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This time last year our message highlighted the unprecedented changes wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the degree to which the virus and policy responses laid bare existing inequities in our sector and our society. As we approach almost two years of this pandemic, we are reminded of the toll this virus has taken on our members—from the devastating loss of work and, in some cases, loss of health and life, to the workload pressures resulting from the shift to remote and hybrid learning.

While vaccinations hold out the hope of returning us to ‘normal’, organized academic labour must decide whether ‘normal’ is where we wish to return, or whether we ought to envision a brighter future for our sector. With members taking a stand against anti-labour, anti-education governments on the picket lines, we know normal is not something we are willing to accept.

If ‘normal’ means a return to an increasing erosion of the academic job in favour of precarious contracts with little to no benefits, we need to envision a new normal. If ‘normal’ means indebting an entire generation of students rather than making public investments to ensure everyone has access to education, regardless of income or wealth—we need to demand a new normal. If ‘normal’ means the ongoing erosion of fundamental research—research that informs the very vaccinations that have allowed us to begin to re-open—we will say with one voice that normal is not good enough.

Through member education, research, bargaining and strike support, as well as campaigning and federal advocacy, CAUT will continue to push for a fairer future for our members and our universities and colleges.
Advocacy for academic staff during COVID-19
Advocacy for academic staff during COVID-19

Together with academic staff associations, we kept post-secondary education front and centre of discussions about post-pandemic recovery plans this past year.

We tracked more than 110 universities’ and colleges’ reopening plans and created a checklist to assess health and safety plans. Fifty-five per cent of institutions planned to deliver their courses primarily online.

Through submissions to parliamentary committees, letters, our 2021 pre-budget submission, and more, we called on the federal government to include academic staff and students at public universities and colleges in emergency support programs. The federal government responded by extending emergency supports to students.
Mobilizing political action for change
The pandemic coupled with an erosion in public funding, austerity measures and an attack on labour in several provinces has stretched the academy to its limits. Yet our steadfast commitment to building a sustainable post-secondary education system helped us face a slew of daunting challenges.

In Alberta, we joined a coalition fighting Bill 32 – the first “right to work” type legislation to be passed in Canada, and made, upon invitation, a submission to the opposition’s consultation on post-secondary education. In Manitoba, we supported the defend and not de-fund universities campaign. We spoke against the worrisome trend of performance-based funding, calling for it to be permanently-shelved.

On February 1st, Laurentian University declared insolvency and made the unprecedented move of seeking protection under the Companies’ Creditors Arrangement Act. CAUT, together with the Laurentian University Faculty Association, undertook a federal advocacy campaign, calling on the federal government, amongst other things, to significantly increase funding for minority language post-secondary education.

This work culminated in a motion passed at the Official Languages Committee of the House of Commons recommending that the government “support educational institutions across the country that are providing official-language instruction and enhancing the vitality of official-language minority communities.” Additionally, many questions with respect to the unfolding situation at Laurentian and the impact on minority language education were asked during Question Period, and CAUT pressed for an emergency debate in Parliament on the role of the federal government in supporting post-secondary education, particularly in official minority communities.

These efforts led to concrete improvements in Budget 2021 which delivered an increase of $121.3 million over three years to make high-quality post-secondary minority-language education available across Canada.

With the federal government undertaking a review of the Employment Equity Act, CAUT held a webinar on the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Act to discuss the ways it can be strengthened. CAUT also signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, an initiative calling on governments and administrators to end the overreliance on performance metrics in hiring, promotion, and funding decisions.
CAUT partnered with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) to push for a national strategy to ensure an accessible, affordable, high-quality, and equitable post-secondary education system.

In February 2021, our coalition representing more than one million workers and students, released a comprehensive “Education for All” report, offering a new vision for post-secondary education, with several recommendations to governments, including an increase of federal transfer payments by at least $3 billion a year.
Defending academic freedom
CAUT has a global reputation for being a fierce defender of academic freedom. A major academic freedom case put CAUT at the centre stage this year, garnering worldwide media attention and galvanizing academic staff activism across Canada. At issue was the University of Toronto’s failure to resolve concerns about the role of outside political pressure in derailing the appointment of Dr. Valentina Azarova as Director of the International Human Rights Program in the Faculty of Law.

Dr. Azarova was the unanimous recommendation of a hiring committee to take up the position. After a sitting judge and major donor to the University contacted the Advancement Office about Dr. Azarova’s academic work and research regarding Israel and Palestine, the hiring process was abruptly terminated.

The CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee reviewed the available evidence and presented a report to CAUT Council, which unanimously endorsed a notice of motion of censure. With the University of Toronto’s failure to adequately resolve the situation CAUT Council delegates voted to impose censure in April 2021.
Upholding the integrity of the academic job
CAUT has worked to build labour power in the post-secondary education sector. This increased power enables us to effectively bargain and campaign for members and promote progressive standards for all workers across Canada. It also enables us to defend the integrity of academic work and advocate for an affordable, accessible, and high-quality public education system.

Securing contract gains that protect and advance employment conditions and professional rights is a core priority for CAUT. This past year, the disruptions and uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continued to dominate the bargaining environment across the country.

Notably, in Alberta the United Conservative Party government substantially reduced public support for the post-secondary system, with employers responding by proposing 0% salary increases—and, in some instances, salary rollbacks. In Manitoba and Ontario, provincially-imposed wage restraints are being challenged but have been adopted by some institutions at the bargaining table.

Despite these challenges, our associations are making important advances—including these:

- The Concordia University Faculty Association renewed their collective agreement for two years, including salary increases, stipend increases for academic unit heads and supervisory librarians, and stipend increases for teaching additional courses.

- The Language Centre Instructors at Saint Mary’s University (CUPE 3912) resisted the addition of a teaching qualification and negotiated a one-time gross lump sum payment to those instructors who had signed a contract during the Winter 2020 semester.

- The Brock University Faculty Association negotiated a new collective agreement including significant gains for Indigenous faculty and librarians, including increased consultation associated with appointments, and the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and experience in hiring, promotion, and tenure.
Building organizing capacity for our members
CAUT supports its members by providing timely research and analysis and offering concrete tools for building organizing capacity through collective bargaining, legal support, campaigning and communications.

CAUT makes member collective agreements available through an up-to-date searchable database. Our research team also tracks salaries, stipends, and benefits for all academic staff. CAUT issued a pension survey to establish plan standards and trends across our sector. A snapshot of recent economic and collective bargaining trends across Canada was made available to members through Facts & Figures. CAUT also provided members with annual and longitudinal data on institutional revenues and expenditures, including the impact of COVID-19.

**Issues Facing Counsellors: New Cross-Country Survey**

Increased demands for mental health services on campus is putting a strain on campus counsellors. This year CAUT initiated a cross-country survey of post-secondary counselling centres to identify issues facing counselling members. The survey has been distributed to counsellors and mental health professionals at post-secondary institutions across Canada and the results will be made available to members as well as shared with policy makers.

**Legal Services**

CAUT’s legal team works closely with member associations to provide them with legal advice and representation assistance in defending their members in cases of breaches of academic freedom, discrimination and interference with collegial governance. This year we provided specific legal assistance to the Laurentian University Faculty Association, the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers, the Mount Allison Faculty Association, the Brock University Faculty Association, and the University of Toronto Faculty Association. Such collaboration is key to strengthening our collective ability to make wins at the bargaining table and advance academic workers’ rights. This year, CAUT’s legal team also provided advice on mandatory vaccination policies for associations across Canada and played a leading role in major legal victories for the sector.
Defending students against Ontario's “Student Choice Initiative”

In 2019, the Government of Ontario passed the so-called "Student Choice Initiative" that directly targeted student unions by making some fees “optional”, including fees for student union equity service centres (e.g. women’s centres, 2SLGBTQ centres etc.), among many others.

CAUT joined with the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, the Ryerson Centre for Free Expression, the Canadian Association of Journalists, PEN Canada, and World Press Freedom Canada to intervene at the Ontario Court of Appeal, following the government’s appeal of the lower court decision resulting from the case initiated by the Canadian Federation of Students and the York Federation of Students. In August, the Court dismissed the appeal and upheld the lower court decision that stated the Minister could not use its executive authority and prerogative spending power to force colleges and universities to make student association fees optional. The Court reinforced that Ontario universities are independent, autonomous, self-governing bodies and highlighted the importance of democratic student unions in the post-secondary setting.

York University v. Access Copyright

This case addressed whether tariffs for published works, approved by the Copyright Board, are mandatory. Access Copyright, which licences and administers reproduction rights in published literary works on behalf of creators and publishers, sought to enforce a tariff against York University. York counterclaimed for a declaration that any copying conducted within its fair dealing guidelines was protected by fair dealing rights under the Copyright Act. CAUT and the Canadian Federation of Students joined forces to intervene at the Supreme Court of Canada to argue for a broad interpretation of fair dealing. In its ruling on July 31, 2021, the Supreme Court held that copyright fees or tariffs cannot be imposed on York University, and accepted CAUT’s argument that it is in the public interest that students and academic staff be able to access education and research materials.
Building organizing capacity for our members

Education

Education and training are critically important for bolstering the capacity of associations to make gains for their members. This year CAUT offered a wide range of remote courses designed to strengthen organizing skills and provide members a space for sharing best organizing and campaign practices with each other.

- Over 70 participants took part in CAUT’s new Organizing School, engaging on issues from shifting to an organizing model and workplace mapping, to one-on-one conversations, leader identification and engagement. CAUT recently held its third iteration of the remote Organizing School.

- Over 125 members also participated in CAUT workshops on collective bargaining, grievance handling, labour action for equity, and climate action.

- CAUT organized its first national Collective Bargaining and Grievance Handling schools, bringing together hundreds of members from associations across the country to engage with one another.

- With changes to the labour code in Alberta allowing academic unions to take job action, over 80 academic staff in Alberta participated in a pilot Job Action workshop to help them get ready for strikes.

Fair Employment Week

Fair Employment Week is CAUT’s annual event to raise awareness about precarious employment on campuses and support local organizing to improve the working conditions of contract academic staff. All of 2020’s events took place online and more than 100 academic staff participated in this year’s activities.
Promoting social justice & equity

Indigenization of the Academy
A Checklist
June 2021

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)
Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Working Group

The first phase involves bringing First Nations, Inuit and Métis people into the academy as equal partners, the institution has noticed the absence and frames it as social or educational inequity. The goal is to empower the mindsets of Indigenous peoples in the academic programs of the institution, and improve the dynamics of relationships. This phase may involve the creation of Indigenous studies programs or targeted programs that are deemed to be of interest to Indigenous peoples. This phase can include targeted programs such as Indigenous language and culture programs.

The second phase involves bringing our cultural practices into the institution. The institution can draw upon its mission and role. It can also mean understanding the broader Indigenous environment of the institution and its impact on Indigenous staff and the experience of Indigenous staff in the tenure and promotion processes. It can mean understanding the broader Indigenous environment of the institution and its impact on academics and staff.

The third phase involves bringing our knowledge and creating a place for it in the praxis of the institution. Indigenous knowledge is introduced to students through the academic curriculum, and Indigenous researchers are engaged as academic instructors. This phase requires Indigenous knowledge holders to be engaged in academic intramural and extramural activities.

We welcome the breaking down of Indigenization efforts along a spectrum representing three distinct visions for an academic future – Indigenous inclusion, reconciliation Indigenization, and decolonial Indigenization, as analyzed by Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz. 2

Indigenization of the Academy: A Checklist

Indigenization is a contested concept and interpreted in a wide variety of ways by post-secondary associations to establish “equitable policies and practices that involve Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians, transforming the academy into something dynamic and new.

Decolonial Indigenization

We encourage you to use the checklist and the frame provided for thinking about Indigenization as a starting point and adjust it to your own local situation. We encourage you to use the checklist and the frame provided for thinking about Indigenization as a starting point and adjust it to your own local situation.

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Get Involved

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Endnotes


Advancing equity in the post-secondary education sector and promoting social justice across Canada and around the globe are values shared by CAUT members.

On the international scene, CAUT stands in solidarity with academic unions and associations around the world defending human rights and academics and teachers under threat. We advocated for the civil liberties and professional rights of academic staff globally, including in Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Poland, Colombia, Iran, France, Turkey, Hong Kong, and China.

We worked cooperatively with Education International—a global federation of teacher organizations representing more than 30 million education workers—to shine a spotlight on the impacts of education technology, the critical issue of teacher well-being during the pandemic, and threats to academic freedom.

Closer to home, in June 2021, CAUT's Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Working Group released a checklist with guidance on how academic staff associations can Indigenize universities and colleges. Indigenization of the academy acknowledges the critical role we can all play in ensuring that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations are not just words, they are actions.

CAUT also spoke out against anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim violence.

This year CAUT is launching the first iteration of an equity toolkit to provide member associations with concrete resources for advancing equity through bargaining, the grievance process and campaigns.

A Checklist on Indigenization

1. Is there an Indigenization Plan?
   - Developed with local Indigenous community input
   - Developed with Indigenous academic staff input
   - Approved by governing Indigenous council, Board of Governors
   - Senior official responsible for plan
   - Indigenization community advisory council
   - Dissemination plan
   - Goals and objectives
   - Evaluation plans and programs reporting
   - Linked to equity, diversity and inclusion plans and efforts

2. Elements of the Plan?
   - Indigenous spaces
   - Support for Indigenous scholars
   - Support for Indigenous programs
   - Recruitment of Indigenous scholars
   - Indigenous academic staff
   - Contract, tenure track
   - Cluster hiring

3. Impact of the Plan?
   - What results are expected
   - What has happened as a result of the plan?
   - What issues were encountered along the way?
   - Have Indigenous community members internal and external to the institution been involved in measuring impact?

4. What has been learned that can be used to guide future efforts?
   - What transparent and open discussions on lessons learned and next steps?
Amplifying our collective voice

University teachers’ association calls for rare censure of U of T administration over law faculty hiring scandal

Boycottage de l’Université de Toronto autour d'une controverse de recrutement

Michaëlle Jean pulls out of planned lecture at U of T over law school hiring fiasco, as several groups cut ties

Alberta government caps compensation for more than 400 post-secondary executives

Échec de l’Université Laurentienne : lourd de conséquences pour Sudbury

CAUT seeks to intervene in Supreme Court appeal related to copyright

« Un jour sombre » pour l’éducation en français à Sudbury

No justice for Hassan Diab

La rentrée universitaire crée du stress chez les professeurs
CAUT is the national voice of academic staff at universities and colleges across Canada. We amplify this voice through a robust communications program that includes a national and global media presence, the posting of timely CAUT research and policy guidance on our bilingual website, a strong presence on social media and the CAUT Bulletin, a magazine published 10 times a year.


We grew our social media presence through dedicated and consistent posting of relevant and timely content to Facebook and Twitter. CAUT’s Twitter following jumped by 20%, thanks in part to membership-led organizing campaigns that were active online, including the University of Toronto censure (@censureutoronto) and the Laurentian University insolvency campaign (@LUFAPPUL and @OurSudbury). CAUT was proud to support these campaigns offline as well as online by creating shareables and videos, as well as supporting actions in the digital space and on the ground.

Members across the country also participated in CAUT’s For our Future federal election campaign (ourfuture.caut.ca) as well as Fair Employment Week (makeitfair.caut.ca).

CAUT offers timely updates to members through the monthly Newswire, which highlights sector news and CAUT updates, the online version of the CAUT Bulletin, which is posted every month and promoted through our website, newsletter and social media accounts, as well as the provision of digital campaigning advice and tools such as New/Mode, NationBuilder and digital assets to help members achieve their campaign objectives.
Founded in 1951, CAUT is the national voice for academic staff representing 72,000 teachers, librarians, researchers, general staff and other academic professionals at 125 universities and colleges across the country. CAUT is an outspoken defender of academic freedom and works actively in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada.

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