



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

Bargaining Communique #9

Subject: Queen’s Refuses to Engage in Conciliation and pushes the Union to escalate actions. The Union calls on Queen’s to show respect for Postdocs Scholars’ work and the value of their contributions

Yesterday, your bargaining team met for the first time with the provincial conciliator to discuss bargaining and how far apart we remain with the university. A conciliator is a third-party representative from the Ministry of Labour appointed when one or both parties believe negotiations are at an impasse. Our conciliator was appointed after Queen’s unilaterally decided that negotiations had reached a standstill, despite the union's repeated attempts to engage the employer’s team on several core issues for Postdocs. We know the reason for an impasse is the employer’s refusal to **recognize and value the work and contributions of Postdocs to the University**. Unfortunately, even in conciliation, Queen's University is not addressing the core issues and is leaving postdocs with no choice but to organize toward collective action in support of bargaining.

Despite the employer's resistance, our team has remained resilient. After just one day, the employer returned to the conciliator with a handbook of what they claimed was movement—even though this document included some articles where we had reached agreement **and no changes except for only one outstanding item.**

The employer's new minimum wage offer of \$45,958 translates to a **2% annual wage** increase since 2021. We do not feel that this meets the significant new investment needed to support the next generation of researchers directly. It also does not take into account recent trends, including collective bargaining wins at U of T and the minimum guidelines put forward by the Tri-Council Agency last spring. Even more worrying, **it would take two years in the employer’s proposal to get to this minimum level.** This offer does not adequately consider the level of inflation and the value of postdoc scholars to the institution, our labs, and the global research community. **Demonstrating a total lack of respect for the process, the Employer also dismissed all the other outstanding items by refusing to engage in counter proposals.**

The Union’s position has underscored our members' critical need for primary healthcare services. We have been consistent and firm on this issue of access throughout negotiations with the employer and remain so with a conciliator. It's disheartening that the employer has not shown the same commitment to providing proper, adequate, dignified care for postdocs. As scholars at a supposedly world-class research university, it's deeply concerning that we cannot access healthcare services, while the Wellness Service at Queens was established to serve around **30,000 undergraduate and graduate students**. The **200 Postdoctoral scholars fighting to secure access with this new contract represent less than 1% of the enrollment. Still, Queen’s refuses to find ways to expand services to account for this relatively minuscule inclusion.** Access to healthcare services is a fundamental human right that should be **guaranteed for everyone's well-being.** Queen’s has brought postdocs from all over the world to Kingston but has chosen to limit their access to vital health services – a decision that is as dangerous as it is disrespectful.



The bargaining team continues fighting for mental health and hardship support to cover postdocs' needs in our most difficult and challenging moments. We have been steadfast in making the pension plan and other already available benefits more accessible and increasing sick days, pregnancy and parental leave, and other leaves to align with legal guidelines, even despite the employer's reluctance to do so.

Our commitment to your well-being is unwavering, and we know your commitment to each other is, too. Queen's refuses to engage in bargaining and conciliation meetings, **attempting to push postdocs into escalating actions.**

Queen's is betting that postdocs won't demand respect and dignity for themselves and each other and hopes that postdocs will not continue fighting for fair wages and access to benefits that can improve life at Queen's. 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.

In response to the employer's continued disregard for Postdoc priorities, the union will hold [strike information sessions](#) virtually on October 4th, October 7th, and October 23rd. We will also hold an all-members' meeting on October 16th to discuss the next steps and collective action.

Unfortunately, the university has left no choice. In order to win a new contract that reflects our level of commitment to our research **and** our value as researchers and community members, it's time for postdocs to show up and demand more.

[We are calling on all postdocs to join us at one of these sessions, at the member meeting. We also call on members to sign the majority petition](#), if you haven't already done so.

Postdocs are committed, dedicated researchers who believe in the importance of our work, of research and universities as a public good. It's time to show Queen's just how serious we are about the work we do.

In solidarity,

Your Bargaining Team:

Armineh Azizi, PDF at Chemical Engineering Department

Shideh Ahmadi, PDF at Chemistry Department

MaryAnne Laurico & Justyna Szewczyk-El Jassem, PSAC Regional Representative

Darren Pacione, PSAC Research Officer

Jake Morrow, 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 firm, 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 get in touch with VP Postdoctoral Scholars: vppd.psac901@gmail.com