

## OPEN LETTER

Kingston, ON. – Unity Council at Queen’s University

16 June 2023

### **Demanding Fair Compensation for Workers**

Dear Vice-Principal Donna Janiec and Interim Provost Teri Shearer:

Unity Council is writing you today on behalf of the approximately 3,300 staff and faculty, represented by the seven unions on campus, to reiterate our position on fair wage increases. Workers are the backbone of this institution, and as such, Unity Council is compelled to address the critical issue of inadequate wage increases and demand fair compensation for all the labour we provide in service of the employer. The workers represented by Unity Council contribute immensely to the success and smooth functioning of Queen's University, and their efforts deserve to be acknowledged and fairly compensated.

You are aware that Bill 124, which constrained the parties during the bargaining of our current collective agreements, was subsequently ruled by the Ontario Superior Court to be unconstitutional and therefore void. This development imposes a responsibility for you as the leaders of Queen's University to proactively address the issue of fair compensation. The existing collective agreements were negotiated under artificial constraints that have no current force in law but were found to contravene our constitutional rights before it was struck down. Queen’s seeks to continue to enjoy a financial windfall from an accident of timing and the Ford government’s appeal of the decision that restored our rights to us. Meanwhile, our livelihoods hang in the balance.

We demand that you renegotiate our wages promptly and cease unnecessary delays while awaiting the Doug Ford government’s appeal of this legislation to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

The principles of equity and fairness must guide the actions of any reputable institution. It is unconscionable that the wages of CUPE 229, CUPE 254, CUPE 1302, OPSEU 452, USW 2010 and 2010-01, as well as PSAC 901 workers at Queen's University remain constrained by the voided Bill 124 in contrast to the recent modest settlement achieved between QUFA and the University. We contribute immensely to the success and smooth functioning of Queen's University, and our efforts deserve to be acknowledged and fairly compensated.

We insist you rectify this inequality by bringing our wage increases on par with those in the Queen’s-QUFA Collective Agreement for all years affected by the moderation period imposed by Bill 124.

.../2

Queen's has both the obligation and the ability to address this wrong. If Queen's University aims to [lead in the Times Higher Education \(THE\) Impact Rankings](#), particularly in areas such as no poverty, zero hunger, quality education, and decent work and economic growth, then the well-being and fair compensation of your employees must be paramount. While you invoke the University's deficit, you have shown little effort to modify budgetary spending allocations so that the University can operate with elementary fairness.

The demand for fair compensation is rooted in the very words of Principal and Vice-Chancellor Patrick Deane: "[At Queen's, we believe our community - our people - will help solve the world's most significant and urgent challenges, through our intellectual curiosity, passion to achieve, and commitment to collaboration.](#)" One challenge surely, is the fair compensation for the workers who support this vaunted problem-solving work.

We demand that you promptly reopen negotiations to bring CUPE, OPSEU, USW, and PSAC workers' compensation increases in line with those of QUFA. The time for action is now, and we expect nothing short of your unwavering commitment to fair compensation for the hardworking employees of Queen's University. Failure to act on these demands would not only betray our trust in your leadership, but also contradict the values Queen's University claims to uphold.

Sincerely,

**Unity Council at Queen's University**

Jesse Bambrick, President, CUPE 229

Marie Edwards, President, CUPE 254

Kimberley Bell, President, CUPE 1302

Elizabeth Hughson, President, ONA 067

Nicole McNeill, President, OPSEU 452

Justyna Szewczyk El Jassem, President, PSAC 901

Jordan Morelli, President, QUFA

Kelly Orser, President, USW 2010