

October 27, 2022

Governing Council of the University of Toronto
27 King's College Circle
Simcoe Hall, Room 106
Toronto, ON M5S 1A1

Dear members of the Governing Council of the University of Toronto,

This week, the University of Toronto has been ranked 3rd for environmental impact and 7th for social impact in QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2023. The social impact ranking was determined by looking at the following question: "How seriously do institutions take their role in creating a more equal, fair and just world?"

Yet U of T is creating a poverty-wage job market right here on campus by contracting out custodial services.

Since 2014, an aggressive strategy to contract out cleaning work has resulted in the loss of too many good jobs – good jobs like the ones that CUPE 3261 members have, jobs that come with benefits, pensions and tuition waivers for their qualifying children. These jobs are economic tools that create, in the words of QS World University Rankings, "a more equal, fair and just world."

We consider one significant step toward this goal to be the university's decision in 2016 to in-source food services at the St. George campus. U of T can be justifiably proud of its choice, which enabled many workers to lift themselves and their families out of poverty, all as a direct result of the good jobs created by this move.

By the same token, the university is cutting good jobs and increasing poverty-wage jobs by outsourcing our other work through attrition. Employees of for-profit cleaning service operators at U of T make little over \$16/hour and have few to no benefits. These workers may not be university employees, but their wages and economic position are determined by the university's decisions.

U of T must do better.

In fact, it has an opportunity to do so right now in negotiations with CUPE 3261. The union has proposed preserving the current number of positions and preventing further reduction in good jobs due to contracting out. The union has also proposed bringing cleaning work back in-house at the 27 buildings lost to for-profit operators since the beginning of the pandemic.

The university has rejected both proposals.

Yet other universities have similar protections in their collective agreement; they include University of Guelph, Toronto Metropolitan University, and University of British Columbia. Wilfrid Laurier

University even contracted in custodial services after the pandemic to increase the quality of cleaning on campus.

In accordance with your mandate, we call on you, members of the Governing Council of the University of Toronto, to advise the university administration to protect U of T's standing locally, nationally, and internationally as a socially sustainable and responsible employer, and to take an important step toward that goal by negotiating limits to contracting out.

The enclosed majority petition has the signatures of 518 full-time and part-time workers. This number represents 75% of active service workers across three campuses who are willing to take strike action over this issue. We have been put in a very difficult position. We do not want to strike at a time when the university community is returning to the stability of in-person learning. However, if we are forced to strike, we will.

Our members are proud to serve the university community. But if nobody else will stand up for good jobs, we must.

It's not too late. I urge you to stand with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AJ', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Allan James
President
CUPE 3261

