



## Message from the President: Out like a Lamb

**Jacqueline Holler**  
*Professor, History Department*  
*President, UNBC-FA*

Dear Members of the UNBC Faculty Association,

It's here! And by "it," I mean spring, of course. It feels like it's been a long time coming—I was reminded by a CUPE member last week that last year at this time we were counting pussywillows, and there was visible (if grey) grass on campus. It's been a long winter, and I hope you are all enjoying the warmer temperatures that should

usher Old Man Winter out the door for another year. On the other hand, the last March in which I served as president was 2015, and in that month, eight years ago now, we were on strike in our decade-long bid for a fair collective agreement. What a journey it's been! As we prepare for another round of collective bargaining, please take a moment to reflect on how much we—you—have achieved over the past ten years. (And if you're new at UNBC, ask a more senior colleague.) There's always more to achieve, but we have come a long way.



In this newsletter, you'll find a review of the recent CAUT Equity Conference by FA Equity Committee Co-Chairs Alia Hamieh and Rheanna Robinson; reflections on collective bargaining in inflationary times by Paul Bowles, a post-mortem of the Laurentian debacle by Stephen Rader and Catherine Nolin, a message from Chief Negotiator Ted Binnema, and a walk down memory lane (also courtesy of Ted) to a time when an eminent university president, George Pedersen, stood up to government interference with university autonomy. There are numerous cautionary tales here, most notably in the Laurentian example, but there is also ample fodder for hope and inspiration worthy of the season. And on an inspirational note, check out this year's CUFA BC Distinguished Academics Awards winners, profiled in this newsletter. Their work showcases the positive impact of academic work across regions, disciplines, and issues of concern from climate change and ecosystem health

to human rights. We are so proud that our own member and FA Grievance Officer, Dr. Catherine Nolin, is one of this year's award winners, and we look forward to celebrating her at the awards gala in May. For now, we hope that these sunny days bring you something to celebrate too, and we look forward to seeing you at the spring AGM on Friday 24 March!

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**Reminder:**

## **Spring General Meeting**

**Friday, 24 March 2023**

**11:30 am – 1:00 pm**

***This meeting will be delivered via Zoom (watch for an upcoming announcement)***



## **Activism for Equity: 6th CAUT Equity Conference**

***Alia Hamieh***

*Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
Member at-Large and Co-Chair UNBC-FA Equity Committee*

***Rheanna Robinson***

*Assistant Professor, Department of First Nations Studies  
Co-Chair UNBC-FA Equity Committee*

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On 10 and 11 February 2023, one hundred and twenty guests from over 50 associations across Canada gathered in Ottawa, on the unceded territory of the Algonquin peoples, to participate in *Activism for Equity*, a national conference organized by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). We represented UNBCFA at this important event and are pleased to share some key learnings we took away from the conference here.

Numerous speakers and panelists, including scholars, lawyers, and academic staff, as well as small group engagement offered a chance to consider how academic associations can: 1) Strengthen equity-related



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outcomes for members (specifically within collective bargaining); 2) Consider equity within the processes of handling grievances; 3) Organize and participate in effective and meaningful equity efforts and education; and 4) Understand more about equity and media relations. Matters of disability, accessibility, and workplace accommodations were prominent and were interwoven throughout presentations and formal and informal conference participant interactions. In addition, from our perspectives, dialogue regarding reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization emerged as areas requiring increased attention as equity goals move forward.



Beyond listening and learning more about the dominating tenets of diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and more, we had the chance to put some of what we learned into practice. On Day Two of the conference, we participated in a scenario exercise, set at the fictional Great Northern University College (GNUC). In small groups we had to consider workplace accommodations for members living with invisible disabilities.

*Dr. Rheanna Robinson, Ms. Annabree Fairweather (Executive Director CUFA-BC), Dr. Alia Hamieh*

By way of role playing in this fictional scenario, we were encouraged to consider new bargaining language, a grievance application, organizing an engagement plan, and contemplating what a news release should include for the GNUC Academic Staff Association campaign for members living with disabilities. The exercise was brilliant. Conference participants experienced the complex and intersecting dynamics that may emerge in a fictional accommodation scenario. This heightened the necessity for us to understand more fully the barriers and bridges to achieving equitable and inclusive accommodation policies and practices.

There are overarching key “take aways” emerging from our participation that we want to highlight:

1. **Institutional Policy is Critical.** Policies informed by contemporary research and scholarship must exist to support equity-related measures within the Collective Agreement (e.g. institutional equity policy, accommodation policy for faculty/staff, etc.).
2. **Language Matters.** This includes the necessity for strong, consistent, and up-to-date language related to anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, human and Indigenous rights, etc. throughout institutional and Collective Agreement commitments.
3. **Capacity Limitations.** Realities related to supporting Faculty Associations to achieve equity-related goals must be supported by the Employer.

- 4. Unions have power.** Susan Ursel, LLP, discussed past work with the LGBT+ community as an example of how, through expansion of the definition of family in collective agreements, unions have been crucial for the implementing rights. Unions are in a position to enact transformative and meaningful change.

Participating in the conference was invaluable. As our FA continues to advocate for members in the collective bargaining process, we are confident that equity-related considerations will be realized in a collaborative and collegial way.



## Collective Bargaining in Inflationary Times

**Paul Bowles**

*Professor, Departments of Economics and Global & International Studies*

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When Thorstein Veblen wrote about the wealthy displaying their riches through acts of conspicuous consumption he didn't have in mind the simple act of buying a cauliflower. But at around \$6 for a head, it might seem like making such a purchase today is close to flaunting one's income. The rate of food price inflation in Canada was 10.4 per cent over the year to January 2023. The consumer price index as a whole rose 5.9 per cent over the same period.

This poses a particular problem for workers in bargaining. Even though today's inflation is due to a combination of increasing energy costs (in part due to the war in Ukraine), climate conditions affecting crops and disrupted global supply chains (in part due to the continuing effects of COVID), it is nevertheless workers in Canada who are being asked to bear the brunt of the 'fight against inflation'. The Bank of Canada does not want workers to get pay increases which match (or better) the rate in inflation for fear that this will cause prices to rise further as firms pass on wage increases and thereby cause an inflationary process to become more entrenched. The Bank has therefore been raising interest rates often to try to increase unemployment and therefore discipline workers into accepting below inflation rate wage increases. Workers may not be responsible for today's inflation, but their real incomes are nevertheless being targeted. Despite the fact that higher interest rates push up costs and therefore prices, the Bank is willing to risk this in order to put downward pressure on wage increases.

The Bank of Canada is not alone among central banks worldwide in following such a policy. In some other countries, though, it is not the only policy being followed. Some countries in Europe, for example, have taxed the windfall profits of energy companies and redistributed the revenues to poorer households through energy subsidies and other payments. Not so in Canada. Public sector unions in BC, however, are fortunate in that the provincial government's 2022 Shared Recovery Mandate (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employers/public-sector-employers/public-sector-bargaining/mandates-and-agreements>) includes provisions for general wage increases plus a Cost of Living Adjustment (known as a COLA). So public sector



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unions, including in the university sector, are in a good position to resist attempts to make them pay for inflationary pressures.

But spare a thought for other workers who may not be so fortunate. Consider the UFCW's grocery store employees for example. They too need the protection of a COLA. Whether they will be able to bargain for one is another matter, and one line of argument will be that if they are successful, the price of that cauliflower will increase even more. But don't blame the grocery workers; blame governments for not taxing, or controlling the prices of, those companies that are making higher profits.



## A Message from the Chief Negotiator

**Ted Binnema**

*Professor, Department of History  
Chief Negotiator, UNBC-FA*

There is not much new to report from the Bargaining Team at this point. We are preparing our plan for bargaining and beginning to set bargaining dates with the Employer's team. We expect to be able to commence negotiations in the second half of April and continue through May. Keep an eye on your email for updates at that time.

I want to take this opportunity again to thank our members who volunteered to serve on the various joint Employer-Union working groups that were created at the end of our last negotiations to explore issues that one or both parties wanted to study in detail. These working groups do their work behind the scenes, and their reports don't capture headlines, but the work of the working groups over the past few years has exceeded all expectations in their usefulness.

*On behalf of myself and the rest of the bargaining team, including Jacqueline Holler, Dezene Huber, Matt Reid, and Donna Sindaco*





### Government Interference in Collective Bargaining

On March 7, 1985, after serving less than two years of a five-year term as president of the University of British Columbia, George Pedersen resigned. Why? To protest government intervention in the affairs of the university. He cited months of growing frustration, but it seems as though a government monetary incentive to cut certain programs may have been the final straw. At any rate, at a news conference called to explain his decision, Pedersen said *“if my resignation does nothing more than dramatize to the general public the plight of our university system it will be an action worthy of the taking.”*

The level of government interference in the affairs of UBC that prompted George Pedersen to resign must seem downright quaint to university administrators today. But we hear no complaints from those administrators. It is not that George Pedersen was reviled for his courageous move. In fact, in 1992 when he was made Officer of the Order of Canada, his citation read that *“For many years, this internationally respected educator has been a prominent spokesperson for education and its inherent societal value.”* He went on to become the President of the University of Western Ontario. And UNBC is privileged to have had him as interim president and, in 1998-99, as chancellor.

In fact, government interference in the affairs of universities in Canada has grown since 1985 in such a way that people with the courage to defend the autonomy of universities are prevented from reaching the positions from which they can do so effectively. Although British Columbia's University Act explicitly states that it is the legal obligation of the members of the boards of governors at BC universities to "*act in the best interests of the university,*" many of those members, ironically, are forced to sign documents that they will represent the interests of the government. Under those circumstances, administrators who stand up against government in the best interests of the university are unlikely to receive the support or promotion of their employer.

Perhaps the fact that we live in a relatively free democracy has made Canadians complacent about the degree to which universities in this country have become captives of government, but autonomous universities are one of the important hallmarks of open and free societies. It is difficult to imagine that governments in Canada would easily relinquish the hold they have gained on research universities in Canada, but courageous unified action by university presidents, supported by faculty associations (and their members), student associations, and the informed general public could still accomplish that goal.



## A Brief History of the Fiasco at Laurentian University

**Stephen Rader**

*Professor, Department of Chemistry  
Past President, UNBC-FA*

**Catherine Nolin**

*Professor, Department of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences  
Grievance Officer, UNBC-FA*

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Just over two years ago, Laurentian University in Ontario filed for financial protection (bankruptcy) under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, a step without precedent in the history of Canadian public universities. As a public institution, Laurentian should have had the backing of government in case of unforeseeable financial challenges, and the oversight of their board of governors in preventing such challenges. Chillingly, use of the CCAA allowed the university to void their contracts with faculty and staff, despite the enormous costs thereby incurred (see graphic). In particular, they were able to sidestep financial exigency clauses that give faculty a say in restructuring in cases of severe financial problems.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), which represents Canadian academics through their Faculty Associations, is lobbying Parliament to revise the CCAA legislation so that it can no longer be used by



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public institutions: after all, it makes no sense for a government to set up a public institution, allow it to be financially mismanaged, and then send it through a bankruptcy process designed for the private sector.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario recently submitted a report on the Laurentian fiasco, which included these highlights:

1. “Although Laurentian’s operations were impacted by several external factors, the main cause of its financial decline from 2010 to 2020 was its poorly planned and costly capital expansion and modernization.”
2. “The poor management of the University’s financial affairs and operations was allowed to continue because of weak Board governance and Ministry oversight.”
3. “Laurentian did not have to file for CCAA protection in response to its financial decline. Instead of following precedent and making a robust effort to secure government assistance to build an effective go-forward plan or work transparently with its unions, Laurentian, on the advice of external counsel, chose to file for creditor protection under CCAA. That choice led to significant repercussions for the publicly funded University, including the elimination of academic programs, job reductions, substantial additional costs, and a loss of transparency.”

More broadly:

### **1. Don’t overlook the role of Boards**

Dr. Wurtele, of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, sides with those who hold that a strong board is essential. In her opinion, Laurentian’s board should have been more concerned by the nature and increasing number of grievances filed by the Laurentian University Faculty Association (LUFA) since 2016. “It tells you that the relationship between the two is stressed.”

### **2. Be wary of overly enthusiastic consultants**

In her special report, Ontario’s auditor general states that Laurentian’s management and administration were pushed into seeking protection under the CCAA by external legal and financial advisers “giddy with excitement to try something new.”

In December 2022, Charlie Angus, MP for Timmins-James Bay, introduced Bill C-309 in Parliament. It would prevent universities, colleges, school boards, municipalities, and hospitals from using the CCAA.

Further information can be found in the references below.





## Repercussions of the CCAA process



## Primary causes of the insolvency



## Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) costs to the University



\* Media reports indicate that deficits ran back to at least 2014.



Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. "Special Report on Laurentian University," November 2022. – page 9  
[https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/specialreports/specialreports/LaurentianUniversity\\_EN.pdf](https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/specialreports/specialreports/LaurentianUniversity_EN.pdf)

<https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/laurentian-university-what-are-the-takeaways-from-the-last-two-years/>

BY JULIEN CAYOUCETTE, FEB 01 2023

Gustafson, Maureen, Sebastien Lefebvre and Robyn Rowe. "Insolvency, Indigenous Research & the Uncertain Future of Laurentian University" Yellowhead Institute. 19 April 2021. <https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2021/04/19/insolvency-indigenous-research-the-uncertain-future-of-laurentian-university/>

<https://www.caut.ca/bulletin/2022/09/interview-fabrice-colin>

<https://www.caut.ca/bulletin/2022/09/numbers-laurentian-university-financial-crisis>

<https://www.caut.ca/bulletin/2023/02/news-legislative-priorities-2023>

<https://openparliament.ca/bills/44-1/C-309/>



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## CUFA BC Announces Recipients of the 2023 Distinguished Academics Award

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2023 CUFA BC Distinguished Academics Awards:

- *Early in Career Award: Dr. Katya Rhodes (University of Victoria)*
- ***Ehor Boyanowsky Academic of the Year Award: Dr. Catherine Nolin (University of Northern British Columbia)***
- *Paz Buttedahl Career Achievement Award: Dr. Jonathan Moore (Simon Fraser University)*

Every year since 1995, the CUFA BC Distinguished Academics Awards series has honoured faculty whose ideas contribute to the community beyond the university and whose scholarship demonstrates the necessity and vitality of university-based research in the public interest. Research universities play a crucial role in the social, intellectual, and economic innovation of British Columbians. “Faculty engage in outstanding scholarship that contributes to new discoveries and creates new understandings of our experiences in the world,” says President Dr. Ken Christie. “The Distinguished Academics Awards give us the opportunity to recognize how much faculty research contributes to our communities.”

*Dr. Katya Rhodes is the recipient of the Early in Career Award.* Dr. Rhodes is Assistant Professor in the School of Public Administration and a researcher with the Institute for Integrated Energy Systems at the University of Victoria. Drawing on knowledge from economics, political science, social psychology, and engineering, she investigates how different policy tools can contribute to successful climate change mitigation. She seeks to improve climate policies to achieve climate targets in an economically efficient, politically acceptable, and equitable manner. Dr. Rhodes’s work is informed by evidence-based policies that will help make communities sustainable and healthy over the long-term.

*Dr. Catherine Nolin is the recipient of the Ehor Boyanowsky Academic of the Year Award.* Dr. Nolin is Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences at the University of Northern British Columbia. As a social geographer, Dr. Nolin’s research explores the gendered, political, and social aspects of state-sponsored violence, forced migration, and life in exile. Her work has explored these interests in the Guatemala-Canada transnational context



and more broadly in examinations of the connections/disconnections between the Global North and South. Dr. Nolin's co-authored book "Testimonio: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala" with her long-time research partner Grahame Russell of Rights Action draws on over thirty years of community-based research and Rights Action's direct community support work in Guatemala to expose the ruthless state machinery that benefits the Canadian mining industry.

*Dr. Jonathan Moore is the recipient of the Paz Buttedahl Career Achievement Award.* Dr. Moore is Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and School of Resource of Environmental Management is an international leader in the ecology and conservation of aquatic ecosystems, and a champion for salmon, rivers, and estuaries. His work advances the science underpinning key environmental laws and policies. His activities have contributed to significant legislative reform and public policy outcomes with tangible impacts for the conservation of wild salmon and their ecosystems, including on contentious energy development that affect aquatic environments. Dr. Moore fosters an exceptional approach to connecting management and policy-relevant science with collaboration, communication, and engagement.

Congratulations to the winners and all the nominees for these awards. The awards will be presented at a gala reception on May 1 at the Fairmont Empress in Victoria, BC. For more information on the award winners and nominees, please visit [www.cufa.bc.ca/awards](http://www.cufa.bc.ca/awards).



The **FA Events Committee** is hosting a monthly afternoon tea during the Winter semester as an opportunity for Members to connect. Our next afternoon tea will be:

**Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**3:30 pm, Faculty Association Lounge (Upper Cafeteria)**

Come out and enjoy tea, coffee and treats (but please bring your own mug 😊)  
Everyone is welcome



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The Events Committee would also welcome any suggestions you might have for other activities. Please feel free to reach out to anyone on the Events Committee:

**Stephen Rader**  
**Theresa Adesanya**  
**Emmanuel Chilanga**  
**Rylan Graham**  
**Siraj Ul Islam**

## UNBC FA Executive Committee

<i>President:</i>	Jacqueline Holler
<i>Vice President:</i>	Paul Siakaluk
<i>Past President:</i>	Stephen Rader
<i>Secretary:</i>	Amy Klepetar
<i>Treasurer:</i>	Catherine Whalen
<u><i>Members at-large:</i></u>	
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Alia Hamieh
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Emmanuel Chilanga
<i>Faculty rep</i>	Paul Sanborn
<i>Librarian rep</i>	Kim Stathers
<i>SLI rep</i>	Daniel Erasmus
<i>SI rep</i>	Jason Lacharite
<i>Term rep</i>	Brian Schaan
<i>Regional rep</i>	Amy Klepetar
<u><i>Ex-officio Members:</i></u>	
<i>Grievance Officer:</i>	Catherine Nolin
<i>Executive Director:</i>	Donna Sindaco



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Please feel free to contact us by email or  
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