

## **University of Toronto academic workers vote overwhelmingly for strike mandate**

**Toronto, ON** — CUPE 3902 (Unit 1) academic workers have given a strong strike mandate to their Local leadership with 90 per cent voting this week in favour of job action as negotiations continue with the University of Toronto.

The bargaining unit comprises about 8,000 academic workers including teaching assistants, course instructors, and exam invigilators who are dealing with increased workloads, mental health challenges, lack of job security and financial stress, all of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

“The strike vote is an expression of our members’ determination to fight for a fair contract that meaningfully improves our experience as workers and students, and thereby the quality of education at the university,” said Amy Conwell, CUPE 3902 Chair and a course instructor. “We are hoping to resolve these issues amicably but are ready for collective action if U of T doesn’t accept our [reasonable demands](#).”

Conwell said that many of the Local’s members take-home pay keeps them below the poverty line in the expensive Greater Toronto Area, without sufficient job security and untenable workloads.

“Many of our members balance multiple teaching assistant jobs while struggling to complete their own degrees. The financial stress and the mental toll of being precarious impacts our ability to excel as students. It also negatively affects our capacity to focus on the needs of the students we serve,” Conwell said.

Although the two parties have made some progress on the bargaining table, U of T has not yet meaningfully addressed the union's high priority issues including hiring and pandemic-related working conditions.

“The university has agreed to some of our proposals and we would like to continue making progress. However, we have been told not to expect any improvement on pandemic-related matters. That is unacceptable. Our demands such as expansion in paid sick days are more than reasonable and the university must commit to our wellbeing as workers and students.”

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### **About CUPE 3902**

CUPE Local 3902 represents nearly 11,500 workers across the University of Toronto’s three campuses in downtown Toronto, Scarborough and Mississauga. Unit 1 of the Local is currently involved in bargaining a new collective agreement for about 8,000 of its members including teaching assistants, course instructors, and exam invigilators.

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