



## PSAC Local 901 – Unit 2 - Postdocs – Queen’s University

### Bargaining Communique #6

**Subject:** Money is on the table!

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After 5 months of bargaining, money is finally on the table. On Thursday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> the Union presented monetary demands to the Employer. Postdocs are in very precarious situations with salaries that are far below adequate, especially given their levels of education and experience. Among our list of demands, we are asking for a significant increase to the minimum postdoc salary and competitive across-the-board annual wage increases for all members. Importantly, we are seeking full retroactivity for all current and former members in the bargaining unit. Compensating all members for the work they have done since the expiration of our collective agreement is a matter of fairness that should be respected and upheld by the Employer. A recent decision by Kaplan, an arbitrator in Ontario, clearly articulates this principle:

**"Retroactivity ... is nothing more than a matter of fairness without significant cost implications. To be clear: the fairness we are recommending here is not some abstract notion of what is right or wrong and any characterization as such would be incorrect. *The fairness arises from the fact that employees were at work for periods of time and the wages were later adjusted for those periods of time. There is no justification to pay some employees the full value of their work, but to say to others, because of the happenstance of timing, that they are not to receive the same rate as everyone else for doing the same work at the same time. There is also nothing unusual about providing retroactivity for current and former employees. That is the standard practice in the private and public sector from coast to coast to coast.*"**

For the past three years, salary increases have been capped at 1% by bill 124, which has now been deemed unconstitutional. Increasing the minimum salary and providing across-the-board wage increases is necessary to account for this context of wage suppression and to adjust for inflation in Ontario.

To address the cost-of-living crisis, we are also demanding a housing subsidy for all members as well as relocation support for members who are coming to Queen’s from outside of Kingston. To ensure that members are supported during times of crisis, we are also seeking to enhance existing entitlements, such as sick leave and childcare benefits, and to create a mental health and hardship fund similar to what exists for unit 1 members.

Health care continues to be a significant issue for postdocs, the majority of whom do not have access to consistent and reliable care. We expect the Employer to work with us to find solutions to these issues.

Our demands are not unreasonable. [A letter of support from the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars](#) emphasizes the Employer’s responsibility to provide fair wages, housing



and relocation support, and access to mental health and childcare services for postdocs. We call on the Employer to step up and meet their obligations to members.

In addition to monetary issues, we continued to seek solutions for non-monetary demands. We were able to sign off on articles 11 (No Discrimination/No Harassment/No Violence), 24 (Technological Change), and 30 (Vacations), and a letter of agreement related to paid training for sexual violence and anti-racism. Unfortunately, the Employer has refused to agree to language related to hybrid/remote work, digital privacy, and psychological health and safety in the workplace. The Union sought to establish a process for requesting hybrid/remote work arrangements and to enshrine basic principles around digital privacy and psychological health and safety. We are disappointed with the Employer's lack of movement on these issues. To address power imbalances between members and the Employer, these processes and principles must be enshrined in the collective agreement.

We will be back at the bargaining table for two full-day sessions this week: February 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

We need your support more than ever. Please sign our [petition](#) for fair compensation for postdocs, use our [email signatures](#) to show your support for postdocs on campus, send an [email](#) to the head of your department and/or to senior administration, hang up a [poster](#) supporting postdocs, and talk to other members of your department about postdoc bargaining.

As a postdoc we are also hoping that you will fill out a [postcard to Patrick Deane](#), if you have not already done so, and we will send a physical copy to the Principal.

Please stay informed, support your bargaining team, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions through the bargaining mobilization coordinator, Astrid Hobill at: [astridhobill@hotmail.com](mailto:astridhobill@hotmail.com).

#### Your Bargaining Team:

Armineh Azizi, PDF at Chemical Engineering Department

Andrea Reid, PDF at School of Kinesiology & Health

Shideh Ahmadi, PDF at Chemistry Department

MaryAnne Laurico, PSAC Regional Representative

Darren Pacione, PSAC Research Officer

Justyna Szewczyk-El Jassem, PSAC 901 Local President

Laneydi Martinez Alfonso, PSAC Negotiator

#### What is collective bargaining?



Collective bargaining empowers Postdocs to negotiate with the employer as equals to reach a legally binding contract protecting the rights of their members. As a strong, collective voice PSAC Local 901 advocates for employment security, improved working conditions, fair compensation, standardized grievance procedures, health and dental benefits and more.

The current collective agreement, which outlined the terms and conditions of employment for postdocs at Queen's University, expired on June 30, 2023.

If you are an employee covered by the expired collective agreement and wish to be involved in the negotiation process for the new agreement, or if you have any questions or concerns regarding the collective bargaining process, please contact VP Postdoctoral Scholars: [vppd.psac901@gmail.com](mailto:vppd.psac901@gmail.com)