



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Local 901

PSAC Local 901 - Unit 1 Bargaining Communique #1

Subject: Standing Strong: Bargaining Team Confronts Employer's Disrespect and Pushes for Worker Protections

From November 18–21, your Bargaining Team began the negotiation process for a new Collective Agreement with the Employer. The Collective Agreement for Unit 1, which consisted of Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Teaching Fellows at Queen's, expired in April 2024, and it took the Employer months to come to the table with the Bargaining Team—a sign of disorganisation and disrespect that continued to manifest throughout this past week of bargaining.

On the first day of negotiations, Employer and Union representatives exchanged initial packages of non-monetary proposals. The Bargaining Team's proposal packages were rooted in a year-long consultation process with our members. Among our demands were longer worker's orientation sessions, protection for members who wish to stand in solidarity with other workers, more comprehensive members' information lists, and an increase in the number of members that can be present at a group grievance meeting. These proposals are made to ensure members' protection and wellbeing at the workplace, and we will continue to bring forth other non-monetary packages in the coming weeks.

Within the Employer's first proposal package was the demand to eliminate language in the Collective Agreement that protects members against lay-offs due to technological change. The Employer's representatives stated that they "struggle with no lay-off language." When the Bargaining Team asked for specific examples of such struggles, the Employer's representatives were unable to respond. A hostile demand like this reflects how the Employer sees their graduate student workers as dispensable and replaceable.

In addition to their plan to undermine lay-off protection, the Employer's package sought to erode other rights already enshrined in the Collective Agreement. They proposed to include a clause that allows the Employer to control materials handed out during worker's orientation, where the Union cannot "disparage the Employer" during its information session. The Bargaining Team rejected any language that infringes on the Union's jurisdiction in communication with our own membership, viewing this proposal from the Employer as an attempt to censor the Union in its effort to educate our membership.

The Employer's representatives were late to every bargaining session, citing the need for additional preparation time, yet they continued to attend meetings unprepared. On Thursday November 28, the Employer's representatives prepared only a single question regarding the interpretation of a space in the Collective Agreement, while the Bargaining Team continued to

PSAC 901

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Local 901

return substantial proposals in an earnest effort to negotiate in good faith. This is a clear sign of the Employer's blatant disrespect and disregard for the negotiation process and the Bargaining Team's time. The Employer's representatives are salaried executive members within Queen's administration; they have no excuse to show up to the table with nothing but a copy-editing question. In addition to a clear lack of professionalism, the Bargaining Team was met with insensitivity and passive aggressive behaviour from the Employer's representatives.

Furthermore, the Employer's representatives told the Bargaining Team that mobilization efforts and members' presence at the site of negotiations—part of our workplace—must be “controlled,” as these efforts will be taken into consideration during the negotiation process. The Employer's representatives cited members' independent actions as an additional reason for their demand that the Union not “disparage the Employer” during workers' orientation sessions. As a Bargaining Team, we stand with our members as they exercise freedom of expression, and we will continue to fight for our collective rights at the table. We are not interested in policing independent actions from our individual members as the Employer requested, as we recognize this is entirely antithetical to the democratic processes we cherish as a Union and as a labour movement. To be asked to do so is, again, highly disrespectful and demonstrates the Employer's desire to control not only Union activities, but the activities of every individual on this campus.

The Employer's fear confirms something we already know: the workers, united, will never be defeated. As we prepare for a second week of bargaining starting December 2, we need your support more than ever. Stay informed by [attending a strike information session](#), following [@PSAC901 on our social media platforms](#), visiting our [live tracker](#) to keep up to date, and [joining a townhall with the team and our negotiator on December 2](#). The Bargaining Team remains committed to representing our membership's demands for a better workplace. We know what we deserve, and we will continue to fight for our rights and fair compensation for our labour.

In Solidarity,

Your Bargaining Team