

The Bargainer's position this year has been actively engaged with bargaining challenges from the past, present, and the future. I will outline some completed tasks and ongoing work associated with the role of Bargainer this past year, and then give an overview of the position we are in and the look ahead.

### Tasks and Committee Work in 2021-2022:

1. The **Collective Agreement 2019-2022** – was reviewed for accuracy in reflecting the changes negotiated in the 2019 round of bargaining; signed; and posted to the VIUFA website.
2. Several Letters of Agreements (LOAs) had been up for renegotiation in 2021 when I stepped into this role, and some were amended and renewed mostly prior to my taking up the role. The **MBA LOA** was largely renegotiated last year, but enacting it has revealed emergent issues and improvements currently being sought through negotiations.
3. The last round of bargaining (2019) continued into the first COVID year, and a consequence of those circumstances was that several issues earmarked for bargaining in that round were moved to committees to study in the interim and then to address in the 2022 round. Among these committees is the **Workload Equity Committee**, of which I was a member. We met approximately once every two weeks for the first six months, and less frequently thereafter. Workload will be an important issue for negotiations ahead, and this committee has done a lot of work, research, and creative problem solving around this issue.
4. The **Joint Labour/Management Committee (JLMC)** met once a month to discuss emerging and ongoing issues between the union and the Employer. The other committees arising from 2019 bargaining are: Class Size Working Group, Trimester Model Subcommittee, Field School Subcommittee, and Indigenous Pedagogies Subcommittee. The reports of these committees came to the JLMC, where the parties discussed the reports as well as emerging and ongoing issues between the parties.
5. The FPSE **Bargaining Coordination Committee** (bargainers from all the unions in FPSE) and the **Bargaining Council of FPSE** (bargainers and presidents from the unions in FPSE) met about fourteen times all told in the past year, to help strategize and to share information. FPSE bargaining coordination has significantly improved its effectiveness recently, as a consequence of good leadership and new Bargaining Coordinator roles.
6. I struck the 2022 **Contract Negotiating Committee (CNC)**, and met with them to discuss upcoming bargaining issues. (Big thanks to all participants!)
7. Other committee work attendant on the Bargainer position includes the VIUFA Executive meetings, Table Officers meetings, and, on occasion, COVID return-to-campus meetings.

### **Bargaining in 2022:**

The VIUFA Collective Agreement expired on March 31, 2022. In order to negotiate a new agreement, we consult widely with faculty to understand needs and priorities for this round. The main instruments for this important work are the CNC and the **Bargaining Survey**. We have consulted with the former (and will meet with them again), and have selected our tool (LimeSurvey) for the latter, and have

begun the process of constructing the survey. We expect you will see the survey hitting your email boxes in a few weeks' time.

Every bargaining round is different from the others, but this one is more different. First of all, we have quite a bit of work deferred from the last round, when some major issues like workload were to be addressed but were deferred due to COVID. Secondly, we have all experienced changed working conditions due to online, off-site, and hybrid requirements, which introduces new circumstances our Collective Agreement should cover. Thirdly, for the first time in decades we are experiencing significant upticks in the Cost-Of-Living (COL). When we graph job action (strikes) against COL rates, we see how job action skews upwards during higher inflation. The reason for this has already been playing out in BC, as public sector employers attempt to get workers to take "real" (COL adjusted) wage cuts by offering sub-inflationary salary increases. BCGEU-Public Service walked away from the table on March 10 as a consequence of unrealistic salary offers. It is not clear yet what may happen with respect to job action in the public sector or in the post-secondary sector. This all adds up to interesting times ahead.

VIUFA is not far behind its peer unions in FPSE in readiness for this round. Our progress towards a set of proposals has begun with the ongoing development of the bargaining survey. Some of our peers are at the same position as we are, and others are more advanced. It is also the case that almost all the other bargainers at FPSE locals have at least twice the release that VIUFA gives its bargainer to conduct the work of preparation for negotiations in the year of expiry of the contract – only the small locals, such as College of the Rockies FA and NICFA have quarter-time bargainers at this time. I am not seeking re-election to the position of Bargainer for the coming year, so I bring this matter to the attention of the membership without expectation that it will affect me personally, except insofar as it affects all our members when we appropriately resource the work that we ask the union to do on our behalf.

I am standing for election to the position of President in this election. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve the membership as Bargainer this year. There are many people to thank for their work that supports bargaining – Jane Wodlinger has been a great Associate Bargainer this year, and Clay, Neil, and Chris stand out for their contributions to VIUFA work, and I especially want to thank the members who step up for committee work that informs bargaining – all the Subcommittees mentioned above – as well as the members who volunteer their time to the CNC, who help by helping the bargaining team understand the priorities of the membership. And on that theme, let me encourage all members to fill out the Bargaining Survey when it comes.

I hope to continue to serve the membership, to work on all our behalf to continue to improve our working conditions, and to protect the rights we have.

Respectfully,  
Gara Pruesse  
**VIUFA Bargainer**  
April 21, 2022