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CALLING ALL CONTRIBUTORS!

The newsletter committee wants to hear from *you!* Have thoughts about events that are happening on campus or in the country? Want to complain about your job? Have an opinion about how the union or newsletter could be better run?

*Write us a letter!
CUUSS-TS@concordia.ca*



Concordia University Union of Support Staff - Technical Sector (CSN)

N E W S L E T T E R



Remarks from the President

A New Collective Agreement

After years of struggle and more than 100 hours of negotiations CUUSS-TS members are looking forward to finally properly integrating contract and casual technicians into our union.

For decades, these good people have been working side by side with CUUSS-TS members but not receiving the same pay or benefits. Many will now be able to take paid sick days, benefit from paid vacation, receive fair union scale wages, file grievances if they are mistreated, and build seniority.

Some who have been working at Concordia for many years are looking forward to a new seasonal or permanent part time status so they can escape the precarity of being laid off regularly with no promise of a return to work.

Jaime Yeargans

New member integration

What is a side table?

What is it?

The Side Table is a committee being formed from a Letter of Agreement made with the University to address any issues related to integrating the approximately 170 newly accredited members. Employment status being a priority issue. The Side Table consists of two Union representatives and two Labor Relations representatives from the University.

Why was it formed?

The Negotiation Committee chose to handle these integration issues outside of the main negotiations to avoid delaying the signing of the collective agreement. This approach allows the new collective agreement provisions to be applied while being able to address the integration issues after signing.

Who will be involved?

The VP Grievance and Secretary (Brinthan and Liz) will be representing the Union in this committee. As of this writing, representing the University will be their Labour Relations Committee, Pierre-Claude Bourke and Gabriel Prevost.

Who will it affect?

Any member who is now a part of the union because of the accreditation of May 2023 will potentially be a part of the discussions at the Side Table. Generally speaking, anyone who was considered a “casual” previously falls into this group.

When will it take place?

The Side Table is intended to meet at least once a month, with progress reviews at the 6-month and 12-month marks. However, the Side Table has not yet started due to ongoing issues with the university's Labor Relations representatives. The Executive is actively working on building a working relationship with the University's Labour Relations Committee in order to have productive discussions at the Side Table. The Letter of Agreement remains in effect until May 31, 2026, and during that time, further improvements can be made to working conditions and employment status.

What to expect?

As issues arise from the integration, the Executive and Area Reps will be in direct communication with the affected members in order to gather information and verify details. The larger membership will be able to keep up to date with the progress through the Newsletter, emails and the General Assemblies.

Beyond CUUSS-TS

Are you looking for more from your Union than just better pay and working conditions? Do you wish your Union could do more about wider issues of social, racial and gender justice or the environment? We have good news for you! The CCMM (Conseil Centrale du Montréal Métropolitain) is an organization of Montreal based CSN unions that works together to address sociopolitical issues from a left-wing labour perspective.

CUUSS-TS has not been active in the CCMM in the past but given the recent changes in our group demographics and the deteriorating state of society we think now is a good time to get more involved. The CCMM is having a convention in Montreal this May and CUUSS-TS is considering sending a delegation to learn more and build connections.

If you would like to be more active on sociopolitical issues, we would encourage you to check out the CCMM. There are some links below. I recommend the declaration of principles as a good start to see what the group is all about and what they have done in the past.

If you are interested in learning more about the CCMM or in attending the convention we would prefer that you attend a CCMM GA first. Anyone interested should email CUUSS-TS@concordia.ca with CCMM in the subject line. We will get back to you with details on the next steps.

April 12, 2025: CIMM workers' assembly: austerity in education, 1 p.m., salle multi CSN

May 5 to 9, 2025: CCMM-CSN Congress

**In Solidarity,
Jaime Yeargans, on behalf of the Exec**

Upcoming General Assembly

CUUSS-TS will have our semesterly General Assembly on April 10th. The Executive will be presenting updates to the Constitution, as well as updates to how our union's areas are distributed and organized. A report from the treasurer on the union's finances will also be given. We encourage members to put forth any motions that they see fit. Please refer to the email sent on Wednesday April 2nd for a formal agenda!

Safety Squints – A Look into Safety at Concordia

Is Safety a University Priority Amidst Budget Cuts?

“Every employee and student is entitled to a safe environment in which to work and study”, reads the first line of Concordia’s Environmental Health & Safety Policy Number VPSS-40. “Concordia University will exert every effort to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of its students, employees and visiting public.” As a university marketing itself as notably hands-on, the hazards of its’ workshops and laboratories and the safety of its’ ~50 000 students are often placed in the worn calloused hands of technicians. Under our fumehoods, over our heavy machinery, students pore over their work under the careful guidance of CUUSS-TS technical staff. While we do our best, managing safety under last-minute project timelines and increasing class sizes is a growing challenge.

Following recent legislative changes to Bill 59, the university was required to change the structure of its’ health & safety committee. The University Health & Safety Committee (UHSC) is now comprised of 24 voting members, including 12 Workers’ Representatives (1 per union or association and 1 for unrepresented employees (Group 50)) and an equal number of Employer Representatives. The Committee also includes 6 non-voting Health & Safety Representatives – representing a variety of Concordia employees, and each representing a different area; Offices, Research at SGW, Research at Loyola, Teaching, Trades at SGW, and Trades at Loyola. These positions and their roles & responsibilities are outlined in the UHSC Terms of Reference.

CUUSS-TS Union members recently elected Barry Robinson, a lab technician in Psychology with a background in research, to the University Health & Safety Committee as the non-voting representative for research at Loyola Campus. Meanwhile, Chris Latchem maintains his role as Workers’ Representative for CUUSS-TS. Earlier this year, the UHSC held its’ first and second introductory / training meetings. Barry notes:

There is not much to report at this point as this was the first meeting of this committee. There was a round table for all to introduce themselves, representing the various units and departments. Faith Howard was voted in as the Employee Chair and Pietro Gasparrini as the Employer Chair for the future meetings. Full training will be next meeting. We reviewed some of the facts that will be taking place during the transition period. Particularly Article 290 Participate/Identify/Analyze the risks associated with Health & Safety of the establishment workers and make recommendations to the employer. We will be getting training appropriate to the Health & Safety Representatives. Our role is in prevention, not in emergency response situations, the lab inspections will be preventative and raise issues of importance. Everything else we discussed cannot be reveal, as they are in the initial

phases of development.

Since then, UHSC reps have been tackling a few recurring health and safety issues raised again recently by technicians. Scheduled, liberated lab inspections with staff representatives of the UHSC helped unveil the extent of H&S violations, and in one instance additional support from the CNESST was successfully called in as a preventative measure. A quick follow-up inspection with the CNESST yielded 2 citations issued to the university, wherein: (1) EHS is to furnish all the aspects of the respiratory training program along with a list of the mask fittings performed, and (2) the department is to provide a list of all the equipment used for the procedures along with the maintenance schedules.

With continued perseverance on the part of technicians raising flags, our hope is we can collectively take steps to ensure the university commits to doing at least the bare-minimum. For us to demand more will require steadfast trust in our peers, a deep resolve to continue fighting upwards, and a collective understanding that only by working together can we hold the university accountable to acceptable safety standards for ourselves, for our colleagues, and for our students.

Erik Huang with contributions from Barry Robinson

(Keep an eye out for a continuation of this segment in the next newsletter, where we interview a long-time technician in engineering about their thoughts on how we can build a robust culture of safety within the union and within the university.)

What is Job Security?

After working in a permanent position for 24 months, employees benefit from job security. This means that they cannot be fired or let go without a valid reason. They also cannot be laid off. Employees benefitting from this retain their pay, salary scale movement, and benefits.

Even if the university abolishes positions, members benefitting from job security still retain their pay and other rights, and are placed on a recall list. Please refer to articles 10.01 to 10.06 in the collective agreement for more information.

Erik Huang

Technician Spotlight with Joé Côté-Rancourt



Instagram: [@joe.c_r](https://www.instagram.com/@joe.c_r)

Can you tell me about the job you do at Concordia and the story of getting that job?

It's been 6 years now that I work at Concordia; right now, I have two jobs that fall into our union.

One is at the DigiFab, where I work with multiple types of 3D printer, laser cutter, vinyl cutter, waterjet, C&C for wood and metal. The other one is exhibition tech at the FOFA gallery.

I installed artworks, pack them up and prep the space. And I also do some skyjack (scissor lift) with that job, and a lot of ladder work, inside and outside; we put up banner on the St. Catherine facade. This is not how I got in as a tech at Concordia though; I started as a student for the sculpture department in the VA. Then Covid hit as I graduated; the VA needed some hands that know the building, so I started to work for pretty much every tech there - Ceramic, painting, woodshop, the foundry and molding shop. It was fun and exciting at that time, but unstable; I had to go around the shops at VA and talk to every tech every two weeks to see if they had work to do. Now I see contracts (laughing), I'm happy to know I'm going to the same space every week and it's chill and secure.

What concerns would you say led you and your coworkers to sign union cards?

At the time I was not on contract, my future at Concordia was unclear; when I was approached to sign I did it for the other techs that taught me so much. They deserve more stability and future planning. Why didn't they offer pregnancy leave to everybody in this school?

I had some free time back then, so I join the effort to gather signatures all around both campus; my family as a history of being "syndicaliste" so probably my enthusiasm came from there.

What was your experience of gathering those signatures? Do you have advice for other workers that are considering unionizing?

It was a stressful roller coaster, felt like a spy movie from time to time (especially in the chem lab or the fish tank lab héhéhé). But it is worth the emotions! At first people are just surprised, and they don't understand. Most people are interested. It was harder with the freshly hired techs. There was frustration, especially towards the end, when we were looking for the five last signatures to have the 50% plus one. Receiving a 'no', was just like fuck, we need to find

somebody else somewhere. But sometimes I would meet people that once they signed the card wanted to help to reach more people. It's like dominoes. It was really exciting and since then every accomplishment with the Union brings me a lot of pride.

What improvements do you want the union to continue advocating for, or to look at including in our contracts?

A LOT héhéhé. Equality, respect, to be included in decision link to Concordia, protection of rights. Anything linked to protecting our members from the exploitation the university wants to do with us. Pregnancy/(M/P)aternity leaves, sick days and part-time options are important to fight for and to consolidate. The Loi 89 is also a red flag that I think our Union should be on the look-out to the slippery slope it can lead too.

Things are sooooo top-down in this school and to me it makes no sense; it's not helping any worker here and it's not good for the students. I feel that the administration has no vision other than to keep the university lucrative boat floating. It's infuriating because the main things that affect their decision that I've seen is; degradation of health (body and soul), degradation of the environment, degradation in the teaching and degradation of free speech. ... Aren't we a school? As a group, we have an opportunity to link up with the other categories of workers at the university and with the students. I feel that students are angry at the same things that teachers are also angry at, and people who work for the building are also angry at. I feel we have similar frustrations against the administration. Discussion is difficult because the work is divided, so I'm looking for that kind of bonding. Like building campus solidarity, between all the unions, and all the student groups.

I also think that the Union has a mission to be involved or at least create safe space in our constitution and our collective agreement to secure some rights for the communities that have been in the past mistreated or erased; especially in the trouble times that we are now with politics and rise of far right. Women's rights, anti-racism politics & Trans rights need to be protected and reinforced now. Concordia loves to wave a flag of inclusivity, but I think they should do more, and legal documents are the place to see the real effort they want to make. By making some pressure from "inside" we have the position to voice "hey, this needs to be more than just symbolic efforts, it can and should be more than what you're doing right now". I hope that the union can create a window to see through all the bullshit of Concordia and point it out. I'm hopeful that it will be done. Don't start me on Concordia greenwashing... they don't even ask the workers about things that could be tackled.

I think we should position ourselves, and it might be hard, in the Israel/Palestine conflict here, which is kind of being erased. That really upset me to a deep, deep point, so I would love if we took a position there.

Going back to “work things” I would like the Union to advocate for; Stability for part timers is important. And not just stability but flexibility; and that touches the full-time too, yes, the needed amount of presence of a tech is X but that tech might need to be around less because of multiple reasons, and it should never be a deal breaker if we want to keep our knowledge at the University. Techs here, at least of what I witness in the Arts, are relegated to lose the ability to be an artist if they want the stability that Concordia offers; it shouldn’t be this way. We are a school, a space for research and development; how can every tech be on top of their field if they are crushed by strict contract? We do represent Concordia but for the students we represent the field they want to have an impact in; techs should have the time and space to continue to learn and experiment. In the art field, if you want to have techs that are cutting edge; you want techs that can continue to have their own practice. That’s where a school is really worth it for a student. That’s my little thing I’m pushing for. For me it changed everything.

Is there anything else you wanted to get into this interview before we finish up?

Big thank you to everybody that signed the card. I’m really proud of everybody that took the time to receive the opportunity and consider it. We got it. Thank you to the people from the “full-time” union that welcomed us in. It’s great that we’re all together in this.

Joé Côté-Rancourt & June McIntyre



Pieces by Joé Côté-Rancourt.

**See more on
Instagram at @joe.c_ir**

Opinions

US Tariffs

President Trump's threat of imposing 25% tariffs on most Canadian exports to the US was deferred until early March. As with most things Trump says, what does it mean in reality? Will it ever happen?

If it did, it would appear the manufacturing sector would be one of the sectors affected the quickest. The United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) leader Sawn Fain was quoted, that tariffs could be a good thing for US workers if they were imposed with the workers in mind. Lana Payne, National President of Unifor, the Canadian general union that includes the Canadian auto workers union was pushing for job protections.

As we have seen with hockey crowds booing the American national anthem and Doug Ford's sudden defense of Canada (Canada is not for sale), the knee jerk reaction can be a rapid turn to nationalism. We need to be careful that these feelings are directed at becoming more united in what could be a very uncomfortable time for our nation, economically.

Does Doug really have the concerns of Ontario's workers in mind? He is calling an Ontarian election asking for a stronger mandate so he can stand up against the tariffs. Even though the past 6 years of his reign in power have not been a period helping workers or defending public services or an absence of scandals.

It is important at this time that we, the workers remain alert to our causes and do not get swept up in a form of nationalism that divides us as workers and allows a different group of oligarchs, to get rich quick with unpopular projects or huge spending increases on military spending.

I would like to invite you to sign on to the Pledge for Canada, if you agree that the principles it sets out represent a useful starting point for encouraging the solidarity we need and for urging our leaders to work together to develop a whole of Canada approach.

Pledge: <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/pledge-for-canada-petition>

Simon Deverson

CREW negotiations come to an end

After a series of three consecutive General Assemblies, the Concordia Research and Education Worker's Union (CREW) voted to approve a strike mandate for their 2500-person membership. They were on strike from March 12th-20th, voting to approve the tentative agreement on the 20th. The Teaching and Research Assistants have been fighting for a large cost of living increase, and had demanded a wage increase to \$45/hr, from \$29/hr. When comparing their wages to the wages of TAs at other Canadian universities and considering the rising cost of food and rent in Montreal, this increase is necessary to bring them to a more livable status.

With the university's current austerity concerns, the administration resisted this demand, and only offered the same wage increase of roughly 12% over three years that was offered to the other staff unions. The CREW membership rejected this offer and chose to strike instead, eventually winning a larger increase of 20% by 2026 (roughly \$35/hr), according to the CSN-CCMM website. Higher, competitive wages for Teaching and Research Assistants will make Concordia a more attractive university for all prospective students. CREW has proven that even amidst the austerity crisis, it is still possible to win a better deal by organizing and mobilizing.

Liz Xu & June McIntyre

CSN boycotts Amazon following union-busting retreat from Quebec

Despite assurances that it was nothing to do with the successful pursuit of unionization and losing a tribunal hearing that would have forced Amazon to work towards agreeing a collective agreement with the Montral Amazon Workers Union (MAWU), they have closed all warehouses in Quebec at very short notice, with the loss of almost 2000 jobs. Because of the speed and manner of these job losses, there have been protest marches and calls to boycott using Amazon. Even the Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, François-Philippe Champagne was quoted as saying that this is not how we do business here in Canada.

The CSN has lodged a complaint and is asking for the warehouses to be re-opened , claiming that Amazon is trying to avoid its obligations as an employer.

Would you consider joining the boycott and avoid using Amazon in the future?

Simon Deverson

New area rep structure

Given that negotiations have been completed, what's the best way to spend the time we have until the next bargaining period starts? Strengthening the union!

The best way to get a good deal in our collective agreement is by having a strong union. But what exactly is a strong union? The strength of a union is ultimately determined not by having the best negotiators, but by the activity and organization of the rank-and-file members. You can have the greatest negotiator in the world but if the workers on the ground are not willing to mobilize for their demands there is no way to force the employer to concede.



CUUSS-TS area representatives and executives. From left to right - Top row: Joshua Murphy, Kevin Francois Andres-Teixeira, Joé Côté-Rancourt, Barry Robinson, Spyro Koukis, Brinthan Gunaratnam, Eddie Mayer, Jaime Yeargans, Tom Simpkins. Front row: Erik Huang, Mark Elie, Liz Xu, Tristynn Duheme, and Syn Furuli.

Towards this end, the union executive has begun to reform our “areas”. Our members work in a lot of different places between downtown and Loyola. To stay in touch with everyone, different locations and workshops are divided into areas, and members of each area elect a representative to be responsible for activities, communications, and mobilization within it. Area representatives meet at a monthly union council meeting to discuss and plan union activity and conduct meetings with area members. They are the connection between our rank-and-file members and the union executive.

The reforms include a restructuring of the areas, and the nomination of new area representatives. Some areas already have new representatives. If you are not sure what area you are part of, or who your area representative is, please ask your colleagues or reach out to cuuss-ts@concordia.ca.

June McIntyre

NEGOTIATION COUNTDOWN

On May 31st, 2023, our Collective Agreement expired.
A new one was negotiated and signed on January 23rd, 2025.
It is set to expire on May 31st, 2026.
As of time of writing,

1 YEAR AND 54 DAYS REMAIN

Your executive team is looking forward to it! Throughout this next year, your executives and union area reps will reach out to collect feedback for our next negotiations. Let us know what improvements you'd like to see to your working conditions! Start building solidarity with techs across the university now, so we can form common demands! Talk to other staff as well – we are stronger when united under a common front.

Erik Huang