sense from your comments is that Fall 2021 is *too soon* for a full return to campus. More preparation time is needed to work towards a *safe* return for Winter 2022.

The final survey question asked: How would you like the university administration to address your pandemic-related concerns for working at Ryerson during the upcoming year? The most succinct and representative answer was: “Vocally, actively, quickly.” Additionally, many reiterated the desire to remain online for Fall 2021, or at least have choice and flexibility about teaching delivery. Others suggested the need for protocols around testing and/or vaccines, as well as reduced class sizes. Still others demanded clear and transparent messaging from the university so each of us can make informed decisions.

The survey information you provided has already proven valuable in discussions with administration regarding how and when we will return to campus safely. CUPE 3904 is united with other campus unions: X*FA (RFA), OPSEU 596, and CUPE 233, who share our concerns. **Together, we create a louder voice.**

To date, the university has not been forthcoming with information or future plans. During a June 1 Senate meeting President Lachemi stated that the university has drafted two possible scenarios and one pivot; however, details have not been shared with the unions or the university community. The university’s lack of transparency adds to the stress the community is already experiencing.

Last week, we shared with you the four-union letter to the University Administration outlining nine key back-to-campus areas of concern and demanding the answers to questions our members are asking. So far, no response has been received and plans for Fall 2021 remain unclear. **Know that we and our sister unions will continue to demand answers about the university’s intentions for the Fall 2021 term.** In collaboration with the X*FA (formerly the RFA), we are also in discussions with our full-time and contract colleagues at OCAD, University of Toronto, and York. After significant discussion, exploration, and debate, this four-university coalition adopted three unified demands:

- It is *Still Not Safe Enough to Return to Campus*,
- We want to return to *safe in-person work and study* for all members of our communities, and,
- In that the pandemic amplifies inequities, is a ‘voluntary’ return to campus a choice for precarious academics? **All contract academics must have the option to teach/TA remotely.**

We appreciate your continued support.

In solidarity,

Laurie Jacklin, President

Richard Deklerk, Treasurer

Michael Frascetti, Unit 3 Chief Steward

Michael Dick, VP Comms

Kelly Train, Unit 1 Chief Steward

Shawn McFadden, Unit 2 Chief Steward

[Memorable Moments in Pandemic Teaching by CUPE 3904 members - 3.22 minute video](#)