

November 10, 2014

Principal Woolf,

We are writing to protest the waste collection changes that were made this summer. We have numerous concerns that we summarize below:

1. Collective Agreement language dictates that waste collection is work that belongs to our CUPE 229 colleagues. You are obligated by law to honour these contractual terms and are wasting valuable resources in forcing CUPE into a grievance process to assert their rights.
2. Using other employee groups to replace CUPE workers is not fair for anyone and creates multiple problems. So far, 27 custodians have been laid off. How much money has this saved and at what cost to the university in terms of the workload of other workers, health and safety risks on campus, public image and general employee morale?
3. The Occupational Health and Safety Act obligates you to protect all workers from injury and illness – this new waste management policy creates multiple, novel risks for workers and liabilities for the employer:
 - a. Custodians are trained to ensure their personal safety. They are provided with protective clothing including gloves and a uniform. Other employee groups have not received this training or equipment. This is especially problematic if these other employees are removing trash from a multi-user office environment where they do not know what is in the waste.
 - b. These changes have resulted in unpleasant odours and an increased risk of rodent and insect infestations in offices and in central waste collection areas. The design of the new centralized waste collection bins is flawed in many locations. The bins cannot be separated and so they are very difficult to clean adding to these health and safety issues.
 - c. Providing a clean environment for employees is your duty as the employer. The remaining custodians are not able to keep up with emptying centralized waste bins which results in filthy public areas that remain that way for extended periods.
4. Units pay for central services, which include waste collection and regular cleaning. These costs do not appear to have been reduced, despite the diminishment of services and the downloading of the costs of bin liners to units. Where is the money going? Why are the so-called savings not being passed along to users?
5. This is touted as an “environmental initiative” but if greening the campus were the real goal, Queen’s would provide green bins for organic waste for every building on campus and have all of them serviced by trained custodians, not volunteers as is the current practice.
6. While it may be true that *some* other institutions have similar waste collection systems, a recent informal poll at a meeting of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations would suggest that the majority of campuses are still serviced properly by

custodians handling office waste. In any case, attracting high quality staff, students and collaborators will be made that much easier if the campus is properly cleaned and the distinctive Queen's brand is upheld.

7. Many other employee groups, including USW, PSAC, QUFA and other CUPE workers, are already experiencing overwork on a regular basis. This new expectation adds to their burden and will necessarily displace some other task or job in the workday. Is there a financial rationale for moving this work from the CUPE rate of pay to that of these other employee groups?

You say that you recognize "that some individuals may face barriers with respect to the central waste collection program." All of our members face significant health and safety, workload and solidarity barriers related to these changes. We ask that you kindly have garbage pick-up from individual offices and the previous cleaning schedule resume as soon as possible. In addition, we ask that you honour the CUPE 229 collective agreement and engage a full complement of custodial staff for the main campuses and the Isabel Bader Centre.

If changes aren't made, further actions may include:

- Complaints to the Ministry of Labour for failure to provide a safe working environment. Work refusals may be required if the campus becomes unsafe or unhealthy.
- Solidarity Campaigns with our members and the public to have them not subscribe to the Grant Hall Concert series until all custodial services at the Isabel Centre for the Performing Arts are provided by CUPE 229.
- Campus information campaigns to alert students, parents and community users about this situation.

It is our hope that upon re-consideration of the rationales and consequences (intended or not) of these changes, Queen's will reinstate services and initiate a consultation process with all stakeholders to consider alternative measures for greening the campus.

In solidarity,



Public Service Alliance of Canada



Diane Beauchemin