

Dear QUFA Member,

On Friday, QUFA sent an open letter to the Provost, copied to all QUFA Members, notifying her that QUFA was withdrawing from mediation and would seek a strike vote from its Members in preparation for the conciliation process. **At an emergency meeting this afternoon QUFA Executive voted unanimously to hold a strike vote. The voting window will open on Thursday after the Fall General Meeting and run until Wednesday December 21st at 3:00pm via the Simply Voting platform.**

As you know, QUFA has been in bargaining with the university since mid-June to negotiate a renewed Collective Agreement. As a result of the slow pace at the bargaining table, in mid-November QUFA and the university agreed to move into conciliation with a Ministry of Labour appointed conciliator beginning in January, if the Parties had not achieved an agreement by then. In the meantime, the university and QUFA agreed to share the costs of a professional mediator to help the parties achieve a negotiated settlement before the new year, thereby obviating the need for conciliation.

A few days before we began mediation, the Ontario Superior Court issued its ruling that Bill 124 was unconstitutional. Bill 124 is the wage restraint legislation that capped total compensation increases for all public sector employees at 1% per year for three years. Obviously, this development changed the bargaining landscape. Therefore, QUFA sought assurances from the University that they were still prepared to negotiate a new collective agreement and notified the University that the QUFA bargaining team was ready to discuss all outstanding issues including compensation. The mediation process is strictly confidential; I am thus unable to report on what happened during mediation. However, I can say that by the end of last week it became clear that the University's bargaining team was unwilling to say whether they had a mandate to bargain a complete collective agreement, which would, of course, include compensation. In the absence of a clear statement that the University even had the ability conclude an agreement, the effect of mediation became the muzzling of QUFA's communication with Members about the University's response to key matters of concern to them. Because the legitimate purpose of mediation apparently could not be fulfilled, the QUFA leadership advised the QUFA bargaining team to withdraw. This action permits the parties to move rapidly to the more coercive process of conciliation.

The purpose of conciliation is to drive the parties to a deal under pressure of a strike/lockout deadline. Once conciliation has begun, either party may request a 'no board report' at any time. A 'no board report' triggers a 17-day cooling off period after which the university would be in a legal position to lock us out if no settlement had been reached. If QUFA had held a successful strike vote it would have a comparable power with respect to job action. **Seeking a strike mandate does not mean that QUFA is going on strike; it is the appropriate step preliminary to sending the bargaining team into conciliation.** A union bargaining team with no strike mandate has no credibility at the table and cannot effectively represent its members. The employer does not require a vote to lockout employees.

The University's conduct at the bargaining table has been profoundly disrespectful of both QUFA's bargaining team and our Members whose mandate they carry. Nevertheless, I am

cautiously optimistic that the strength of the conciliation process will allow the parties to avoid job action, as it recently did at Western University. But for that process to work, we have to play our part well, and the strike vote is in aid of that.

Please attend the Fall General Meeting. Bring questions. The meeting begins at 1:00pm this Thursday 15 December via Zoom. Please email Elizabeth Polnicky ([ep43@queensu.ca](mailto:ep43@queensu.ca)) to receive the meeting link. If at any time you have any questions about the bargaining process, please feel free to contact me directly via email: [morelli@queensu.ca](mailto:morelli@queensu.ca).

Best regards,

Jordan Morelli  
President – QUFA