

# The Steward

SEPTEMBER 2009

**THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE UBC TA UNION**



## Welcome from the President

Welcome new and returning teaching assistants! I'm happy to serve as President of CUPE Local 2278, representing UBC Teaching Assistants, Markers, and Instructors at the English Language Institute.

As we begin this new academic year, we are also entering the last year of our contract, which means it's time to start thinking very seriously about bargaining. As you may know, our current contract is set to expire in August 2010. The process of bargaining a new contract can be a long and difficult one and that's why it is vital that we get to work as soon as possible.

Now is a wonderful time to get involved in the union. Members of the union may contribute to any of our committees, run to be members of the executive committee, or serve as department representatives. We welcome your input and support, and look forward to hearing from you regarding issues important to you.

Attending our general meetings is also an excellent way to keep up on what is going on or to raise issues or concerns you may have. To keep informed of all the happenings, visit our webpage, join our Facebook group, sign up for our mailing list, or call the union office.

We are fortunate to have your support in deciding the direction and vision of the union as we move toward bargaining an improved agreement for UBC TAs. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you!

-- Andrea van Deijck  
President, UBC TA Union - CUPE Local 2278

---

## **CHECK OUT OUR SHINY NEW WEBPAGE @ [WWW.CUPE2278.CA](http://WWW.CUPE2278.CA)**

---

## Orientations scheduled

Every department is required to hold a TA orientation session. These sessions not only introduce new members to their union and the collective agreement, but keep returning members up to date. This is particularly important as we enter a bargaining year. That's why it is very important for **all TAs, old and new**, to attend orientations.

If an orientation hasn't been scheduled for your department, ask for one or let us know. These are quick meetings where a union representative goes over your basic rights under our collective agreement. Check our website – [www.cupe2278.ca](http://www.cupe2278.ca) – for a link to the orientation schedule and to download a copy of the collective agreement.

On the web  
[www.cupe2278.ca](http://www.cupe2278.ca)

Email  
[cupe2278@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:cupe2278@interchange.ubc.ca)

Phone/fax  
604-224-2118

By mail/in person  
#218- 2150 Western Parkway  
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1V6

**CONTACT US**

## A Quick Introduction to Collective Bargaining

### What is collective bargaining?

Collective bargaining is a method for employees (ie. Teaching Assistants) to negotiate through a representative (ie. a union) a labour contract with the employer (ie. UBC). The Collective Agreement details wages, hours, working conditions, and other agreements between the employees and the employer. Without the Collective Agreement, gained through collective bargaining, each employee would have to form an individual agreement with the employer. By bargaining together, employees gain more influence when negotiating to improve working conditions.

### Who represents me?

As a Teaching Assistant at UBC, you are represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 2278. You can visit our webpage at [www.cupe2278.ca](http://www.cupe2278.ca) to find up-to-date wages, the current Collective Agreement, how to get in contact with us, and much more.

### How do I know what my rights and duties are?

The current Collective Agreement details your rights and duties. This includes information on vacation and leave, reappointment, wages, and grievances. Be sure to read it and know your rights!

### What is a bargaining year?

A Collective Agreement is a fixed term agreement. A year in which the Collective Agreement expires and a new Collective Agreement is negotiated is a bargaining year. Our current agreement expires on August 31st, 2010. If a new Collective Agreement is not agreed upon by the expiry date, the current agreement remains in force until a new agreement is reached.

### What issues are we bargaining for in 2010?

Aside from the usual issue of increased wages, our members have identified several areas in the Collective Agreement that could be improved to make TAs' lives better. Among these are guaranteed adequate office space for every TA to work and paid time off before comprehensive exams. In addition, many Ph.D. students take more than four years getting their degree, but are only guaranteed TAs' preference for four years. We would like to get them another guaranteed year of preference. We also want to add more ways to initiate having a TA's workload checked in case it is too heavy. There are many ways to improve the Collective Agreement, but we need your continued input and support. Watch for membership meetings, check the webpage, join the Facebook group, or get in contact with us to find out how to get the issues you care about on the table!

---

## Online Survey

This fall, your union will be conducting an online survey of our membership in order to find out what contract issues are most important to you. Look for a message in your inbox and a link on our webpage. We need to know what issues are important to you, so fill out the survey, keep in touch, and get involved!

## EXECUTIVE ELECTION

**GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR UNION!  
NOMINATIONS WILL OPEN AT A  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
IN OCTOBER.**

*Join the CUPE 2278 Facebook group!*

