

LUFA News

Fall 2025

LUFA FALL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, November 20th from 10:00 am to Noon in FB 2005

CASES Boardroom or via Zoom:

<https://lakeheadu.zoom.us/j/94834573268>

Meeting ID: 948 3457 3268

Passcode: 293003

President's Report

Gautam Das, gdas@lakeheadu.ca

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The Fall 2025 General Meeting will take place at 10 am on November 20, 2025. I am inviting you to attend the meeting, and please encourage your colleagues to attend. Among the highlights of the meeting is the address by Ms. Chantal Sundaram, Senior Labour Relations Officer at CAUT, who will facilitate an opportunity to discuss the Collective Bargaining process and member roles and responsibilities. Our Bargaining with the Board of Governors of Lakehead University will commence in June 2026, which is likely to be a particularly difficult one as decades of underfunding have put our university in a challenging situation. To make an informed decision, your participation is more important than ever before! I would also like to remind members that this is our university. We need to identify and embrace our common goals to make Lakehead University the best possible place for research and Innovation, teaching and learning, which cannot be achieved without transparent and collegial Governance. We must work together at all levels of University Governance, from Departments and Faculty Councils to the Senate and the Board of Governors.

I want to thank you for your participation in this year's LUFA meetings and for engaging in discussions. I want to express my sincere appreciation to the volunteers serving on the Executive and Social Justice committees, and to the members serving as grievance officers. The work members do in various LUFA committees is becoming increasingly complex and requires expertise from areas such as Research Policies, University Policies, and Policies from the Human Resources and Office of Human Rights. Contact me if you are interested in supporting LUFA in those areas. **Please note that service to LUFA is Administrative Responsibilities (Article 16.04 and Article 16.05).**

In the following paragraphs, I will summarise some of the information you may find beneficial.



Compliance with Collective Agreements (Articles 35.02.01 and 28.05): It was brought to our attention that some provisions in the collective agreements are being violated by some of our members. For example, the issue of administrative course release in conjunction with overload payment is a particularly serious one. Course releases are given to us to perform administrative duties for the department, faculty, or Senate. Some members who are receiving a course release are, at the same time, engaging in overload teaching, an arrangement in violation of the

Collective Agreement. In another instance, some members routinely teach more than their allotted load and thus receive overload payments. Such cases are particularly detrimental to LUFA's efforts to reduce the standard course load at LU from 2.5 FCE to 2.0 FCE. As someone who has served on the bargaining team several times, I can attest that our arguments towards a reduction of our high (2.5 FCE) teaching load are always weakened by the counterargument that many of us teach more than their assigned teaching loads on a regular basis.

Those of us serving as **Assistant Deans**, I must urge you to carefully read the Collective Agreement language. Please note that as Assistant Dean, you cannot perform tasks that are the exclusive purview of Deans. The same applies to those of us serving as **Graduate Coordinator, Chair of the Department**, or **members on a hiring committee**; we must all understand our roles and responsibilities. Please contact LUFA if you have any questions.

Serving on a hiring Committee (Article 8.03): As per the collective agreement, we are supposed to participate in the hiring process for administrators. It has become the norm for universities and other sectors to use hiring firms. Of course, like other associations, LUFA does not support this practice. In such hiring settings we are normally required to sign an NDA, which means we cannot disclose any information about the applicants. However, LUFA can assist you in getting general information about the sector! If such an instance applies to you, I ask that you contact LUFA if you need any assistance.

Coffee and Conversation: LUFA is organizing a series of member engagement sessions called "**Coffee and Conversation**." These sessions will provide a forum for the discussion of:

- (i) the current bargaining environment and issues;

- (ii) how internal and external factors can influence our ability to maintain our bargaining rights; and
- (iii) benefits, salaries, and any other issues you want to bring to the attention of the LUFA Executive.

We have hosted two sessions since September 2025.

Pre-Senate Meetings: LUFA is hosting Pre-Senate meetings regularly. The Purpose of the meeting is to find out how we could restore our Bicameral Governance system! I will request all of you to read **the Lakehead University Act 1965 (Article 14):**

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/about/sg/secretariat/university-act>

The Senate has complete role of Academic matters. We made a significant revision to the Senate By-Laws, which includes a senator from the Faculty Association – It is expected the LUFA president to take the roles as they attend CAUT, OCUFA and various other meetings. The LUFA representative will bring the perspective from different parts of the country and universities, which will enrich the conversation at the Senate and developing policies. We are in touch and in constant discussion about policy development. **LUFA needs your participation in developing policies and LUFA will assist you.**

OCUFA Advocacy: I participated OCUFA's annual Advocacy at Queen's Park. Some of the issues we have discussed with the MPPs are as follows:



- i. **UNIVERSITY UNDERFUNDING** - Ontario's universities receive the lowest provincial funding by far in Canada; Provincial and Federal policies have constrained the ability of universities to meaningfully grow their revenues; and Low per-student funding negatively impacts the education that Ontarians receive.

OCUFA's suggestions are as follows:

- a. Annual 11.75% increases in total university funding for each of the next five years to bring Ontario close to the Canadian funding average. Year one of this plan requires an additional \$511.8 million. Alternatively, Ontario could meet the Canadian funding average with an immediate increase in total university funding of \$2.78 billion.
 - b. Fund the 28,000 domestic students who are currently unfunded at the Canadian national average rate of funding. This requires an additional \$470 million.
 - c. Develop a funding model that supports and incentivizes enrolling larger numbers of academically qualified Ontario students.
- ii. "RED TAPE REDUCTION" SHOULD REQUIRE ACTUALLY REDUCING RED TAPE. The provincial government is interfering with university autonomy and burdening universities with more "red tape" and unnecessary policy duplication.

OCUFA's suggestions:

- a. Meaningfully cut red tape in the university sector by eliminating unnecessary policy duplication, such as that found in Bills 33 and 166, and by respecting institutional autonomy.
- b. Ensure that Ontario's university funding formula and strategic mandate

agreements are not bound by unnecessary red tape.

- c. Refrain from legislating via ministerial directives and embrace the transparency of parliamentary democracy.

- iii. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES DRIVE ONTARIO'S ECONOMY - Ontario's economy is under threat from American tariffs and automation-induced job losses; Despite all university programs providing skills that employers need, only a narrow range of programs are receiving additional financial support from government; and University underfunding means that pathways to improved earnings and enhanced labour market resiliency will not be available to all qualified Ontarians, damaging Ontario's economy.



OCUFA's suggestions:

- a. Develop a university funding model that supports and incentivizes enrolling larger numbers of academically qualified Ontario students and recognizes the value of all university programs, so that the Ontario economy gains increasing numbers of highly skilled future workers across all sectors.
- b. Continue strong investments into university research via the Ontario Research Fund – **I am in conversation with the local MPs and MPPs to increase research support, Innovation and commercialization at**

Lakehead University. Stay tuned for more information.

CAUT News: I am attending CAUT's CBO meetings regularly at Ottawa. We are developing various policies including one for AI. Dr. Pernia is also attending the Equity Committee meeting. We are very much engaged in CAUT activities. Ms. Sundaram is helping us in preparing for the upcoming bargaining. This month Ben, Karl and I are attending the CAUT council meeting. I am glad Ben can join these meeting as it brings the knowledge and continuity in the Association moving forward.

Further updates and information are available via **LUFA Communiqué**, NEWS Bulletin, and the [LUFA website](#). I encourage you to consult them as often as you are able. Please get in touch with me or any other LUFA Executive members if you have any questions or concerns.



In solidarity,

Gautam Das, LUFA President

OCUFA Report

Karl Skogstad, Representative,
kaskogst@lakeheadu.ca

I had the pleasure of representing our faculty association at the recent Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association (OCUFA) Annual General Meeting & 178th Board of Directors meeting from October 25-26 in Toronto. For new members and for those who do not know, OCUFA is an advocacy group for the various faculty associations that exist at Ontario universities. See more [here](#).

Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act, 2025

One of the main topics discussed at the meeting was the potential impact that Bill 33 would have on post-secondary institutions in Ontario. These impacts include:

- Introducing merit-based admission standards. [OCUFA is concerned about the impact](#) that this would have on institutional autonomy as well as EDI concerns with regards to the student body.
- Granting the government the ability to regulate student fees. The concern here is that this would limit the services available to students.
- Heightened research security requirements: The language is vague and the Federal Government already has a robust set of rules. Anything the Province adds will either be redundant or more red tape.

Some institutions themselves have taken a stand against this bill. OCUFA is looking into coordinating their actions with elementary and secondary school unions as well as with provincial and national student-union organizations.

OCUFA Strategic Plan 2025-29

OCUFA released their new Strategic Priorities Plan. The three priorities will be:

1. Championing strong and sustainable public funding for universities.
2. Promoting and protecting good academic jobs.
3. Defending and enhancing the ability of academic workers to influence the direction of universities.

The plan lists several objectives under each of these pillars. I encourage members to go to the OCUFA website to review the document when it becomes available.

OCUFA Awards of Distinction

Congratulations to Lakehead University's, Gisella Scalese, for receiving OCUFA's Academic Librarianship Award. This prestigious recognition celebrates Gisella's outstanding contributions to librarianship, especially her dedication to students and her powerful advocacy for equity and inclusion.



It is clear that the Ontario university sector is facing a number of challenges, especially surrounding funding. Several faculty associations reported attempts by their university administrations to cut positions. OCUFA encourages the members of the faculty associations to continue to advocate

for the benefits of having publicly funded institutions in their communities. The current government has been most responsive to communications directly from voters. Encouraging community members to advocate for increased funding directly to their local MPPs is seen as a promising strategy. In a related note, LUFA's president was singled out by those in attendance for his success in building a relationship with a local conservative MPP. This has been difficult for many other faculty associations to achieve, and was seen as a great benefit for the institution.



Chief Negotiator Report

Robert Mawhinney,
rmawhinn@lakeheadu.ca

As announced, the 2026 negotiating team has now been formulated:

- Rachel Warburton - English
- Jill Greenwood – Education - Contract Lecturer
- Debra Gold – Library
- Sherry Wang – Business - Orillia
- Mariette Brennan - Law
- Siamak Elyasi – Chemical Engineering
- David Wright, Labour Lawyer, Spokesperson

Please join me in thanking them for taking on this very significant role.

Our team is now actively working towards the start of negotiations, which will begin near the end of the winter semester. This includes:

- completing various training sessions and becoming familiar with the current collective agreement language
- compiling potential survey questions to obtain useful feedback from members

In other news, myself and the President are visiting various faculty councils to provide information and request feedback. Please attend your faculty council and provide us with any feedback you feel would help with negotiations. If you are unable to attend, please contact your department representative, myself, or any of the negotiating team members.

Finally, if you have not provided LUFA with an alternate email address (not LU), please send to lufa@lakeheadu.ca when you have a chance.

CAUT Defence Fund Report

Livio di Matteo, ldimatte@lakeheadu.ca

The annual meetings of the CAUT Defence Fund were held October 18th in Ottawa. The CAUT Defence Fund provides financial assistance to Canadian academic member staff unions dealing with strikes or lockouts. The Fund currently includes 66 member unions representing over 37,000 academic staff from St. John's to Victoria. The meetings opened with comments by CAUT President Robin Whitaker who commented on the challenges facing the post-secondary sector regarding austerity, lay-offs and governments seeking to also exert more control over institutions amidst a rising tide of anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism around the world. President Whitaker noted that we need to focus on what unites us and

that the CAUT executive is engaged in strategic planning to deal with these many challenges and the manner in which they will impact the defence fund and individual associations.



CAUT Meetings underway at the Westin Hotel, Ottawa

CAUT Defence Fund President Michael Shaw then delivered his opening remarks and started out by congratulating colleagues from the Dalhousie Faculty Association who were locked out by their employer and then reached resolution with assistance and support of the CAUT Defence Fund and member unions. There was support from other public sector unions and this type of joint support was instrumental in showing broad union support.

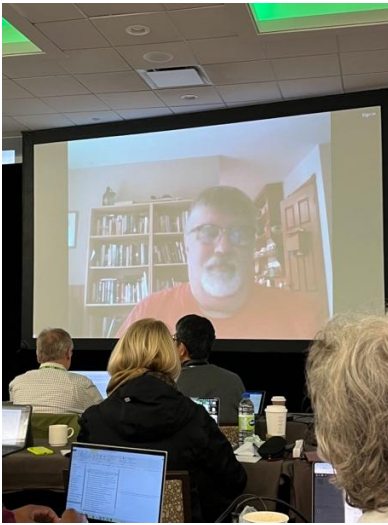
New members have joined the fund bringing the total to 66 associations from coast to coast. The newest additions are:

- Association of McGill Academic Staff of the School of Continuing Studies
- Association of McGill Professors of Education

- Association of McGill Professors of the Faculty of Arts
- Association of Part-time Professors of the University of Ottawa,
- Syndicat des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Sherbrooke.

The Defence fund has reached over \$40 million in assets ready to provide strike support to members. As well, the Members Unanimous Agreement Motion, requiring all member unions to agree to changes to our bylaws to allow a weighted two thirds vote as opposed to unanimous agreement of all Member Unions was sent to all Member Unions for approval and has subsequently been approved thereby improving aspects of future governance.

A notable event at this year's meetings was the presentation of the new Tom Booth Solidarity Award. The Tom Booth Solidarity Award recognizes a long term and ongoing commitment to solidarity by the recipient named in honour of legendary CAUT Defence and University of Manitoba Faculty Association member Tom Booth. This commitment is demonstrated by participation in Flying Pickets over multiple years, and /or participation in the CAUT DF standing committees over multiple years and/or participation in leadership roles in the fund over multiple years. Larry Hale, UPEI was announced as the first recipient of the Tom Booth Solidarity Award. Larry joined the proceedings via Zoom and stressed the role of Tom Booth in the initial organizing and running of flying pickets and his hard work on the lines in numerous strikes and disputes. As he aptly stated: "Collective agreements matter."



Larry Hale, UPEI, was honoured as the first recipient of the new Tom Booth Solidarity Award

The Treasurer's Report was delivered by Ash Hossain, and he noted the Defence Fund has increased from \$36 to \$41 million and as a result fees to member associations have now been reduced to the lower level given the fund's replenishment.

In other business, the labour situation remains fluid and contentious at a number of institutions. Strike benefits were approved as follows: the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association, the Cape Breton University Faculty Association, and the Nipissing University Faculty Association. Of note, the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association at the time of the October 18th meetings, had been in negotiations with its administration for 500 days. As well, Nipissing University is apparently in the midst of some turmoil given that enrolments have been halted in several programs and the evidence is that some type of restructuring is underway.

In short, the work of the Defence Fund is vital to safeguarding the interests of faculty at universities across Canada. The Defence Fund is the shield wall that guards the ranks of academe and each individual member association through its contributions to the fund and engagement with flying pickets

plays a part in the interlocking roles that maintain that shield wall.

Livio Di Matteo, LUFA CAUT Defence Fund Representative

Emeritus Committee Report

Glenna Knutson,

glenna.knutson@gmail.com

The LUFA Emeritus Committee met several times since the May 2025 LUFA General Meeting. A major focus of our work has been on the name and structure of the Emeritus Committee. Specifically, the Emeritus Committee has initiated a recommended Bylaw change, supported by the LUFA Executive, that the LUFA membership change the name of LUFA Emeritus Member to LUFA Retired Member and the name of the LUFA Emeritus Committee to the LUFA Retired Members' Committee. There are numerous benefits to this name change, the most obvious being elimination of the confusion between the title LUFA Emeritus Member (a LUFA designation) and LU Emeritus Professor (a Lakehead University Senate designation).

We have also recommended to the LUFA Executive that the minimal fee for LUFA Emeritus membership be eliminated. The result of this would be that all LUFA members would be included as LUFA retired members, significantly swelling the ranks of this group and allowing all access to benefits such as membership in CURAC (College and University Retirees Association of Canada).

We continue to review the results of our survey carried out last year, and plan further activities. Earlier in the fall, we were saddened to receive notice that Nancy Luckai needed to resign from the Emeritus Committee. We appreciated her energetic and thoughtful contributions, and will miss her experience and knowledge. We ask retired LUFA members to consider letting their names stand to fill this now-vacant position; interested members should approach the LUFA Nominating Committee or Ben Hubbard in the LUFA office.

The members of the LUFA Emeritus Committee are: Frances Helyar, Glenna Knutson (chair), Karen Maddox, Brian Phillips, and Karen Poole.

Orillia and Barrie Committee Chair
Pension Committee Chair
Physical Environment Committee Chair
Research Committee Chair

Sree Kurissery
Camillo Lento
Muhammad Khalid
Mat Leitch

Equity and Social Justice Committee Report

Juan Pernia, jpernia@lakeheadu.ca

The committee is preparing a short survey with the purpose of determining the main concerns from the membership regarding equity, diversity and inclusion at the university. This survey will provide information for a future in-depth survey related to the main concerns indicated in the short survey. All information collected from these surveys will be very helpful for the next steps of the committee related to future actions/activities related to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Librarian Committee Report

Janice Mutz, jmutz@lakeheadu.ca

Sara Janes attended the CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Conference in Ottawa Oct. 3rd and 4th. Here are some [conference highlights](#).

LUFA Executive Committee 2025/26

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer
Past President
Members at Large

Chief Grievance Officer
Chief Negotiator
CAUT Rep.
CAUT Defence Fund Rep.
OCUFA Rep.
OCUFA Collective Bargaining
Status of Women Rep.

Benefit Committee Chair
Contract Lecturer Chair
Emeritus Committee Chair
Equity and Social Justice
Committee Chair
Communications Committee Chair
Librarian Committee Chair
Nominating Committee Chair

Gautam Das
Karl Skogstad
Florin Pendea
Naqi Sayed

Kamil Zaniewski
Lynn Martin
QingLai Dang
Robert Mawhinney
Gautam Das
Livio DiMatteo
Karl Skogstad
Robert Mawhinney
Wendy St Laurent-
Coutts
ShiKui Wu
Devon Lee
Glenna Knutson

Juan Pernia
Ravi Gokani
Janice Mutz
Jason Blahuta