

To: PSAC Local 610  
University of Western Ontario  
Somerville House, Room 1313,  
London, ON

September 21, 2015

Greetings Postdoctoral Scholars

As the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Local 901 (PSAC 901), we represent more than 1500 Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows and Postdoctoral Researchers at Queen's University. We are happy to learn of your unionization campaign and encourage you to vote YES to unionize!

Here at Queen's University, there are 180 Postdoctoral Researchers in our union, and similar to PSAC 610 at Western, we both represent graduate teaching assistants as well. Queen's postdocs have been unionized since the summer of 2011 and have negotiated one collective agreement with Queen's. We will start negotiating a second collective agreement in early 2016.

Postdocs have always been considered employees of Queen's University, however, only with our first collective agreement did we receive benefits enjoyed by other Queen's employees. For example, we did not have dental benefits, nor a minimum salary, and no formal grievance procedures in the event of problems with our supervisors. This has changed.

Thanks to our unionization effort and collective bargaining, we now have:

- dental and health and drug benefits that are paid 100% by the employer;
- a minimum salary of \$31,000 starting when we ratified the collective agreement;
- annual pay increases for ALL postdocs, (not just those making the minimum salary) of 1.75% and 2% over the past two years;
- a formal, supported grievance procedure based on problem solving and conflict resolution;
- fifteen weeks of supported parental leave: the employer tops up our employment insurance so that we get 100% of our salary;
- the right to join the Queen's pension plan after two years;
- 55% of the cost of Group Life Insurance paid by the employer;
- stronger protections with regards to academic freedom, intellectual property, and safe disclosure.

We accomplished all these terms in negotiations for our first collective agreement without going on strike. The benefits that you will receive from your collective agreement at Western University may not be the same as ours. Unions are democratic organizations, and members collectively decide their own priorities. PSAC 901, and the other 172,000 members of the National Public Service Alliance of Canada are here to support you; when you go into bargaining, you will not be going in alone.

During our unionization drive we addressed some concerns you may share. For example, some may worry about the cost of unionizing, however we can assure you, that in our experience, this has not been a problem. It is a top priority for PSAC negotiators to recoup money back from the employer in bargaining, which was the case for our union. We have also signed an agreement with PSAC Ontario that ensures that, as much as possible, dues money stays within the local. That means that we are able to fund postdoc activities, training, bursaries and participation at conferences.

In an academic environment that is increasingly reliant on casual, part-time labour, postdoc jobs are important sources of income for scholars. Our work is valuable and we deserve to be treated with respect. Here at Queen's, unionization has won us that respect, and we encourage you, our colleagues, to take this opportunity to make a better life for yourselves.

In solidarity,

Silja Freitag  
Vice-President Postdoctoral Researchers  
On behalf of the Executive Committee of  
Public Service Alliance of Canada, Local 901