

BUFA Forum

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Message from the President

Don Dworet
BUFA President

Over the past three months BUFA has asked chairs and directors to inform us of the effect of rescission on the departments, centre and programs. Here is a sample of their responses:

“As I have in the past three years as Chair made repeated appeals to the Dean of Humanities for new faculty members because 50% of our courses are being delivered by part-time instructors, I have been repeatedly told that there are no funds available because of budget cuts”

“One impact of the 5% cut last year was a reduction in the number of courses offered:

“This year we had 34 half courses plus 6 full courses, for a total of 23 full course equivalents. Last year we had 41 half courses plus five full courses for a total of 25.5 full course equivalents. This means somewhat reduced selection for students, as well as larger class sizes.”

Another department reports “possible loss of faculty line, larger class sizes throughout program, increased enrolment targets and a reduction in miscellaneous expenditure allocated for curriculum implementation.”

These comments represent e-mails BUFA has received from many departments and centres. It is evident that the budget cutting experiences have had a negative impact on our personnel, programs and students. BUFA has regularly questioned the need for these cuts, especially to the degree

Message from the President

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that they were requested. We also questioned decisions related to the priorities that those with the power to make the budget cuts (president, vice-presidents and deans) established for these decisions. A change in the use of carry-forward money, cost recovery program money and a decrease in administrative expenditures could have significantly affected the impact of decreased university income derived from tuition and government grants.

There is no question that the pressure to reduce is still with us. Though we have been asked to reduce by 2%, and the Administration wants us to be happy that it is only 2%, BUFA still questions this request. 2% is roughly 3.2 million dollars from Brock's operating budget - probably much less than the carry-forward money available for next year. BUFA's view is that our faculty, students and programs are our highest priority and that any funds available from carry-forward, revenue generating programs, tuition, and government grants are used to maintain what we have -- only after this is accomplished should funds be used for alternate purposes. The reductions which have occurred over the past two years have hurt all segments of the University and at a time we are spending much money to enhance our reputation, cuts may have done much to diminish it.

Alert: Lakehead University forced closure

At the recent CAUT meetings in Ottawa (April 21-25) Lakehead University reported that the arbitration involving the University administration enforcing a four day "furlough" on all Faculty and Staff is ongoing. At this time faculty and staff have had four days of compensation removed from their pay as a result of the university being "closed" from December 21 - 24, 2009. It is LUFA's and CAUT's position that this closure is in violation of their collective and a positive response from the arbitrator is expected. The Representative from the Lakehead University Faculty Association reported that over \$250,000 was spent by LUFA in fighting this decision and they will be asking other associations for financial assistance once everything is settled.

Brock Budget Update

Impact of the March 2010 Ontario Budget

President Lightstone's report to Senate during the April meeting acknowledges that Brock received more operating revenue from the provincial government than had been originally forecasted by the University's administration. This additional revenue – a total of over \$2 million – is in recognition of the costs associated with providing quality education to a growing number of students. In addition to these unanticipated grants, the \$1.5 million that the University set aside, in the event that enrollment growth was not fully funded in 2010-11, is now available. We, therefore, have a net increase of \$3.5 million in operating revenue. Given recent cutbacks, this increase should be welcome news. However, President Lightstone ends the report by saying that we should continue with our program cuts undeterred by this good news.

The Senate Budget Advisory Committee

The above decision is in direct opposition to the views of the Senate Budget Advisory Committee (SBAC). On the basis of intensive consultation and discussion, the SBAC presented the following conclusions at to that same Senate meeting:

- We are concerned that small group learning, in its various forms, is in jeopardy. Courses with seminars are fewer, seminars are fewer, yet larger to the detriment of the learning experience and even to safety. This runs contrary to Brock's advertising.
- We are concerned that undergraduate teaching is imperilled and we cannot say with confidence that budget reductions are not affecting the quality of our programs.
- We are concerned about the level of Graduate Student funding and fear that that our competitiveness is eroding. Moreover, the reduction in seminars may reduce opportunities for graduate teaching assistantships.

Lack of Transparency and Genuine Consultation

Also in its April report, the Senate Budget Advisory Committee laments the fact that its input seems to be solicited **AFTER** budget decisions have already been made. BUFA sees this situation as yet another piece of evidence demonstrating the superficiality of the University

Brock Budget Update

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administration's commitment to transparency. BUFA's written requests (based on the insights from some of our members in the Accounting department) for details on the revenue and expenses that go into Brock's budget have received incomplete answers. The President has distanced himself from a commitment – made publicly at a Town Hall meeting – to develop a Web site detailing the specific cuts at the level of individual academic units. For these reasons BUFA has good cause to question the University administration's commitment to transparency and consultation in budgeting.

Brock students will be asked to pay about 5% more in tuition next year, for which they will receive a lower quality education. BUFA considers the budget cuts for 2010-10 wholly unnecessary and demands that the unanticipated increases in operating revenue be invested in our academic mission.

“Union members aren’t Kleenex”

[by Mikael Swayze/CALM](#)

When a fleet coordinator at the Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA) was fired in 2004 for allegedly claiming sick leave fraudulently, she filed a grievance. Arbitrator Owen Shime recently awarded her more than \$500,000 because of the lack of cause and the high-handed manner in which the employer fired her. In addition, he found that employers of unionized employees have a duty to act in good faith in carrying out management functions.

The worker, a Public Service Alliance of Canada member, was a 23-year employee of the GTAA with no prior record of discipline or absenteeism. She suffered a work-related injury in the fall of 2003, took two days off work and was referred to a physiotherapist. However, she needed surgery. She had the surgery in February 2004 and was given a note saying she would be off work for four weeks.

She lived with a fellow GTAA employee who was off sick at the time and was under covert surveillance by the employer. The employer decided to also place the grievor under surveillance. They saw her running a few errands and seeming not to suffer any discomfort. They asked for more medical information and that she return to work sooner. Fearing being terminated, as her partner had been, she returned to work a week early. She was suspended and on March 24 she was terminated.

Because of the surveillance and the GTAA's refusal to believe her and her doctor and physiotherapist, she was referred to a psychiatrist who diagnosed her with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and with betrayal trauma. Here was a 23-year employee with a perfect record, “stalked” by her employer and then fired while legitimately off sick. Her PTSD originated from previous assaults. However, the re-emergence of her PTSD symptoms was entirely a result of her firing.

The arbitrator found her testimony and that of her doctor and physiotherapist compelling. He was particularly critical of the fact that GTAA management saw fit to judge for themselves the grievor's medical condition solely on the basis of the video evidence.

The arbitrator wrote in his conclusion: “Employees are not like tissues to be used up and then thrown out at a whim into the bin of low level employment or unemployment. Employees, particularly those such as the grievor, who have been long term local employees, are entitled to both a reasonable consideration of their seniority and work record and to a reasonable investigation of their conduct before being discharged and accused of dishonesty.”

He also found there is an “obligation on the employer not to conduct itself, without reasonable and proper cause, in a manner calculated and likely to destroy or seriously damage the relationship of trust and confidence between employer and employee.”

- *Mikael Swayze is a staff representative with CUPE 3902 and CALM Secretary-Treasurer.*

Our past is our future

by [Stephen Elliott-Buckley/Our Times/CALM](#)

For generations unions have been agents of social change.

But changing our world is a different task in this new century. Today we face climate change, increasingly strong anti-union employers and governments, and several generations of young people who have little or no understanding of the history and role of unions in our society.

Unions began by people focussing their political will. Our future lies in reinvigorating this social will to action. We have the capacity to engage our communities, help people see their interconnectedness, and motivate responsible planning for a sustainable future.

The state of the unions

Unfortunately, despite the existence of refreshing exceptions, the union movement is under profound stress.

Union density has been declining for over a generation.

Governments and corporations have declared unions a critical enemy to their neo-liberal agenda, which aims to minimize the role of our public institutions and elected governments and maximize the role of private business.

Demographic shifts indicate many of our core activist members will retire from their jobs and our unions, taking with them core activist wisdom. New members are open to the superficial charms of neo-liberal messages since they have been raised in an era where cuts to social programs are the norm.

We too often contract out our political activism, letting organizations do the political work for us after we contribute donations or dues to the cause. This reduces our willingness and capacity to practise democracy.

The state of the world

A destabilizing global economy, peak oil, and the ecological consequences of tar sands exploitation threaten to change the economic playing field. Pushers of privatization, deregulation, regressive taxes, and de-funding government services assert individual values over community values and action. This challenges our solidarity.

Unions embrace individualism as well when they raid

each other for relative power gains, instead of organizing the unorganized and mobilizing members for political action. Conservatives attack our solidarity from the outside while we undermine it and our bargaining power from the inside.

The union movement can no longer take for granted a respected place in society. It must re-engage with its current and new members on a core level to help build a foundation of social, economic and political values.

Systems of organizing and activism are changing rapidly. After the prime minister prorogued parliament again in December, a grad student in Edmonton started the “Canadians Against Proroguing Parliament” Facebook group. It collected 225,000 members within weeks, and it led to nation-wide rallies.

After Parliament resumed, the group transformed itself into Canadians Advocating Political Participation. Although Facebook and Twitter are no panacea, the use so far of this social media shows new ways of mobilizing political sentiment.

Mobilization is still happening, just not inside traditional organizations.

Money works differently now, and we should take advantage of that. Now that corporate and union donations are no longer allowed in federal politics, unions can devote resources to educating and politicizing their members so they can directly engage in politics. In the end, this will also enrich members' relationships with their unions, creating stronger organizations.

Our past really is our future. The labour movement's origins in the coalescing of political will into a movement—the union movement—is the very kind of union mobilization and activism we need in the 21st century. We must re-establish our place in socially progressive communities. We have been missed. We need to take part again.

- *Stephen Elliott-Buckley is a CUPE research representative and a former high school teacher. Our Times is an independent, pro-union Canadian magazine www.ourtimes.ca www.ourtimes.ca*

Deficit hysteria no excuse to end stimulus

by [Hugh Mackenzie/CCPA](#)

As Canada's recession winds down, there is growing talk of housing and debt bubbles. But there is an even bigger bubble that's set to burst.

It's the Harper government bubble—that carefully crafted, out-of-touch universe our prime minister has been living in since recession threw hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of work.

Within the Harper bubble the recession is over and so it's time to turn the taps off stimulus funding and get back to the original extreme Conservative program of gutting public services. Within the Harper bubble, unemployed Canadians are grateful to the Harper government for all the help they are getting. Within the Harper bubble of government-sponsored TV ads, Canada's recession victims look downright cheerful, despite the fact that 810,000 employment insurance recipients are poised to run out of benefits with no strategic stimulus plan to get them working. In the real world of recession and a fragile economic recovery, the Harper government's efforts in last year's federal budget fell far short of what's needed. It's a problem still in search of a solution.

Canada's commitment to economic stimulus has been lukewarm compared with that of many other countries in the OECD.

The contrast between the Canadian stimulus program and that of the U.S. could not be more stark: a scattergun program less than the sum of its parts in Canada versus a strategic focus on capacity-building priorities in the U.S.

In Canada, the Harper government held up more than 80 per cent of its stimulus spending for more than a year—and then winter set in and the ground froze.

In the U.S., where President Barack Obama refuses to live in a bubble, the federal government had already delivered millions of jobs by the third quarter of 2009.

Thanks to the Harper government's foot-dragging and scrambling for political advantage, Canada's economic stimulus is late getting into the market. With the threat of a slowdown in Canada's hot housing market, the worst thing the government could do right now is take its foot off the gas and hit the brakes.

Canadians deserve better. The number one priority has to be employment. Canada lost nearly half a million jobs in the recession and those jobs aren't coming back quickly.

Canadians still need the support of extended employment insurance.

Canadians also need a robust stimulus program aimed at creating jobs and building Canada's capacity for the future.

The absolute worst thing the Harper bubble government could do now is to shift its focus to deficit hysteria. Canada's economic recovery is fragile, and that of the U.S.—our biggest trading partner—is even weaker. As both the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have pointed out, governments that pull their stimulus funding too quickly could cause another recessionary dip. That mistake must be avoided.

As big as our deficit may look in Canadian historical terms, it is not that large in a global context. A recent survey in the Economist shows that Canada's deficit as a share of GDP is the second smallest on a list of

Deficit hysteria no excuse to end stimulus

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major economies, larger only than China's.

Our debt as a share of GDP is a fraction of that faced by other major countries. It is far too early in the economic cycle to know if Canada even has a structural deficit large enough to worry about in the longer term.

The Harper government should shift the emphasis in economic stimulus toward investments that will pay off for Canada's economy in the long term: strengthening our post-secondary education system; addressing the health system challenges of an aging population; continuing to rebuild our physical infrastructure; and funding a Canadian response to climate change.

Finally, although this may be too much for even the most incurable optimist, the government could set aside its ideology, suspend its planned corporate tax cuts and reconsider its non-policy on early childhood education funding.

The corporate tax cuts don't make sense. They put Canada out front in a race to the bottom in North America that we shouldn't be in. They make no contribution to the recovery of businesses hurt by the recession—and not making any profit anyway—while delivering savings to industries that don't need the help.

A budget that took on these challenges would have been a refreshing change for Canada. It's time for the Harper bubble to burst.

- *Hugh Mackenzie is a research associate at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.*

Education has no borders

[UFCW/CALM](#)

Activists, academics, unionists, and the media recently packed the Tinto Café in downtown Toronto to take part in the UFCW Canada sponsored, Education Has No Borders. The event provided community members with a fun-filled opportunity to see and try new migrant worker resources and discuss the empowering effect of education.

"This is a night to celebrate our ties as community activists and allies, and our past work together and the promise of the future of education," said Naveen Mehta, UFCW Canada director of Human Rights, Equity and Diversity.

The children of migrant workers will now be welcome to apply for one of five UFCW Canada Migrant Workers Scholarships worth

\$1,000 each. Through community partners, like Migrante Canada and the Workers Action Centre, migrant workers will also have free access to the union's webCampus and its hundreds of college accredited online courses.

A new labour law blog concerning migrant and immigrant worker issues is also being developed in cooperation with the law firm Long Mangalji, LLP.

The event also served as the official launch for two new networks: the UFCW Canada Academic Support Network, and Students Against Migrant Exploitation, or SAME, which has already attracted a great deal of interest with several chapters in various universities and colleges across the country.