

## **Statement regarding the Guidelines on Peaceful Protest at Queen's and the Guidance on Institutional Statements Regarding Global or Domestic Affairs**

October 28, 2024 - We are writing to express our concerns about the recently issued Guidelines on Peaceful Protest at Queen's and the Guidance on Institutional Statements Regarding Global or Domestic Affairs. We condemn Queen's University's efforts to restrict freedom of speech and undermine our freedom of association. As a union, we believe freedom of association and expression is fundamental to our labour/ student movement. PSAC901 will staunchly defend our lawful right as employees to engage meaningfully in the fight for collective bargaining and will not compromise on this principle.

On September 19, 2024, a school-wide email was sent from the Office of the Principal regarding Guidance on institutional statement regarding global or domestic affairs. The email urged political neutrality on both global and domestic affairs, which was clearly targeting a series of pro-Palestinian demonstrations taking place on campus. Additionally, Guidelines on Peaceful Protest at Queen's was issued in University-Wide Policy Library in 2024, intended "to provide helpful information to students, faculty, and staff who wish to exercise their right to free expression at Queen's University through protest". Covering protest location, and manner of protest, to "acceptable" behaviors and actions, the guidelines quickly jump to threats of "arrest, suspension, trespass from property, and expulsion" for engaging in "prohibited activities" including excessive noise, affixing signs, or "use of chalk." No form of warning against prohibited conduct or due process is mentioned.

### **Unions' freedom to strike**

Protest against systematic violence on campus is a fundamental right of students, faculty, and wider community members of Queen's. It serves as a vital means of expression and advocacy for those affected by injustice. The ability to organize, protest, and engage in collective action is essential to ensuring that voices are heard and that rights are protected.

As both an employer and an educational institution, Queen's University has no authority to dictate the forms of labour actions or political demonstrations that occur on campus. PSAC 901, as a union, believes that only union members have the right to authorize strikes or any other forms of

labour action. The freedom to engage in such actions is particularly significant to PSAC 901, as collective actions are a vital tool for collective bargaining, ensuring that our members have contracts that support decent work conditions.

PSAC 901 condemns Queen's efforts to threaten the rights and freedoms of union members by issuing these guidelines. Such restrictions not only undermine the core values of free expression and assembly but also create an environment of fear and repression. These guidelines exemplify the unprecedented level of censorship imposed by the Queen's administration on campus.

### **Student activism through direct actions**

Through direct actions, PSAC 901 and various campus organizations, groups, and representatives have been fighting against Queen's attempts to sabotage the well-being of our members within this academic community. This includes opposing austerity measures such as eliminating Graduate Awards for Master's level researchers, demanding accountability from the Queen's administration, and standing in solidarity with pro-Palestinian demonstrations, to name a few. These efforts rely on the active participation of community members in these direct actions.

These guidelines purposefully threaten community members' right to express their political views, aim to silence dissent, and discourage meaningful dialogue on pressing issues. This attempt to impose such restrictions not only stifles individual voices but also amplifies the systemic violence that already exists within the flawed structures of Queen's administration.

PSAC 901 recognizes that Palestinian solidarity movements are racialized and that arrest and expulsion would disproportionately affect international students' ability to express their political views. Any loss of enrollment or charge could result in visa revocation, potentially leading to deportation from the country. The mention of consequences such as arrest and expulsion serves as explicit messaging that Queen's has the institutional power to suppress dissent students by depriving them of their rights to work, study, and live in this country at any time for political involvement.

Standing in solidarity with student activism, PSAC 901 will continuously defend the right to use civil disobedience and direct actions to further our cause. We will not back down from the intimidation by the Queen's security apparatus.



Public Service Alliance of Canada  
Local 901

### **Ongoing structural violence against oppressed people**

PSAC901, as part of a wider intersectional struggle of workers and oppressed people in Canada, believes that none of us are free until we are all free. Remaining politically neutral in the face of human suffering, environmental degradation, and ongoing colonial projects at our university only serves to collude with structural violence.

Queen's University is situated on stolen land, and the administration has no right to dictate who can use the campus and how it can be used. We view the university as part of our commons, places that must be accessible and available to all. Given the universities receive funding through taxes and students' tuition, we demand that Queen's University stop policing the actions of students, employees, and other community members, and recognize its responsibility of fostering an equitable environment for free expression.

We stand firm in our commitment to confronting injustices and will persist in advocating for a campus environment that respects everyone's rights to protest, organize, and express their views freely. Together, we will resist any attempts that seek to undermine our collective strength and solidarity in the fight for justice and equity.

We call on PSAC 901 members, community activists, and all campus community members to join a Right to Protest Town Hall on October 30, 2024. Join us as we discuss ways to defend free expression on Queen's campus. Please RSVP here: <https://tinyurl.com/yz7mp2ha>

In Solidarity,  
PSAC 901

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