

March 2025

GRAD WORKERS ON STRIKE!

Graduate workers walked off the job on March 10th, after Queen's delivered a "best offer" to the bargaining team. PSAC-901's bargaining team remains willing to proceed with negotiations, but Queen's has not provided any further negotiation days. It seems **Queen's has left the table**.

Many of PSAC's critical proposals were flat-out rejected by Queen's negotiators:

- a living wage
- a lump-sum remedy for Bill 124
- guarantees on a funding-to-labour ratio
- affordable housing
- compensation for course development and revision

Queen's "best offer" also included a proposal far below these demands, and would only begin wage increases over the summer term, **when many graduate workers do not have active contracts**.

The strike has seen over 2000 workers hit the streets for picketing, rallies, and a full schedule of programming open to workers and students. Activities have included teach-ins, musical performances, crafting, face painting, and trivia games. A mobile art station - one of many solidarity actions from the Union Gallery - has allowed picketers to express themselves from across campus. These activities show that even while on strike, graduate workers are prioritizing learning and community at Queen's.



STEELWORKERS RATIFY AGREEMENT

Support staff in USW 2010 reached a tentative agreement with Queen's in the early hours of Monday, March 10th and took it to the membership for a vote. The ratification vote took place on March 13th after two Info Sessions, where **Steelworkers voted 65% in favour** of the new agreement, bringing a close to a long process of negotiations and mobilization.

Highlights of the new contract include **across-the-board increases of 3%, 2.25% and 2.25%** in each year of agreement, a \$500 signing bonus, **stronger language** to address workload issues, and **enhanced rights** for workers facing layoff or redeployment. The new Collective Agreement will also see adjustments to the union's salary grid to align with market pay rates, resulting in **higher base salaries**.

While USW wasn't successful securing retroactive pay regarding Bill 124, which was a driving factor behind their strong strike mandate (96%) from workers, the majority of Steelworkers voted to ratify the tentative agreement and chose not to strike. Together, Steelworkers faced many challenges during this last round of bargaining, but based on our right to a democratic process, **Steelworkers made their voices heard**.



SOLIDARITY ON THE LINE



Union members and students are stepping up to support graduate students on the line. CUPE workers are **returning the support** they received during their own negotiations. CUPE workers are turning up on their lunch breaks to march with their colleagues. USW workers are also showing their support by walking with picketers, **resisting efforts to scab**, and calling for Queen's to return to the table. Academic Assistants from USW 2010-01 have faced enormous pressure to scab, and some are threatening to resign in protest. QUFA members held a solidarity rally on March 21st and they've been hosting teach-ins and bringing their students to the picket line for experiential learning. **The solidarity is strong across campus. We are Queen's Workers United!**

Undergraduates came out for their own rally on March 27th. **Students are demanding that Queen's come back to the table** and abandon plans to assign a grade of "CR" on courses with ungraded work. Not only would CR grades undermine the value of graduate labour, it would **actively harm students** as they work to improve their GPAs, get into graduate programs, and declare their majors. This plan would also **disproportionately impact students with accommodations and disabilities**, as the Queen's Coalition Against Austerity outlines in an excellent blog post.

HUNGER & HOUSING AT FOREFRONT OF BARGAINING



Food insecurity among graduate workers has been a driving force in PSAC's efforts to secure a living wage. Last year saw a massive increase in hunger among grad students:

- **41% have reported worrying about running out of money for food**
- **28% ran out of food at least once and couldn't afford more**
- **11% have reported going a full day without eating**

All this at an institution that brags about being a global leader in reducing hunger on campus! PSAC-901 is feeding the strike through picnics and the **Mutual Aid Commons**, run in collaboration with Labour for Palestine Katarokwi/Kingston.

The cost of graduate housing is also top-of-mind for graduate workers. Housing may not seem like a labour issue to many - but it becomes one pretty quickly **when your boss is your landlord**. Queen's is both the employer and landlord to hundreds of graduate workers living in the An Clachan and John Orr housing complexes. In December 2023, right before the holidays, Queen's announced an **increase to graduate rents of 10.5%, without consulting the Queen's Community Housing Tenant's Association as required by provincial law**. This year, they're imposing **another increase of 7.5%**. These increases claw back workers' wages and put them back in the pocket of the employer. Grad workers are asking for commitments to increase graduate housing stock and a stop to rent increases beyond the provincial limits. Housing is also a worker's issue when wages fail to keep up with the cost of living. The average rent of a 2-bedroom apartment has increased 40.68% in the last ten years, but TA **wages have only increased by 19.67%**.

