



BC's Union for Professionals

Labour Relations Report

submitted by Sam Montgomery, Labour Relations Officer (LRO)

November 6, 2024

Annual General Meeting of the Professional Employees Association University of Victoria Chapter

UVic Budget Cuts and PEA Response

After two consecutive years of budget cuts, PEA members at the University of Victoria seem understandably fatigued and overextended. We have seen many talented and hardworking professionals have their positions eliminated or leave through voluntary resignation, leading to workload intensification for those who remain. While student enrolment numbers are holding steady for now, many of our members remain fearful for their future job security and report being on the edge of burnout.

Through it all, we have continued to uphold our members' rights under the collective agreement and have been identifying ways to mitigate harm where we can. We also continue to advocate for changes to the post-secondary funding model that will offer more stability.

Joint Job Evaluation Plan Working Group

We have also been hard at work to modernize our Joint Job Evaluation Plan with the University. After hiring a consultant firm to review our existing plan, our working group is now using a series of PEA benchmark positions to test the viability of their recommendations. We anticipate that the new plan implementation will be a key discussion point at the bargaining table next year, as all 1200+ PEA positions will need to eventually be re-evaluated and properly classified under the new plan.

Grievances and Collective Agreement Enforcement

The primary responsibility of the Labour Relations Officer is to enforce our members' rights under the collective agreement. While we always strive for informal resolution, certain disputes must be advanced through our grievance procedure. Across the PEA, we have seen an increasing number of grievance disputes advancing to mediation and arbitration. These are time-consuming and costly endeavours for both the Union and the University, leading to a record high in terms of legal bills for the PEA.



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We had over twenty outstanding grievances at the end of 2023, and we have been diligently working to achieve resolutions for our members where we can with the employer. Over the spring and summer, we had two full weeks of grievance mediation that led to satisfactory resolutions for all parties, and we have at least 3 weeks of upcoming grievance mediation and arbitration hearings that have been scheduled for this winter.

The PEA has a duty to fairly represent all of our members. In cases of member against member conflict, we assign different representatives to each party to ensure their rights are protected. We also must issue notice to any employee who might be negatively impacted by the outcome of grievance proceedings, and they have the right to intervene or seek independent legal counsel. Overall, we can use the grievance procedure to identify areas of the collective agreement that need to be clarified or improved at the bargaining table.

Preparing for Bargaining 2025

The collective agreement expires on June 30th, 2025 and we will be canvassing Members at Large to serve on the bargaining committee next year. We will do a member-wide survey to help us identify the priorities at the table, and we anticipate compensation and workload will be the two key issues.

As public sector employees, we know that our members will be impacted by the wage mandate that the new Provincial government will set. We are working with other unions on campus and across the Province on matters of shared interest and will keep our members informed through regular communication and townhalls.

It has been a privilege to work with the PEA members at UVic. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment.

In solidarity,

Sam Montgomery