



Report of the President

James Compton

I want to begin my 2018 Report to Council on a note of thanks to all the activist support CAUT has received during the past year. We are busy on numerous fronts across the country and without the consistent dedication of individual faculty members we would cease to exist as a strong national body. University administrations remain tied to tired austerity policies, government funding remains woefully inadequate in meeting rising student demand for post-secondary education (PSE), and the ugly treatment of Contract Academic Staff (CAS) continues to ensure they are not properly compensated for their teaching and research. I know that the work our members do extracts a personal and professional toll that is not always acknowledged. Well, here's a tip of the hat to you all. And with that in mind here's a brief list of some of the successes our community of activist/scholars have enjoyed because of your work.

Bargaining

As mentioned, government austerity measures continue to be popular among provincial governments. Funding has been cut to universities in Saskatchewan, while in Alberta, there are no mandated cuts, but the government has directed universities to seek zero-percent increases over the next two years. And in Nova Scotia, the government showed its enthusiasm for interfering with collective bargaining by imposing a wage settlement on 75,000 public sector workers which, in turn, produced a legal challenge to the constitutionality of the law.

Push back also occurred in Manitoba where the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) won a stunning decision at the province's Labour Board. The Board found the University of Manitoba guilty of unfair labour practice when it withdrew its salary offer during 2016 negotiations with the faculty association. The university administration pulled its salary offer from the bargaining table just days before a strike deadline. The administration claimed the move was forced by the provincial government. However, the Board concluded the administration acted in bad faith by not telling UMFA about the government's mandate and ordered the university to pay up to \$2.4M and issue a formal apology. As UMFA President Janet Morrill has noted, the decision carries enormous national significance because it "serves as a notice that employers still have a duty to bargain in good faith, despite government interference."



Another struggle of national significance was led by college instructors in Ontario. After being told repeatedly by the employer that CAS should simply accept their lot, the 12,000 OPSEU members marshalled forces and withdrew their labour. At the end of the five-week labour action, union solidarity was stronger than ever, student support had increased, and faculty at 24 Ontario colleges had won significant gains for CAS, including language on equal pay for equal work and, for the first time, new language on academic freedom.

Academic freedom

The corporatization of university governance structures has created important challenges for academic freedom. Nowhere was this more apparent than at Carleton University where the Board of Governors insisted that all Board members, including elected faculty members, sign a code of conduct that barred them from criticizing Board decisions. It also imposed a gag order that prohibited faculty representatives from reporting back to their constituency. Forceful opposition from the Carleton University Academic Staff Association, backed by the threat that CAUT Council may impose censure if the Board did not mend its ways, brought a successful resolution to the issue. The Carleton Board adopted a new code of conduct in January that rolled back the most poisonous elements of the previous version.

A governance scandal at the University of Calgary (U of C) resulted in the resignation of Elizabeth Cannon as the University's President in January of this year. The resignation followed the release of a CAUT report that concluded Cannon was in a conflict-of interest due to a co-existing and "highly-remunerated" role as a board member of the oil and gas pipeline giant Enbridge. The investigation into the relationship between the U of C and Enbridge found that the company's sponsorship of the Enbridge Centre for Corporate Sustainability (ECCS) gave it undue influence over academic priorities in the ECCS program. Many faculty would only agree to speak with the Ad Hoc Committee investigators if they remained anonymous, citing a culture of fear on the campus.

Political action & campaigns

Without doubt, the Canadian academic community enjoyed a huge win this past year with the success of our Get Science Right campaign. Years of lobbying at the local and national levels finally paid off in the February 2018 Federal Budget. The budget didn't give us everything we wanted, but it did commit 62 percent of what was identified by the Fundamental Science Review, chaired by Dr. David Naylor. It amounted to a record onetime investment in basic science, including \$925 million over five years to Tri-Council funding. The budget also contained \$15 million over five years to implement programs that support improved equity and diversity in academia, with \$50 million per year ongoing for the Canada Research Chairs program (CRC) to better support early-career researchers, increasing diversity among nominated researchers.

The victory on funding for basic science directs our attention to the importance of coalition building. For sure, our members put in countless hours writing letters, holding panels and lobbying their MPs. But we also had help from partners such as Evidence for Democracy and The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC). We even made common cause with Universities Canada. Why? Because in this instance we wanted the same thing. In fact, Universities Canada was following our lead. As David Naylor told Council last year, it was CAUT that for years was the lone voice championing funding for basic science during the lean years of the Harper government. We believe strongly in the power of collective mobilization. That's why we had representatives speak at Quebec's National Assembly to express opposition to Bill 234, a private member's bill that introduced sweeping changes threatening governance at the Université de Montréal. The Bill infringes on academic freedom, weakens collegial governance, and alters working conditions outside the regular union bargaining process, and that's why we stood with our colleagues at the Université de Montréal.

It's the same spirit that animated our support for academic colleagues suffering job losses and incarceration in Turkey.

I have drawn attention to some of the more high-profile files the CAUT has worked on this past year, but in each case, success has been predicated on a desire to work together to further shared interests. That's what we do.