



This is the chain of messages exchanged between
Justin Huseby, Chair, AUPE Local 052
Prachi Mishra, Vice-Chair, AUPE Local 052
Dr. Malinda Smith, Vice-Provost, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), University of Calgary

April 5, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

FROM: Prachi Mishra

Dear Dr. Malinda Smith,

I am writing to inform you that on behalf of AUPE Local 52, we will be sending you a letter regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion with regards to caretaking staff at the University of Calgary. Our Local is gravely concerned about the recent decision by university administration to cut caretaking shifts down to two and the devastating impacts it will have on caretakers, as well as the campus community. We believe it is a violation of the principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as set out by the Office of EDI.

We will be making this a public letter for the UCalgary community this Thursday. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my Local Chair, Justin Huseby, who is cc'ed to this email.

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In solidarity,

Prachi Mishra (she/her)
Vice Chair, AUPE Local 52

April 7, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Local 52 Letter to Dr. Smith.pdf

FROM: Justin Huseby, Prachi Mishra

Dear Dr. Malinda Smith,
Vice-Provost
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
University of Calgary

On behalf of AUPE Local 052, I am writing to you to raise my grave concerns about the decision to change caretakers' shifts. As the vice-provost of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), I am drawing your attention to the violations of the principles of EDI on campus.

The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI) highlights three areas of accountability related to human rights at the University of Calgary: Leadership, administration, and advocacy.

Most importantly, the OEDI "acknowledges and appreciates the intersection of social identities, systems of oppression, and the discrimination connected to unequal distributions of power in general and those within university structures, hierarchies, and power relations."

On the University of Calgary website, the OEDI says: "We are committed to achieving equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible employment practices and workplaces." Your mission is to "strive to remove barriers" encountered by equity-seeking groups including women and racialized minorities.

Rather than removing barriers, the university is creating more barriers, and financial hardship, for its 200 caretakers, most of whom are women, people of colour and newcomers to Canada.

April 7, 2022

Indeed, what we see here is a case of institutional racism and sexism, where a group working in an occupation mostly limited to women and people of colour is adversely affected by decisions that have failed to take their circumstances into account. While it may not have been the intent of the University of Calgary to target them because of who they were, the effect on them has been the same.

In the past three years, the caretaking portfolio has faced cuts with the elimination of dozens of jobs and the unilateral change to the shifts they work. The change in shifts has had a significant impact on caretakers, many of whom relied on the later shifts for a \$2.50 per hour boost to their low hourly wage, which is below a living wage.

While there used to be five shifts for caretakers, this has now been reduced to two. With wages so low, many of these workers must work a second job to make ends meet. The later shifts gave them the opportunity to find second or third jobs or to take care of family. For many, that opportunity has been lost and caretakers are being forced to quit one of their jobs.

These workers deserve to be treated with respect and equity, especially when they are working for an institution such as the University of Calgary, which is a community leader, and which has made promises regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Surely, the cuts to caretaking constitute a matter of equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus. I am disappointed to see this decision was not taken with the consideration of the caretakers as a vulnerable population.

Undoubtedly, the University of Calgary faces the reality of budget restraints as a result of drastic cuts to the post-secondary education sector. In times of austerity, those who suffer the most are the marginalized members of society. However, it is incumbent on the OEDI, and the university as a whole, to protect its most vulnerable populations during austerity.

This is where the rhetoric of EDI meets reality. If we cannot protect the most vulnerable members of our community, is the university saying that the principles of EDI apply only to those on higher wages and to students with a brighter future ahead of them?

Are these racialized workers, these women, these immigrants to be sacrificed when the going gets tough?

The university must realize that creating equity, diversity requires action, not just words, and that action requires investment and resources. It is not acceptable to say that EDI cannot apply to one group, the most vulnerable group, because the university cannot find the resources in its \$1.4 billion annual budget. Any cuts to the caretaker portfolio will result in minimal savings, as their earnings are already below living wage.

Despite the claim the university has tried to “protect the workers,” the fact is that simply giving low-income jobs to caretakers is not equity, diversity, and inclusion. Meaningful protection of jobs is not merely the maintenance of positions that do not uphold the dignity of its workers.

While the president has said that “the University took active steps to protect positions,” the real effect of the shift changes will be the loss of jobs, as workers are forced to give up second or third jobs. The sudden change in shifts will inevitably lead to the loss of caretaking staff.

There is also a human cost. For example, a caretaker on the 4 p.m. to midnight shift has family commitments and is the only person who can take their grandchild to school and back in the morning and afternoon. If they are put on the new 1:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. shift, they will be unable to work this job and simultaneously support their family.

As a result, this caretaker may have to leave the university. While the university may not have eliminated this caretaker’s position, the stressful circumstances would force the caretaker out of the campus community. This would be the story for not just one, but multiple caretakers as they balance second jobs, family commitments, barriers to efficient transportation, and more.

As the Vice-Provost of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, you are “the institution’s primary representative responsible for advising the campus community and the Executive” on EDI issues.

For the sake of these 200 hard-working members of our campus community, we ask that you advise the president that the decision to unilaterally change their working conditions is incompatible with the university EDI goals.

Sincerely,

Justin Huseby,
Chair of AUPE Local 052
403-880-1689
chairlocal052@aupe.ca

Prachi Mishra,
Vice-Chair of AUPE Local 052
403-890-1389
vicechairlocal052@aupe.ca

April 18, 2022

TO: Prachi Mishra

FROM: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Prachi Mishra:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your note and open letter to the campus community. We've never met and engaged — yet. I look forward to every opportunity to build good relations.

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) principles, policies, procedures, and practices are important to the OEDI, which engages in this difficult work on behalf of the whole UCalgary community. Caretaking staff are indispensable members of our community. I have said this prior to arriving at UCalgary, and this remains my view today.

I have requested an update. This has been delayed because of an intense schedule. I will ensure I am apprised of the details and review how EDIA principles were responded to during decision making and offer any input that may be of value.

Further, I want to inform you of the fact that soon I will be embarking on institution-wide consultations as part of the first ever UCalgary EDI Strategic Planning process. How is this relevant? The OEDI is relatively new and is not yet fully integrated into all of our decentralized model of decision making, governance and practices. A strategic vision will help to deepen EDIA vision, values and, more importantly, practices. We have never had such a process at our university so my hope is that one outcome of this university process is a shared vision and mandate of how to incorporate a consensus understanding of better and promising EDIA practices into everything we do.

I will be back in touch. I am very much looking forward to hearing from you directly and learning how we, together, can get EDIA right. Going forward I also hope to engage you and our campus community on how we, together, can strengthen our commitment and practices of EDIA for all members of our campus community.

Respectfully

Malinda S. Smith, PhD, LLD (Hons)

Vice Provost (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Associate Vice-President Research-EDI

Professor, Political Science

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

University of Calgary

May 9, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

FROM: Prachi Mishra

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Dr. Malinda Smith,

Thank you for your response. On behalf of AUPE 52, we look forward to engaging with you and build a strong relationship with the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to establish principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility on campus. We appreciate your commitment to the values of EDIA and are looking forward to working with you more closely on these matters.

We are wondering if you have heard back with regards to an update regarding caretakers and their shift changes. Since the shift changes began in April, caretakers have faced innumerable challenges to their work, including the barrier to fair wages. Considering that, as you know, the overwhelming majority of caretakers are women of colour, we believe this is an urgent EDIA matter and are looking to have caretakers' demands to return to their original shifts as soon as possible.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the issue further. We are excited to hear about your plans to create a more inclusive campus and look forward to discussing how it can be meaningfully implemented for the university's non-academic staff. As indicated in our letter, we are especially committed to seeing EDIA operationalized in decision making beyond standard statements of inclusivity, but rather implemented in high level decision making and practice to protect workers in times of austerity. We look forward to engaging with you further to develop such a vision for the university.

In solidarity,

Prachi Mishra (she/her)

Vice Chair, AUPE Local 52

July 5, 2022

TO: Prachi Mishra

FROM: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Prachi:

Thanks for this follow up note. I apologize for my delayed reply. I have been on an all-too-brief vacation and will be back in office later this week. I will follow up then.

All the best.

Malinda S Smith, PhD, LLD (Hons)
Vice-Provost & Associate Vice President Research (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)
Professor, Political Science
Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
University of Calgary

July 14, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

FROM: Prachi Mishra

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Dr. Malinda Smith,

I hope you are keeping well. We have yet to hear back regarding your update you requested from the university to see if the principles of EDIA were applied towards the decision to change caretakers' shifts. Please let us know if you heard anything on this matter.

In solidarity,

Prachi Mishra (she/her)
Vice Chair, AUPE Local 52

July 25, 2022

TO: Prachi Mishra

FROM: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Prachi Mishra:

Thanks for reaching out. I appreciate it. Apologies for delay in reply. I have been on vacation, and a number of folks on my small team are on leave and/or are sick.

I will be back in touch to schedule a meeting to discuss my plans for moving forward. I would like to focus on the upcoming plan for an institutional EDI strategy. I hope all associations can be at the decision making table to shape the future of EDI and accessibility at UCalgary.

With best wishes

Malinda S Smith, PhD, LLD (Hons)
Vice-Provost & Associate Vice President Research (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)
Professor, Political Science
Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
University of Calgary

August 3, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

FROM: Prachi Mishra

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Dr. Smith,

Thank you for your email of July 25.

AUPE Local 052 welcomes your desire to “shape the future of EDI and accessibility at UCalgary” and would be happy to participate in that process.

Having the input of our members working on the front lines is vital to any attempt to create a successful Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy that incorporates all aspects of campus life.

However, that is clearly going to be a longer-term process.

The university's 200 caretakers need urgent action to address their concerns. They are already suffering from the unilaterally imposed changes to their working shifts.

Many have seen a significant drop in their already meagre income from the university. Many have lost the shift premium of \$2.50 per hour that brought their hourly rate just up to the level of a living wage. Some have had to quit either their jobs at the university or their second or third jobs because of the shift changes. Many are struggling to get to and from work on transit because of the changes to their start or finishing times.

When you factor in the devastating impact of soaring inflation on people with low incomes, the need for swift action on this issue is clear.

These are the real impacts that face these marginalized workers, who are mostly women, people of colour and newcomers to Canada. A successful EDI approach would take these legitimate concerns into consideration before decisions are made.

It is unfair to expect these workers to wait for a long-drawn-out consultation process and then a long-drawn-out effort to draft and approve an institutional plan. That kind of approach simply adds to the injustice these workers have already endured. Marginalized workers cannot wait.

We are still waiting for you to tell us whether EDI was taken into consideration in the decision to make these drastic and damaging changes to caretaker shifts.

That's a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. Either it was or it wasn't. These workers deserve to have that answer.

If you have asked that question of the administration and the administration has refused to answer, caretakers deserve to know that, too. Were you or your EDI team consulted? Surely you must be able to answer that question.

It is possible to answer these questions now while also beginning the longer-term project you describe. To leave these questions unanswered will add more disrespect to a marginalized group already under attack by the university.

In solidarity,

Prachi Mishra (she/her)

Vice Chair, AUPE Local 52

August 4, 2022

TO: Prachi Mishra

FROM: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Prachi:

Thank you for reaching out, again.

Should I have any information to share I will be sure to contact you.

I look forward to meeting you.

With best wishes,

Malinda S Smith, PhD, LLD (Hons)

Vice-Provost & Associate Vice President Research (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)

Professor, Political Science

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

University of Calgary

Sept. 21, 2022

TO: Dr. Malinda Smith

FROM: Justin Huseby, Prachi Mishra

ATTACHMENT:

Dear Dr. Smith,

Thank you for your continued interest in the changes in shifts imposed on university caretakers and the role of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the decision to make those changes.

We appreciate that things take time at UCalgary, but it has been frustrating for our caretakers to be left for nearly six months without an answer to a simple question: Were EDI principles applied to the decision to change their shifts?

While they and you have waited patiently for an answer, the shift changes have come into effect. As we have said before, these changes are causing serious financial hardship to many of these 200 workers, many of whom are women, people of colour and newcomers to Canada.

In April, you said you had requested an update from the university. In August, you said you had not yet heard back.

It must be frustrating for you, too, to be kept waiting this long for an answer that directly relates to your position as Vice-Provost EDI. The failure of university leaders to reply to your inquiry does not bode well for the important work that lies ahead for you.

While these front-line workers, who you have described as “indispensable members of our community” are left waiting, they note that the university is moving ahead swiftly with participating in the Dimensions program.

Quite rightly, real resources are being put into UCalgary’s efforts, with the appointment of an Executive Committee, as well as a Steering Committee with more than 60 members representing all faculties, staff and student groups.

I am sure you can imagine how disheartening it is for caretakers to be described as “indispensable,” only to see that their EDI concerns are left unanswered while so much effort is put into EDI efforts in other areas.

The only way to interpret this is that caretakers don’t matter – that EDI principles don’t apply to them, even though they perfectly reflect the diversity EDI efforts are meant to address.

Caretakers don’t feel indispensable. They feel invisible.

We know that you are serious in applying EDI to all parts of the university community.

We would like to invite you to meet with some of these workers to explain to them face-to-face about what EDI means and how it applies to them and their important roles.

Would you be able to attend such a meeting?

Sincerely,
Justin and Prachi

Sept. 21, 2022

TO: Prachi Mishra

FROM: Dr. Malinda Smith

ATTACHMENT:

RE: Caretaking

I have had the opportunity to discuss the changes in caretaking with colleagues and to reflect on it from the perspective of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Care work matters: On weighing the context, and all the structural and systemic factors, I am not aware of evidence that demonstrate that the caretakers were unfairly targeted by the last round of restructuring due to budget constraints. The budget cuts significantly impacted our campus community. As has been noted previously, budget related restructuring initiatives impacted various departments across campus. Many areas outside of caretaking experienced significant impacts to their workforce. In fact, I am aware of specific and deliberate efforts within caretaking that reduced the number of jobs lost

Equity matters: With respect to the loss of shift differential, I am advised that this change impacted less than 25% of caretakers, rather than all caretakers as has been suggested. I am also advised that this change directly contributed to the preservation of caretaking jobs – instead

Sept. 21, 2022

of job loss – while also meeting operational needs. I am further advised that during the spring layoffs across campus, only 1 out of 207 (0.48%) of caretaking positions was eliminated.

Let's pre-empt the polemics and rhetorical flourish: workforce restructuring initiatives are extremely difficult for all involved. They involve real people, real lives and livelihoods. This is serious stuff. The cuts weighed on our community then, as now. I trust that my colleagues engaged in the process with good faith, while weighing the difficult options to make these decisions.

I am unable to offer further comment on these changes and look forward to engaging with you in the near future on the institutional EDI strategy.

Malinda S Smith, PhD, LLD (Hons)
Vice-Provost & Associate Vice President Research (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)
Professor, Political Science
Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
University of Calgary