



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

### **Bargaining Communique #8**

**Subject: Queen’s refuses to address Postdocs core issues in bargaining and pushes the Union to escalate actions**

---

### **Queen’s refuses to address Postdocs core issues in bargaining and pushes the Union to escalate actions**

Last week, your bargaining team was back at the table from July 29th to August 1st, fighting for a new contract for all Queen’s University Postdocs. We wish we had more and better news to report, but the reality is that this summer the employer has been determined not to budge, ultimately electing at the end of last week to stop engaging at the bargaining table and pushing the Union to escalate actions by applying for conciliation.

Throughout this bargaining session, and at a virtual session held at the end of June, Queen’s has refused to make any meaningful movement on remaining issues. The employer has spent the entire summer stalling, slow-walking negotiation, and not even responding to several bargaining proposals that you and your fellow postdocs have made clear are our priorities.

### **From the Table**

#### **Benefits**

At the table, we have continued to fight for access to dignified healthcare, relocation support, and support for professional and career development. What we are asking is reasonable and would facilitate the postdoc's life at Queen’s. If the University is really committed to improve postdocs working conditions why would they oppose addressing these core issues? We have also been steadfast on the need to make pension and other benefits that are already available more accessible, to increase sick days, pregnancy and parental leave, and other leaves to be in line with legal guidelines. On all of these issues, the employer has slow-walked or stonewalled the bargaining team. They have offered, for example, to rebrand a travel fund that is already available to postdocs as a travel and professional development fund (which can currently only be used to claim travel expenses). Based on the discussions, it may seem that the employer contends that Postdocs should be primarily happy with under-attended career development opportunities at Queen’s – indirectly suggesting, as they often do, that university’s upper administration knows what is best for postdocs better than postdocs do.

#### **Wages**

We also continue to fight for a dignified wage. Unfortunately, the employer refuses to go above even a \$40,000 minimum salary and insufficient across the board raises. After, three years of only 1% annual wage increase in the context of record levels of inflation, this refusal demonstrates the low regard Queen's administration has for postdocs' work and value to the university. The refusal also comes despite the [University of Toronto’s recent raise of their postdoc minimum to](#)



[\\$50,000](#) (with average across the board raises of approximately 4.25% per year) , and despite [the federal government even more recently setting the salary for Postdoctoral Fellows at \\$70,000](#).

### Austerity

Queen's main talking point is that they simply do not have any money to pay postdocs what they are worth. The need for austerity claim is a claim that has been [refuted time and again](#) by those paying close attention to Queen's financial situation. And it is especially baffling given the university's [recent decision to give upper management positions 4.75% raises](#). From a research level, it also has a worrying impact on the reception of research at the university, [given Queen's continual fall in research rankings](#). As they are currently doing with all workers at the University, Queen's is attempting to gaslight postdocs into accepting less money and worse working conditions, despite evidence that improvements are not only affordable but necessary to ensure the long-term success of this institution, and its employees.

We call on the Employer to do better and to meet their obligations and commitments as leaders of this institution.

### So, What Now?

In the days and weeks ahead, your colleagues will be reaching out to talk to you about ways to get involved in ensuring your union is successful in securing a new contract that reflects your hard work, dedication and expertise. [We are asking all postdocs to sign our majority petition](#) to show their support for the bargaining team, for each other, and for the respect and dignity of all workers at Queen's (postdocs are not the only workers currently engaged in bargaining!).

By refusing to engage at the bargaining table, Queen's is attempting to force postdocs into a strike or lockout position. They are making a bet that postdocs won't show up to demand respect, and dignity for themselves and for each other. They are hoping that postdocs will not continue to fight for fair wages and access to benefits that can make life at Queen's and in Kingston more livable.

That we have come this far in our careers is a testament to the work we can each do, but by coming together, we can do so much more: we can ensure that all postdocs at Queen's earn what they deserve.

The employer believes that postdocs do not deserve better than what we are already getting, and they hope we believe it, too. It's time we show them they're wrong. Queen's make no mistake, we are prepared to fight for a fair deal!

Please stay informed, support your bargaining team, and do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions.

Your Bargaining Team:



Armineh Azizi, PDF at Chemical Engineering Department  
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)