

March 4, 2025

For the labour strike of PSAC Unit 1 beginning March 10th, 2025, at 12:01 am.

PSAC Local 901 Unit 1 Strike Protocols for QUFA Members, respectfully provided to Mary Cella Olmstead, QUFA President, by Jake Morrow, President of PSAC Local 901.

As we prepare for a March 10th strike deadline, PSAC 901 Unit 1, the union representing graduate student workers on campus, calls on all QUFA members to demonstrate their solidarity with our members—your supervisees, mentees, colleagues, and friends—by refusing to cross our picket line. Both physical and virtual.

We also call on QUFA members to remove any and all barriers for graduate student workers to participate in their own union's legal strike action against the university. Both physical and virtual.

Outlined below are a series of calls to action which support these main calls.

We call on all QUFA members to invoke your extremely rare Collective Agreement right to refuse to cross a picket line on ideological grounds.

Articles 12.3(b), 12.3(c) and 12.3(d) outline your right to refuse to cross a picket line on ideological grounds.

Article 12.3 States that "No Member shall be disciplined for refusing to cross the picket line of another bargaining unit that is engaged in a legal strike against the University or has been locked out by the University, if any of the following applies:

...

"(b) The Member has scheduled duties that would be affected by their declining to cross the picket line of another bargaining unit but has advised the appropriate Unit Head as early as reasonably possible, and has made alternate arrangements for carrying out the scheduled duties;

(c) The Member has scheduled duties that will not be carried out and has advised the appropriate Unit Head as early as reasonably possible that the Member will not be available, it

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being understood that for each day on which this occurs the Member will be deemed to have sought and been granted a one (1) day leave without pay, but with existing benefits; or

(d) The Member is a Term Adjunct and has scheduled duties which will not be carried out and has advised the appropriate Unit Head as early as reasonably possible that the Member will not be available, it being understood that for each scheduled classroom hour (or part thereof) for which this occurs, the Member will be deemed to have sought and been granted a pro rata leave without pay, but with existing benefits, based on the ratio of the scheduled classroom hours for which duties are not performed and twice the number of classroom hours in the course(s) for which the Member is appointed."

These Collective Agreement rights are a gold standard clause that you fought for and won, but they become moot and pointless if not used. We implore you not to waste these hard-fought rights ahead of your own coming bargaining.

To support this call, we implore all QUFA Members to advise the appropriate Unit Head "as early as reasonably possible" that you will not be available—physically or virtually—for the duration of any potential PSAC 901 job action. We implore you to join us on the picket line.

We call on all QUFA members to refuse to take part in any strike-breaking or scab labour. We also call on all QUFA members to refuse to help in continuity planning for job action, which necessitates the implementation of scab labour.

Article 12.2 of the QUFA Collective Agreement outlines your right to refuse to take part in strike-breaking labour. It states that,

"During any legal strike by another bargaining unit against the University, or during any lockout of another bargaining unit by the University, members have the right to decline to perform the work of striking or locked-out employees."

Strike breaking, or "scabbing," is the act of taking on the labour of striking workers. It is an action that publicly undermines the leverage of those fighting for their rights, and in so doing, creates often irreparable damage to the community of a workplace.

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Thanks to tips sent to PSAC 901 Representatives by members of several Department and Faculty Leadership teams, we became aware of so-called "continuity planning" activities and those invited to take part in them. Specifically, we came in possession of a document titled **"2025 Continuity Planning for Academic Activities: In the event of a PSAC Unit 1 Labour Disruption"** as well as associated documents for **"high risk contingency planning."**

These plans explicitly called for Department Heads to let the Provost's Office know how and where they might hire workers to perform the duties of PSAC 901 Members and how to plan around "high risk laboratories" and spaces that may be affected.

In support of this call, we ask that:

- All QUFA members refuse to take on additional work normally carried out by PSAC 901 Unit 1 members (Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, and Research Assistants).
 - This includes, but is not limited to, answering emails, marking, delivering course material (lectures, tutorials, labs, assignments, etc.) normally carried out by Teaching Assistants (TAs), Teaching Fellows (TFs), and Research Assistants (RAs).
- All those in Department and Faculty Leadership roles refuse to take part in "continuity planning" for our strike. This type of planning is a particularly damaging form of strike breaking.

By engaging in so-called "continuity planning," or by sharing the "Request to Work Form," not only do QUFA members undermine graduate student workers' fight for greater rights, they may actively be encouraging that strike-breaking activities be foisted on fellow QUFA members. Those who participate in such exercises infringe on fellow QUFA members' rights to decline the work of striking employees and they are weakening the effectiveness of QUFA's own bargaining efforts.

In support of this call, we strongly encourage all QUFA members to report any and all instances where they are asked to perform strike-breaking activities by a supervisor. We strongly encourage all community members to report any and all instances of faculty and staff pressuring graduate student workers or other community members to strike break through [PSAC 901's Official Strike Breaking Report Form](#).

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We call on all QUFA members to refuse to enter workplaces that may become unsafe in the event of a PSAC 901 strike.

As part of the “continuity planning” exercise discussed above, the University explicitly outlines the possibility that the withdrawal of PSAC 901 Unit 1 members’ labour poses health and safety concerns in buildings with laboratories that Queen’s defines as “high-risk”—“laboratories that contain radioactive, biohazard, or chemical materials or where there is the presence of equipment that pose a significant risk of injury (e.g. woodworking tools, cranes/hoists) or where there are regulations requiring oversight (e.g. X-Rays, lasers, etc.).”

According to the FAS Associate Dean of Graduate Students, James Fraser, these plans are taking place on “a very challenging timeline particularly in budget season.” As some of you may know, plans were due on a four business-day turnaround.

Article 12.3(a) of the QUFA Collective Agreement

“No Member shall be disciplined for refusing to cross the picket line of another bargaining unit that is engaged in a legal strike against the University or has been locked out by the University, if any of the following applies:

(a) The Member has reasonable grounds to believe that their personal safety may be jeopardized.”

This is a right shared by all workers in Ontario as outlined in Section 43.3 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which states that,

“A worker may refuse to work or do particular work where he or she has reason to believe that,

(a) any equipment, machine, device or thing the worker is to use or operate is likely to endanger himself, herself or another worker;

(b) the physical condition of the workplace or the part thereof in which he or she works or is to work is likely to endanger himself or herself;

(b.1) workplace violence is likely to endanger himself or herself; or

(c) any equipment, machine, device or thing he or she is to use or operate or the physical condition of the workplace or the part thereof in which he or she works or is to

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work is in contravention of this Act or the regulations and such contravention is likely to endanger himself, herself or another worker."

In support of this call, we implore all QUFA members:

- To consider if work scheduled to take place in any buildings with "high-risk laborator[ies]" as outlined above is safe.
- To consider if work scheduled to take place in any buildings next to those with "high-risk laborator[ies]" as outlined above is safe.
- To consider whether asking their students to enter into any buildings with "high-risk laborator[ies]," as outlined above, risks their student's personal health and safety.
- To exercise their right to refuse unsafe work.
- To report the unsafe work environment to their employer or supervisor, [as per the procedure outlined in 43.4 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act].

We call on QUFA members to remove any and all barriers for graduate student workers to participate in their own union's legal strike against the university.

Since many QUFA members are our work supervisors, thesis supervisors, and academic mentors, the inherent dynamic of this relationship means that QUFA members are potentially the largest barrier to participation for our members' in union activities. More often than not, this is due to the systemic pressures of graduate school. In our bargaining survey, 76% of members identified a heavy workload as a barrier which discouraged them from participation in union activities. 57% cited burnout. Even if inadvertently, the work that is being assigned to graduate student workers, outside of their specific labour contract, impedes their ability to participate fully in their union.

For some, however, the power dynamic is more pronounced or troublesome—15% of members stated that a fear of retribution from an employer or department hindered their participation. This fear is most common and most pronounced in racialized international students, who are often made to fear, wrongfully, that to withdraw their labour may have an impact on their study permit. This is patently false, but often perpetuated and/or misunderstood by faculty members supervising graduate students.

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Whether consciously or not, QUFA members often hold significant power in our members' determination of whether or not to exercise their legal rights to participate fully in union activity.

It is for these reasons that we call on all QUFA members to remove any real or perceived barriers of participation in this strike by releasing our graduate student members from all student responsibilities for the duration of any PSAC 901 job action.

We call on all QUFA members to release graduate students from their course duties and refuse to academically penalize them for uncompleted student work during the strike.

We call on all QUFA members to cancel or postpone any events, meetings, or other Queen's related responsibilities that they may be asking of graduate students for the duration of any PSAC 901 job action.

We call on all QUFA members to report any and all instances of strike-breaking practices.

Article 20 of the PSAC 901 Unit 1 Collective Agreement is the clause outlining issues of Harassment, Discrimination and Violence. 20.02 states that, *"every Employee has a right to equal treatment with respect to employment without discrimination because of race, colour, ancestry, place of birth, ethnic or national origin, citizenship, creed, religious or political affiliation or belief or practice, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, physical attributes, marital status, family status, age, physical or mental illness or disability, place of residence, record of offences for which a pardon has been granted, language (except where competence in a language is a bona fide occupational requirement), **and membership/non-membership or participation/non-participation in Union activity.**"*

Participation in union activity is defined in our Collective Agreement as a protected grounds under which members must be free from discrimination. As such, any infringement on our members' rights, individually or collectively, will be treated as a clear violation of our Collective Agreement, and we will pursue action under the grounds of discrimination. Any unwanted pressure placed on our members to cross their own picket line will be dealt with and reported as an act of discrimination. Whether it is a graduate seminar, a committee meeting, a departmental event, or any Queen's related activity—physical or virtual—any pressure placed

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on any of our members to cross their own picket line will be pursued as an act of discrimination.

We will be reminding our members of these same rights, and we will be encouraging them as well as all community members on campus to inform PSAC 901 representatives of any perceived violation or strike-breaking action on [PSAC 901's Official Strike Breaking Report Form](#).

If you are unsure if someone's actions constitute strike breaking, please make a note of this in your report.

Finally, We call on all QUFA members to make public your support for striking graduate student workers.

We ask that QUFA members discuss openly with your supervisees and graduate students the ways you intend to support graduate student workers during the strike.

We ask that you [sign this petition in support of our bargaining efforts](#). We ask that you commit to showing up on the picket line rather than crossing it.

We ask that you voice your frustrations to the employer, not to graduate student workers who are being forced by Queen's to fight for a fair contract.

We thank you for your solidarity and support in these difficult times. The more that you can do to answer these calls the more it will help ensure a short, effective strike.

In solidarity,



Jake Morrow

President, PSAC 901