

*October 30th, 2024****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:*****Queen's University Potentially Forcing Postdocs to Walk the Picket Lines**

Kingston, ON – October 30 – Postdoctoral Scholars at Queen's University could be locked out of their research by the University as early as November 12.

After more than a year at the bargaining table with the Postdocs' union, Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 901 Unit 2 (PSAC 901), Queen's has aggressively escalated its campaign in an attempt to push researchers into accepting what the union calls an inadequate contract.

A potential lockout is a dangerous threat to the research currently taking place at this university. This would be an unprecedented move, the first time in Canadian research history that any employer – public or private sector – has ever locked out Postdoctoral employees. There are over 200 Postdocs at Queen's, early career scholars, largely funded by Federal and Provincial Government grants as well as professors' own money.

As of October 26, Queen's has requested and received a no board report – a legal filing through the Ministry of Labour, which will allow the university to lock out all Postdocs from their employment and research as early as 12:01 am, on November 12th.

A lockout is a forced labour action initiated by an employer to pressure a group of workers into agreeing to certain terms of employment. In a lockout, the administration may legally prevent employees from accessing workspaces, workplace technology and equipment, from performing employment related tasks, including research, or receiving any payment from the employer. Essentially, a lockout is a forced strike initiated by the employer, and workers and union have no say in starting or ending.

Bargaining History

Postdocs Collective Agreement expired on June 30, 2023 and negotiations began in October 2023 on a sour note. On the very first day of bargaining, the employer canceled a pilot project which provided Postdocs and their families access to health and wellness support without offering any replacement.

Throughout the bargaining year, Queen's has been slow to move on key Postdoc demands and has been largely unwilling to interact with union proposals. In August, despite the union's continued expression of willingness to engage in one-to-one bargaining, Queen's unilaterally applied for conciliation – declaring that they felt bargaining was at an impasse and calling in a Ministry of Labour appointed Conciliator. On October 16, Queen's issued an ultimatum, delivering what they called a final offer, which they claimed would expire at 11:59 PM that same day. Knowing that members would not accept the deal, PSAC 901 had no choice but to reject the offer. On October 21, Queen's requested a no board report, an aggressive step that

fast-tracks the process towards a potential lockout. This action indicates that the University is preparing to put itself in a legal position to lock out union members in the coming weeks.

Despite this escalation, PSAC 901 bargaining team has remained steadfast in demanding serious attention to issues such as healthcare access, mental health support, relocation funds, protections, and wages. The union calls for solidarity and action in support of Queen's Postdocs during this crucial contract negotiation, in anticipation of a potential lockout.

Bargaining Demands

Postdocs are highly skilled researchers who work across various disciplines, engaging in pioneering research projects that aim to make a huge impact on their communities and the world. At Queen's, postdocs contribute massively to the university's research profile, bringing in millions in grant funding, and contributing to teaching and committee service.

Despite their contributions, Postdocs often receive surprisingly low wages while working at Queen's. Currently, the minimum salary for Postdocs is \$35,958, roughly what a person working full-time at Ontario minimum wage would make annually. In contrast, recent guidelines from the Federal Government put the minimum salary for Postdoctoral researchers working on tri-agency grants at \$70,000. On top of these wages, Postdocs do not have access to many on-campus benefits, such as available healthcare and childcare services that are available to graduate student workers.

Calling on Community

PSAC 901 expressed disappointment in the university in a letter sent to Department Heads and Principal Investigators early Tuesday evening. The union called on Principal Investigators at the university (Professors who hire and supervisors) to email Queen's administration and demand that they work with Postdocs to negotiate a contract that reflects the dignity, respect, and fair wages we all deserve – that they do not use your research and your researchers as pawns to “save a few dollars.”

Statements of solidarity from across the university community, city, province, and country have started to come in to the union, which plans to begin releasing statements ahead of November 12th – a day it says will prove to the university the collective strength and solidarity Postdocs have behind them.

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