



September 20, 2023

**Re: Response to “Open letter” from CUPE 3261**

Dear Mr. Daccord,

I am writing in response to the CUPE 3261 “open letter” of August 23, 2023. Your letter requests “unified” bargaining for the renewal of three separate collective agreements with three separate bargaining units. The University’s view is that this change would create barriers to reaching agreements with any of those units. Instead of simplifying and making the negotiations process more efficient, it would complicate and prolong it, as well as increase the risk of labour disruptions and disputes.

Each collective agreement is individual and self-contained. The obligation to bargain is between the parties to that agreement. The parties have a legal obligation to bargain in good faith toward reaching a collective agreement. This obligation does not contemplate or extend to bargaining separate units in a “unified” or interconnected way.

The University maintains its position that these bargaining units do not share a community of interest, as previously stated. They are covered by different collective agreements, with different terms and conditions, covering different employees who perform different work. For example, CUPE 3261 FT/PT is comprised of approximately 800 mostly full time and some regular part-time employees performing a wide variety of jobs in hundreds of buildings across all three campuses, whereas 89 Chestnut is comprised of less than 100 employees at one building that operated as a hotel until the University purchased it in 2006. It still operates differently than many other parts of the University. The Casual unit, on the other hand, is comprised of approximately 200 mostly student employees working on a casual part-time basis in various jobs at all three campuses.

Negotiations are most effective and efficient when only the parties to the particular agreement are present and engaged on the issues relevant to them. Having a combined bargaining committee that meets the requirements of each collective agreement at the same time would be impractical and ineffective. The three different bargaining units are managed by different management teams with little if any overlap. Having everyone on both parties’ multiple bargaining committees released at the same time to engage in prolonged bargaining that would include time spent on issues not relevant to some committees creates unnecessary scheduling challenges and delays.

The University’s relationship with CUPE 3261 includes 32 years without a strike or lockout, as well as some of the best wages, benefits, and pension in any comparable sector or unit. The University does not believe our employees would be well served by trading a bargaining process with such positive outcomes for an unwieldy “unified” process that may lead to greater risk of labour disruptions and disputes.

Sincerely,

Alex Brat  
Senior Executive Director, Labour Relations

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