Dear members of YusApuY,

It’s been a busy start to 2019 and my first months in the union office felt like a whirlwind! As those of you who contact the union office know, there’s lots going on around campus! I want to take this opportunity to let the membership know about some of the initiatives and work underway by your 2\textsuperscript{nd} VP. Some of the projects have been collaboratively taken on by all the Officers which Sonny shared with you. In terms of my work as 2\textsuperscript{nd} VP, in addition to answering inquiries by email and over the phone, attending meetings with members and liaising with the Employer, here are some of the highlights of the work I’ve been doing on your behalf:

\textbf{Job posting reviews}

One thing I noticed shortly upon coming into the office was a trend where the Employer wasn’t providing the Union with the information related to hiring that we’re entitled to under Article 12. I began monitoring the job postings and posting details we were receiving and noted where we weren’t getting what we’re entitled to within the timelines spelled out in the Collective Agreement. We filed a policy grievance about this because when the Employer fails to give us the information we’re entitled to, it makes it harder for us to be proactive with you, the membership, about job posting and hiring issues. Almost immediately after filing the grievance, the Employer started to provide us with the reports that we’re entitled to. We’ll continue to monitor this situation.

\textbf{SunLife issues}

On April 8, 2019 I sent a communication specifically related to the issues we’re currently experiencing regarding SunLife and the grievances we’ve filed due to violations of the Collective Agreement related to benefits. We encourage all members to review your reimbursements from SunLife to ensure that there aren’t any issues with your claims and to follow the process we’ve outlined if you think there is an issue with your benefits coverage.

\textbf{External relationships}

I’ve been building on our established relationships within the Cross-Campus Alliance (CCA), the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), and the Coalition of Post-secondary Workers of Ontario (CPWO). The CCA has been busy collaborating to address many issues, not the least of which is transit on campus. If you’ve been impacted by the transit changes, it’s not too late to share your story with us (email transit@yusapuy.ca). We’re also working on addressing the University’s response to inclement weather this winter season. In terms of the CCU, you may have already seen my update from the February CCU meeting in Vancouver. The next CCU meeting is in Winnipeg in June. As I did in February, I’ll prepare a report and circulate it to you all once I’m back. This year is the Centennial of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, so it will be exciting to be in Winnipeg on the anniversary of the now infamous ‘Bloody Saturday’! (For some related news coverage of the Centennial, please see this CBC article or this one). The CPWO will also be meeting over a weekend in June, in the GTA. Given the direction the Conservative government has taken with respect to the broader public sector, it’s important that we build strong relationships with our colleagues at other post-secondary institutions to strategize about how to respond to the recent and anticipated legislation related to the education sector coming from the Ford government.
In addition to strengthening our existing relationships with other unions and labour organizations, I’ve also been working to establish new relationships. For instance, the full-time Officers and a small group of stewards attended the Toronto and York Region Labour Council’s ‘Steward Assembly’ held in the evening on March 25 in downtown Toronto. Over 850 union leaders from unions across the GTA met to build solidarity between and among unions who are all grappling with – or preparing for – the impacts of recent Ford government legislation. That evening, we heard a keynote address from the charismatic journalist and best-selling author and social critic, Linda McQuaig, and we also heard stories of adversity and fighting back when employers impose programs and policies that hurt workers. We learned about policies of the Ontario Conservative government and how they've impacted various workers and unions, and we deepened our community networks by getting to know diverse union members throughout the GTA by sitting with union members who live in our respective political ridings. You can find some images from the evening, here.

**Learning and development**

On April 9, I participated in a one-day training with St. Stephen’s Community House on de-escalation skills and conflict intervention. During the training we explored the nature and dynamics of conflict and learned the core skills of interest-based problem solving and active listening. In particular, some of the topics of the day included: understanding conflict escalation; interest-based and other approaches to conflict resolution; active listening skills to de-escalate people in conflict and to identify their underlying interests; strategies to build understanding between disputants and to engage in problem-solving; exploring a Quick Intervention Model – a technique to resolve conflicts on the spot using mediation principles and skills; and role-play practice to apply the Quick Intervention model. The purpose of the training was to enhance my ability to respond to conflicts in my role as your 2nd VP. St. Stephen’s House is a not-for-profit community agency that provides training and mediation services for all sorts of organizations.

**Committee work**

I don’t want to steal the thunder of any of the Committees who will be reporting later this spring, but I do want to share that each Officer is working with various committees to try to ensure they have what they need to be successful in carrying out their work this year. I’m working with the following committees: Constitution and Policy, Communications, and Nominations.

**Membership survey**

Lastly, but certainly not least… as I hope you’ve seen, the Executive Board developed a survey and we hope you’ll participate! We want to get to know what you think has been working and what hasn’t been working in terms of the union’s work, our initiatives and communications. Your responses will help guide some of the work that the Executive Board undertakes on your behalf and the way in which we do it. I know there are members who feel disconnected from the union and we want to build a bridge so that you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts with us. We work for you and we want to do that work with a better understanding of what you want to see.

With thanks and in solidarity,

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**BREANNE WHITWELL**
2nd Vice President