

CUPE UNITS SET STRIKE DEADLINE



On January 9th, all five CUPE units filed “no board” reports with the Ministry of Labour, setting a **strike deadline for February 3rd**. Unless Queen’s and Aramark can reach a reasonable deal on sticking points, **over 1000 workers** will hit the picket lines, including maintenance and custodial staff, food services and hospitality workers, library staff, and laboratory technicians.

The CUPE units made this difficult decision after a **lack of movement on critical issues**, including unwillingness to address two-tiered wages for caretakers and custodians, job security issues like casual hiring and contracting out, inadequate staffing for library staff, monetary proposals for laboratory technicians, cost-of-living adjustments, and many others. Bargaining teams are also concerned about Queen’s and Aramark’s delay tactics at the table and their **resistance to keeping workers informed through transparency**. Negotiations will continue in good faith at the table, but union leaders and volunteers are also preparing in case a strike goes forward in February.

GRAD WORKERS FILE FOR CONCILIATION



PSAC-901 unit 1 was back in bargaining on January 13th and 15th, tabling initial monetary proposals and working to finalize some non-monetary issues. The university hasn’t formally responded to PSAC’s monetary proposals, but so far the general tone has been: “**other workers are more important than you.**” Queen’s negotiators have indicated that with multiple unions in bargaining, **they view graduate workers as less deserving** of substantive wage increases than other workers. PSAC-901 views this response as a tactic to divide the solidarity among workers at Queen’s.

This posture also shows that Queen’s doesn’t respect the skill that graduate workers bring to their work or the **essential role graduate workers play in making this university function**. Queen’s seems to think that the honour of studying here should be enough to compensate graduate workers for **poverty-level income, food insecurity, growing workloads, and skyrocketing rents** (Queen’s proposed a 7.5% rent increase at graduate housing just this week. Last year’s 10.5% increase is being challenged as illegal at the Landlord Tenant Board on February 6th).

PSAC-901 will continue to push for **respect and fair compensation for graduate workers** at their next bargaining date on January 27th with the help of a conciliator. It’s clear that there’s still a long way to go.



QUEEN'S REFUSING BILL 124 RESTITUTION

Bill 124 screwed workers at Queen's and across the province. By limiting wage increases for all public sector workers to 1% per year, Bill 124 meant that union leaders were **blocked from negotiating higher wages**. Thanks to Bill 124, **real wages at Queen's have fallen 11-14% below inflation**.

Queen's saved on labour costs for years because Bill 124 kept our wages artificially low, and they've had months to reverse the harm it caused workers. Bill 124 was first declared **unconstitutional** in November 2022, and Unity Council has been demanding that Queen's reopen contracts as early as 2023. Queen's wouldn't reopen contracts until they expired. **Now, they're refusing to make things right in bargaining.**

The CUPE units have reported that Queen's is **flat-out rejecting** efforts to get Bill 124 compensation for workers. PSAC-901 and USW 2010 expect the university will do the same with them in bargaining.

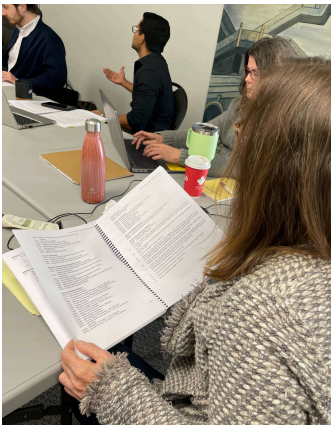
Queen's says they want to wait for the outcome of a lawsuit filed by the Ontario Federation of Labour before addressing Bill 124, but there's nothing stopping them from negotiating compensation now. They're also rehashing claims about the "budget crisis," even though they've given **big raises** to upper management and senior leadership. We think **these excuses smell like...**



How have other universities responded to the repeal of Bill 124?

- OPSEU workers at Ontario colleges got restitution of 9.5%, backdated for 3 years
- Professors at University of Ottawa got 8.5% over 3 years, in addition to cost-of-living adjustments
- TMU didn't waste time and money with delays. They reopened contracts with their faculty, negotiating an additional 5.25% covering 2020-2022.

STEELWORKERS ARE READY



As of December 31st, the Collective Agreement between Queen's and support staff has expired and the USW 2010 bargaining team met with Queen's on January 16th to discuss proposals. Three more days of bargaining are scheduled for February 5th-7th, where the bargaining team is ready to address **critical issues on wages, workload, and job security concerns** such as casual hiring and bargaining unit work.

While they wait, the bargaining team is putting in **very long hours** finalizing monetary proposals to present in the next bargaining meetings. This means sifting through job data, gathering testimonials from the bargaining survey, and planning for potential job action if needed.

USW will be hosting a lunchtime **Bargaining Town Hall** on Zoom January 22nd with members of the to answer worker's questions about negotiations.

So far, no bargaining dates have been set for Academic Assistants in USW 2010-01. **AAs have been without a contract since August 2023**, but USW and Queen's agreed to keep the current agreement in place until August 2025, or until a new agreement is reached, whichever comes first. Key issues for AAs include closing the wage gap between AAs and Teaching Assistants and restitution for Bill 124.

