

1. Welcome to CUPE 951



The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is the largest union in Canada with over 625,000 members. Our local, 951, represents the office, technical and childcare workers at the University of Victoria.

Accepting your job with the University entitles you to the rights and benefits of union membership with CUPE, some of which are highlighted in the pages that follow. Your Collective Agreement, the contract negotiated between the University and CUPE 951, outlines in detail your rights and benefits.

CUPE 951

General meetings are held once a month except July and August. Every member is encouraged to attend general meetings; you are entitled to thirty minutes in addition to your scheduled lunch break in order to attend. Between meetings, we stay in touch through an email list, social media (Facebook and Twitter) and our website, cupe951.ca.

CUPE 951 is run largely by volunteers. The Executive Board, elected every two years by the membership, coordinates the operation of the local. To find out how you can help, attend a general meeting, contact the office, or talk to any union officer, steward, or representative.

Stewards are specially trained volunteers who help to answer your questions and solve problems. Other officers are trained in special areas such as health and safety, return to work, and accommodation. Others help to coordinate communication, education, job evaluation, political action, and much more.

The CUPE 951 Office is located in the Technology Enterprise Facility (TEF), room 221.

The executive assistant, Kira Bradley, can be reached at 250-853-3658 or by email at cupe951@uvic.ca

2. Union Dues: Funding Ourselves

If you have never worked in a unionized workplace, you may wonder why you pay dues. This small portion of your pay helps to fund the work the union does to support, negotiate, research, educate, and advocate for our members.

Currently, there is a one-time initiation fee of \$10 for new employees and dues of 2.29% are deducted monthly from your paycheque.

A portion of the dues collected is used to pay fees to CUPE National and other labour organizations. The CUPE 951 Defence Fund, used to help members in need, is supported by 0.5% of dues. The fund helps to pay members in case of strike or lockout; pays for education in labour law; covers legal fees for arbitrations; and assists individuals as needed.

The remaining dues go toward the operation of the union including the salaries of the executive assistant (in full) and the President and the Chief Steward (cost-shared with the University).

In return, CUPE and the other affiliates offer support for contract negotiations, arbitration hearings, education courses, labour research, political advocacy, and more.

Within the local, full time staff plus a host of volunteers work to make sure:

- your workplace is safe
- your personal and human rights are respected
- you are represented and supported in times of conflict and need
- you have access to information and education
- you are paid for the work that you do
- you enjoy the best possible contract improvements that can be negotiated
- union work is done by union workers

3. Your Rights & Benefits

In addition to the basic rights afforded to workers through the *Human Rights Act*, and the *Workers Compensation Act*, the **CUPE 951 Collective Agreement** (contract) includes negotiated rights and benefits.

If you did not receive a copy of the contract, you can access the electronic version through the CUPE 951 website (cupe951.ca/collective-agreement/) or request a print copy from the office.

The contract is a legal document, separated into a number of articles (sections) that discuss specific topics such as working hours, vacation and sick time, seniority, promotions, discipline and layoffs, safety, benefits, and equity issues. It also includes letters of agreement, several appendices, and the salary schedules for CUPE 951 employees.

If you have any questions about the contract language or how it applies to your job, call a steward.

4. Get to Know Your Stewards

Stewards are problem-solvers and advocates; they are trained to help members through crises but also to answer questions about the Collective Agreement (contract), about rights and benefits, and to be the eyes and ears of the local.

You should contact a steward if:

- you don't understand part of the contract
- you have questions about your benefits or rights
- you think your rights under the contract have been denied, ignored, or undermined
- you have been called to a meeting with management that may impact the terms of your employment
- you receive notice regarding a change to your employment
- you are called to a disciplinary meeting
- you are being harassed or made to feel uncomfortable in the workplace
- you have a conflict with another member or a manager
- you believe that union work is being privatized, contracted out, or being assigned to or completed by workers outside the union
- you are interested in volunteering as a steward

A list of current stewards is available on the website (cupe951.ca/contact-us/stewards/) or you can contact the office to be put in touch with someone. Unlike some locals, CUPE 951 does not have "shop stewards" who represent specific groups of workers or are assigned to specific buildings, although we do have Child Care stewards who are specifically trained to deal with issues in that work group.

When there is an issue and a steward steps in, they will follow steps to help you. The first step is to talk to you about the issue and gather as much information as possible. If it is better handled by someone other than a steward, you will be referred to the right representative.

The next step is for the steward to talk to your supervisor and/or manager -- sometimes with you in attendance, and sometimes on your behalf -- and find a solution. If that fails, it may be passed on to the Labour-Management committee for consideration or a grievance may be filed.

A grievance is a formal complaint that the union presents to management in order to reach a resolution. This may involve several meetings but usually an agreement can be reached at this level.

If not, the complaint may be sent to arbitration: a legal decision reached by someone who is neutral and outside the workplace. Very few problems are sent to arbitration as it is a costly and time-consuming process for both sides. However, arbitrations may be necessary to prevent similar problems in the future.

All grievances and arbitrations are considered when the contract is renegotiated. Stewards give input into how contract language can be improved to clarify understanding and remove grey areas.

5. Other ways CUPE Protects You at Work

In addition to stewards, CUPE trains officers in two important areas: Health and Safety (H&S) and Return to Work and Accommodation (RTWA).

Health and Safety officers are trained to identify potential hazards through workplace inspections and reports, to investigate workplace accidents and injuries, to follow up with the injured worker, and to support them through any claim that may be filed with WCB or ICBC.

You should contact a Health & Safety Officer if:

- There has been an accident or injury in the workplace
- You feel you are being asked to perform duties that are unsafe or work in an environment that is unsafe -- you have the “right to refuse unsafe work”
- You are required to fill out forms for a WCB or ICBC claim due to a work-related injury or accident
- You need help adjusting or replacing your office equipment in order to prevent injuries
- You have any question related to workplace safety or health

Return to Work and Accommodation Officers are trained to assist members in negotiating and implementing changes to their duties or schedules when required for medical reasons or requested for equity reasons such as dependent care or religious observation.

The University is bound by a Duty to Accommodate under the Human Rights Act. RTWA officers work with management to modify the work you do or the hours or days you are required to work.

You should contact a Return to Work and Accommodation Officer if:

- you have been away from the workplace on medical leave and need a gradual return to full duties
- a change in your medical condition or equity needs requires a modification of or reduction in duties
- a change in your medical condition or equity needs requires a modification of your shift or reduction in hours
- you have other needs, such as religious observation, that require accommodation

It is expected that modifications will not place undue hardship on either the member or the employer. RTWA officers ensure that every worker is able to continue meaningful employment with the University.

6. More Benefits to Union Membership

CUPE 951 supports your personal health and development in many ways:

In addition to negotiated **extended health** and **dental plans**, CUPE 951 members are part of a **defined-benefit pension plan**, something union members have fought hard to maintain.

The **Career Development Fund** is jointly funded by CUPE 951 and the University. The fund can be accessed by any regular employee to help pay for education that is not directly related to their current position.

The **Education Committee** seeks, identifies, and coordinates union education opportunities for our members. In most cases, wages, registration fees, and related costs including travel, are covered by the union so that members can attend.

The **Good and Welfare Committee** reaches out to members in need and those celebrating milestones of service and other achievements.

The **Joint Job Evaluation Committee** regularly reviews positions to ensure that members are paid for the work they do. Jobs are assessed based on the required duties and responsibilities and a pay grade is assigned. If your job is new, it should be reviewed after the first 6 months of employment. Anyone may also request a review if duties or responsibilities are added, removed, or are in any way adjusted.

The **Sick Benefit Bank** is available to any regular member who has used up all of their sick time but still requires time off. Every member contributes a few days from their annual allotment to the bank and a committee reviews applications to ensure a fair distribution of those days.

Activists educate and advocate for members and in solidarity with other unions through the **Political Action Committee**, **Human Rights Committee** and **Environment Committee**.

Your rights are also protected through the **Grievance Committee**, **Job Security Committee** and **Technological and Organizational Change Committee**.