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A MESSAGE FROM AUFA'S PRESIDENT

Dear fellow AUFA members,

I will begin by extending my deepest gratitude to all of you for your engagement over the past year. As you all know, we have been facing unprecedented circumstances here at Acadia and across Nova Scotia that have required enormous levels of commitment and engagement from our membership.

This will be my final communication as the AUFA President, since President-Elect Geoffrey Whitehall officially steps into the role on July 1, 2026. However, I have been overseas for fieldwork for the past two months, and both Geoffrey and Past President Stephanie Jones have taken on a substantial amount of work in my absence. I am so grateful to them and to the entire AUFA Executive for consistently going above and beyond over the past year. Stephanie Jones, Geoffrey Whitehall, Stephen MacLean, Ciaran Purdome, Sazia Mahfuz, Michelle Damour, Christine Moreau, and Katie Mazer: it has been an honour working alongside you and thank you for committing to this important service. Of course, a special thank you also goes to Jane Longley, our Union Officer, whose steadfast reliability and organization keeps AUFA running smoothly.

Over the past year we have done an incredible amount of work as an association, from the signing of the 17th Collective Agreement in October 2025 to creating several new ad hoc committees, including one to address the ongoing issues related to Bill 12. Behind the scenes, the members of our standing committees are working tirelessly to protect and strengthen our membership. Recently, we formalized the role of [Unit Representatives](#), and clarified the parameters of "[Representatives of the Association](#)" to allow

members serving in these positions to have more independence and agency. We have been working towards the goal of empowering more AUFA members to play an integral part in our association's functioning, organization, and member mobilization. Finally, we look forward to officially welcoming the NPEs and Nursing faculty to Acadia and into AUFA this summer.

For the past year, the AUFA Executive has met regularly with representatives from AUPAT, SEIU, and ASU to discuss cross-campus issues and to strengthen our connections. This proved particularly beneficial during the overlapping negotiations for both AUFA and SEIU Local 2 Acadia in Fall 2025, as well as the more recent negotiations undertaken by SEIU Local 2 Chartwells last month; all three of these negotiations resulted in ratification and signing of new collective agreements without strikes/job action. It was incredibly heartening to see such an outpouring of support for our SEIU comrades in both divisions, since their victories are our victories. Likewise, we have supported other faculty associations financially and through driving pickets here in Nova Scotia, including the Dalhousie Faculty Association and CUPE 3912 (MSVU & SMU), during their respective strikes. AUFA members have also participated in rallies against recent government cuts across the province and showed solidarity with our students who participated in the Nova Scotia student strike (CSS-NS) to stand against rising tuition costs and to promote divestment. These gestures of support show our collective resolve.

These victories and moments of collective action are, however, taking place in a period of deep uncertainty here at Acadia and across Nova Scotia. The future of postsecondary education in this province is unclear, and we have heard repeatedly over the past year that Acadia's financial situation is dire. As we all know, it has been a particularly difficult semester. We are consistently being asked to do more with less in our regular teaching, service, and research commitments—all while also being required to complete government-mandated templates for each of our programs and to weigh in on the administration's restructuring proposals. The effect of these pressures on our members over the past several months has been palpable.

While we do not know what the future holds, we do know where our strength lies: our unified membership. Together, we have worked to produce a strong CA that itself is a reflection of our collective solidarity and commitment. Our CA protects us all and, because of these protections, AUFA members stand strong in the face of these uncertainties. Our membership is made up of individuals from many different disciplines and areas of expertise, spread across an institution that places vastly different demands on each of us. While we may all hold varying opinions on what the future of Acadia could or should look like, we must stand together for an institution that includes all of us. No restructuring can be done in a way that undermines or violates the Collective Agreement, which is in effect until June 30th,

2028. A reminder that while we may not all agree on what the future Acadia should be, we did agree to ratify this Collective Agreement with 92% of votes in favour. Our Collective Agreement protects us, and it is now our responsibility to protect it—and each other.

Thank you all, again, for placing your trust in me and electing me as the AUFA President for 2025-2026. It has certainly been one of the most difficult years I have experienced since arriving at Acadia in 2019, but we have managed to make it this far by supporting one another and keeping lines of communication open. I have been consistently impressed and inspired by the strength and resolve of the AUFA membership. While these past few months have been incredibly challenging, they have also been illuminating and productive. Working closely with my fellow AUFA members on the Executive and standing/ad hoc committees has been, by far, one of the most rewarding aspects of the role. I am grateful for the amazing people we have here at Acadia and in AUFA.

Chelsea A.M. Gardner (she/her)

President, Acadia University Faculty Association (2025-2026) president@acadiafaculty.ca

CAUT EQUITY AWARD

Congratulations to Juan Carlos Lopez, who recently received the CAUT Equity Award! As noted on CAUT's website (<https://www.caut.ca/awards-scholarships/equity-award/>), this national award “was established in 2010 to recognize post-secondary academic staff and groups who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to challenging exclusionary behaviours and practices such as racism and homophobia and by so doing have made post-secondary education in Canada more inclusive.”

Juan Carlos is the first AUFA member to receive this award, and his award was reported by Acadia's Communications department here: <https://www2.acadiau.ca/about-acadia/newsroom/news-reader-page/equity-award-shines-bright-light-on-ediar-acadia.html>, and by Gary Brogden for the Maple League here: <https://www.mapleleague.ca/post/championing-equity-in-higher-education-dr-juan-carlos-l%C3%B3pez-receives-caut-equity-award>

REPORT FROM CAUT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND ORGANIZING WORKSHOP

By: *Geoffrey Whitehall*

This was my first time attending a CAUT Forum. As incoming AUFA president, I was advised by many “old timers” that this particular forum was an excellent education for anyone interested in getting up to speed on the post-secondary education sector and exploring concrete strategies for building a strong, inclusive, and successful union. Before going into some details, my general take-away from the forum was this: **strong Collective Agreements (CAs) do not only emerge from the negotiation phase of a CA’s lifecycle; strong CAs are also built from an ongoing campaign to effectively understand, organize, and mobilize the membership.**

The Forum “brings together CAUT member association negotiators and organizers from across the country, providing opportunities to meet peers from other associations, share high level discussion and build networks of support.” The Forum started with a Cross-Country Bargaining Check-up (in which I gave an update on AUFA’s 17th CA) and led into skill-building and issue-based workshops that were informed by recent struggles from across the post-secondary education sector. **We face different aspects of the same struggle.** Here are some skills and themes explored in these sessions: Building a Focused, Equitable and Achievable Bargaining Mandate; Workshopping CAUT’s Bargaining for Indigenization Advisory; Understanding Different Workload Models; Bargaining on Artificial Intelligence (AI); and Sector Wide Organizing Against a Regressive Government.

Each session generated ideas and lessons to be brought back to each representative’s association. For example, when we workshopped Acadia’s CA it became clear that there is much work to be done to catch up with Indigenization efforts documented in other associations’ CA language. Similarly, in the face of unprecedented changes due to AI, Acadia’s newly minted CA will likely be far behind other institutions when we arrive at the negotiating table in 2028. This will require temporary measures and cooperation in the meantime to secure meaningful MOAs. On the other hand, AUFA’s Constitution and CA have strengths that show what is possible for other unions to achieve in their next round of planning and negotiations. **AUFA is a strong and respected union.**

One workshop stood out for its potential: sectoral bargaining in the age of regressive governments. At one level, sectoral bargaining is an aim of The National Union of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (NUCAUT), which “brings CAUT member associations [of which AUFA is one] into the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Connecting them to other unions and labour organizations, it helps to build and

unify the wider labour movement nationally, provincially and locally.” At another level, sectoral bargaining is also something that AUFA can explore at a provincial or regional level. The need for province-wide organizing is obvious. The regional context also presents opportunities since similar provincial government strategies and priorities are being used to transform the sector (often according to ideas imported from Ontario, Alberta and the USA). **We are not alone.** Unions in the Atlantic region share common histories, purposes and struggles that can be mobilized to resist top-down and outside restructuring.

While it was clear from these sessions that big and small, east and west, north and south, the post-secondary education sector is under attack, it was also clear that strong organizing of collective power continues to be the single most successful way to advance the goals and values of those who labour in the sector. I encourage all those who have been recently mobilized by issues at Acadia to apply to attend a CAUT event. CAUT covers the travel cost and AUFA covers accommodation and meals. AUFA also has an annual travel fund to support members attending events that help understand, organize and mobilize the membership. **Your participation makes AUFA our union.**

ANSUT’S BILATERAL AGREEMENT COMPARISON REPORT

By: *Wendy Robicheau*

In less than ten minutes, you can become familiar with the basics of the bilateral agreements between the Province of Nova Scotia and the ten public universities by reading through ANSUT’s comparison report (available at <https://www.ansut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Bilateral-Agreement-Comparison-November-2025.pdf>). This 26-page document briefly gives the highlights of the bilateral agreements without delving into all the details. The report includes a summary, an outline of the agreements, and a large appendix. Here is the report’s format:

A four-page outline section provides bullet points of the contents of the agreements. The points are arranged under these headings:

- payment terms;
- provincial tuition policy;
- Nova Scotia University Student Bursary guidelines;
- financial health benchmarks and reporting;
- admissions policy;

- health program utilization;
- academic program review;
- student housing requirements;
- strategic alignment actions (sorted into actions ready for implementation, actions requiring more information, and initiatives suggested by Advanced Education);
- Committees, provincial curricular experiential learning typology; and
- other obligations of the Universities.

A nineteen-page appendix provides several comparisons between the institutions. Specifically:

- Appendix 1A details the provincial financial contribution versus holdbacks on strategic alignment factors, health program utilization, new student housing, housing vacancy rate, and academic program review;
- Appendix 1B details provincial financial contribution and holdbacks on core operational funding, strategic action plan payment, bed provisioning, strategic action holdback, health program utilization, and new housing;
- Appendix 2 lists admissions policy by institutions with Bachelor of Education or undergraduate health programs;
- Appendix 3 lists health programs at the relevant institutions;
- Appendix 4 contains brief statements of strategic actions plans for each of the ten universities, beginning with Acadia;
- Appendix 5 charts student housing requirements by institution, bed provisioning rate, maximum vacancy rate, and new housing requirements.

ANSUT's Bilateral Agreement Comparison report is an interesting and insightful read. I encourage you to review the document and send any questions about the report to ANSUT.

THE MEANINGFUL WORK OF THE AUFA SURVEY COMMITTEE

By: Joseph Hayes

I have served in various roles within AUFA during my 10 years at Acadia, but one of the roles I have enjoyed the most is working with the Survey Committee. I do surveys as part of my research program (I study human personality), so this is a natural fit for me. I also love collecting and analysing data, so this is a service role that doesn't feel like a burden. Most importantly, though, the work of the Survey

Committee is meaningful because it directly informs how we approach negotiations and what ends up in our Collective Agreement (CA).

As outlined in Article XVII of AUFA's Constitution, a membership survey must be distributed in the year prior to the end of the current CA. In effect, this survey kick-starts the negotiations process as the first formalized step of engaging with the membership. The purpose of the survey is to understand what the membership wants in the next Collective Agreement, so that we can develop a set of priorities that form the basis of the proposals for negotiations.

I was proud to be a part of this process in the lead-up to negotiations for the 17th CA. The committee was relatively small (5 members) and worked very well together. We developed a set of questions that aimed to gauge what members wanted the negotiating team to focus on. The trickiest part in creating the survey was determining what to even ask about. A lot of this came from our own experience, priorities, and values, but it also entailed considering the perspectives of other people across campus who have very different experiences and values than our own. Thankfully, we had two members of the AUFA Executive Committee on the team who had a good understanding of things that needed to be addressed. We also had people in various roles (i.e., Instructor, Assistant Professor, Full Professor, Department Head) and from each of the Faculties (Arts, FPAS, FPS).

Aside from the specific questions, we also had to consider practical issues such as how to collect the data and how to convey the results. Given that I do survey research, I already had access to a means of creating and distributing a survey, so that part was taken care of. We were able to keep the responses anonymous, while also making sure that only AUFA members could participate, and that each member could only complete the survey once. We wanted to make sure we heard from as many members as possible, so we tried to keep the survey relatively short (or quick to complete). We didn't want to get bogged down with technical details of the CA because we reasoned that not all members are necessarily familiar with specific articles (which may be a barrier to completing the survey), so we tried to stay general in our attempt to gauge priorities.

We wanted to be able to easily convey the results of the survey back to the membership, which is also a constitutional requirement of the committee. We therefore used questions with fixed response formats (e.g., Likert-type questions) where possible, but also included questions with open-ended response formats so that people could provide a richness of detail if they desired.

Once the data were collected, we divided our efforts to synthesize the results. Given that I am familiar with quantitative data analysis, I focused on the quantitative results, while other members of the committee with expertise in qualitative data analysis tackled the open-ended responses. In the end, we

communicated the results to the membership in a well-attended 2-hour special meeting that was solely devoted to discussing the survey results. To ensure that these results informed the proposals for negotiation and that the information gathered from the survey could be used at the negotiations table, we also sent the raw data to the Proposals Committee and the Chief Negotiator.

Finally, although I have focused entirely on the negotiations survey of priorities (because this is the main responsibility of the AUFA Survey Committee), it is not the sole responsibility of the committee. During my time on this committee, I also distributed a survey to help prepare for the strike in February of 2022, and to gauge expectations for the Salary Reopener in the final year of the 16th CA. In general, the committee handles any surveys that the Association needs to be done. If you enjoy doing survey research, have expertise in this area, or simply want to be involved with AUFA in a meaningful capacity, I highly recommend joining the AUFA Survey Committee.

THE CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS



Geoffrey Whitehall, AUFA President Elect, went to Winnipeg, Manitoba as the AUFA delegate of the triennial meeting of the National Union of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (NUCAUT).

NUCAUT brings CAUT member associations into the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Connecting them to other unions and labour organizations, it helps to build and unify the wider labour movement nationally, provincially, and locally. This year NUCAUT successfully had a motion approved (in combination) on the floor of the CLC which directs the CLC to advocate for the post-secondary sector. The CLC always ends with a labour march through the host city; here is our AUFA flag proudly displayed.

CALL FOR SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION

Greetings, AUFA members!

The AUFA Communications Committee is looking to increase our social media presence and highlight the work of our members through a social media campaign that we are calling “Member Mondays.”

What is “Member Mondays”? On Mondays, our social media accounts will be used to highlight and celebrate the work of an individual AUFA member. Note that this isn’t necessarily about work that you do specifically for AUFA, but rather work that you do as a faculty member at Acadia and that might be of interest to the broader public. This could include an interesting course that you are teaching or teaching technique that you are using, a cool research project that you are undertaking or have recently completed, work that you have recently published, or noteworthy university or community service in which you are engaged. It is a way to get some (more) public visibility for the work that you do.

How would this work? Depending on your comfort level with social media and time available, you could choose to either provide us with drafts of your proposed posts for us to post on the AUFA account throughout the day, or you could actively manage the social media account for a period of time during the day, responding live to questions, etc.

What platform(s) would it be on? AUFA currently has accounts on Bluesky and Instagram. Please note, however, that **this opportunity is open to all members, regardless of whether or not you are active on those platforms (or on social media more generally).**

Ok, what’s next? We hope that you want to be involved with this! If you do, please email us at andrew.biro@acadiau.ca and/or fikir.haile@acadiau.ca, with a brief description of the work that you would like highlighted. Feel free to include sample photos if you have these available. If you have a sense of what your preferred format would be (e.g. pre-written posts vs live take-over, Instagram vs Bluesky, etc.), please indicate that, as well.

AUFA STUDENT BURSARY LETTER

Dear AUFA,

My name is Hannah Benedict, I am final year student in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing BScN satellite program here at Acadia University. I am writing to you to express my gratitude with the support from the AUFA student bursary for the 2025-2026 academic year. I grew up locally in Falmouth and spent lots of time at Acadia growing up whether that was on the track, the field or in the rink. When I decided to further my education in healthcare it was an easy choice to return to Acadia to continue my positive experiences I have had at this campus and this community.

There are many expectations and costs that come with being a nursing student. From travelling to clinical, maintaining personal lives, and completing mandatory hours that range from office hours to shift work, purchasing mandatory items to be successful in the course such as uniforms and items (stethoscope, scrubs, sneakers, etc.) to the continued rising costs of living. This bursary assists to alleviate financial pressure and allows me to be more present in my learning and focus my time towards the community in clinical practice and further my learning as a future nurse.

Outside of Academics I can be found spending time with my family, at the barn with my animals and being outside experiencing our beautiful province. After completing my degree, I plan to pursue my nursing career within rural communities in our province. Thank you for investing in the future of this profession and supporting nursing students.

Sincerely,

Hannah Benedict

*Editors' Note: The AUFA Student Bursary was created after our 2007 strike, in recognition of the solidarity shown by unionized workers who refused to cross our picket lines. A substantial additional donation was made by AUFA collectively and by individual AUFA members during the university's 2009 financial crisis, when AUFA was asked to re-open our Collective Agreement to forego negotiated salary increases for 2009-10.

The citation for the bursary is as follows: "**The AUFA Student Bursary** will be awarded annually to an Acadia University student who exhibits financial need. Preference will be given to an immediate family member (child or spouse) of any unionized employee (not limited to Acadia University unions). This bursary was established in 2007 by the Acadia University Faculty Association."



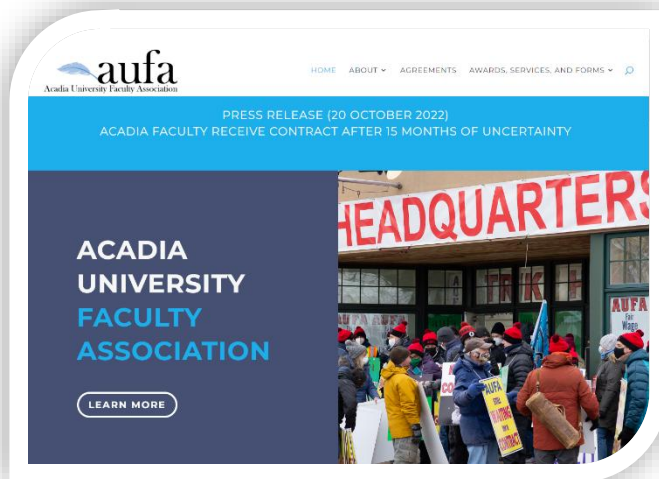
NEW!

FAQ about the proposed
university restructuring.

Visit

www.acadiafaculty.ca/acadia_restructuring/

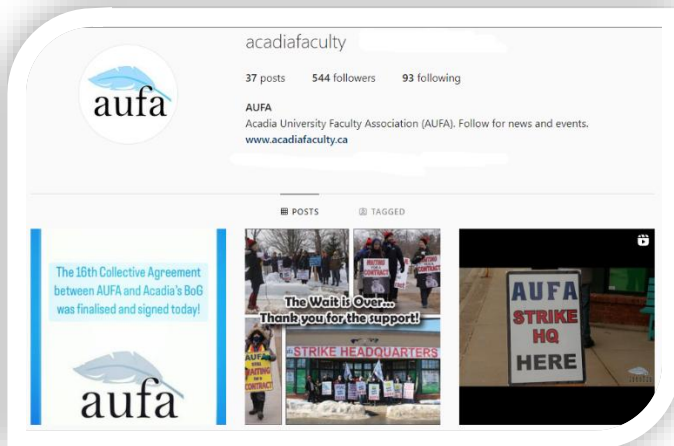
CONTACT US



Check out the AUFA
website!

Visit our
Bluesky account!





Follow our
Instagram page!

Do you have questions for the association? Don't hesitate to reach out!

- [Chelsea A.M. Gardner](#) (AUFA President) or [Jane Longley](#) (AUFA's Union Officer) can answer general questions or concerns. You can also email the [AUFA supported email address for the President](#).
- [Katie Mazer](#) (Communications Officer) can answer questions about the contents of this newsletter.

The Communications Committee is Andrew Biro, Fikir Haile, Katie Mazer, Christine Moreau, Wendy Robicheau and Britanie Wentzell. Special thanks to all our contributors, copy editor Erin Patterson, and Jane Longley.

We encourage your contributions (letters, articles, article summaries, and other pertinent information). Anonymous material will not be considered for publication; however, under special circumstances, the AUFA Communicator may agree to withhold the author's name. The Communicator Committee retains the right to edit and/or reject contributed material.



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