

## The Faculty Crisis at York University

Over the past two decades, there has been a dramatic surge in undergraduate enrolments and a growing supply of PhDs but no proportionate increase in tenure-track positions. As a recent report highlighted:

The overall proportion of tenured or tenure-track positions for doctorate holders working full-time in Canadian universities decreased by 10 percentage points between 1981 and 2007, decreasing from 79.8% in the 1980/1981 academic year to 70.3% in the 2006/2007 academic year.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the Ontario provincial government's neoliberal policies have led to funding shortfalls, which were compensated through increased tuition fees and the hiring of contract faculty. Short-term, per-course contract work is less stable and much lower paid than tenure-stream appointments.

Since it is tenure that protects the academic freedom to teach and do research, tenure is at the core of the university's educational mission, but York, like many universities, has increased the reliance on casualized academic labour. As a result, insecure, temporary and lower-paid teaching work, with much less access to pensions, teaching support and research funds and leaves, has become the norm for many who seek an academic career.

York's managerial practices and "strategic priorities" are thus adversely affecting access to sustainable livelihoods for qualified academics and eroding the quality of higher education at York itself.

In the face of this faculty crisis, **there is a pressing need to improve the job security for Contract Faculty** and in this way also the **learning conditions for students** and their experience at York University.

## Existing CUPE 3903 Unit 2 Job Security Provisions

### Current Job Security Provisions

- Stronger seniority and incumbency provisions than at most other universities (Article 12)
- Long service override (Article 12.03.1)
- The bridge for members moving from Unit 1 to Unit 2 (Article 12.09.1)
- A cap on how much members of Unit 2 can teach (to promote the equal distribution of work (Article 12.03.1 (v, vi))
- The Affirmative Action Pool (Article 23) (also called the Conversion Pool) to bring Unit 2 members into tenure-track positions within YUFA (York University Faculty Association)
- Long Service Teaching Appointments (LSTAs) (Article 24)

These job security provisions no longer provide either a reasonable or an adequate level of employment and income stability for contract faculty even though Unit 2 does the bulk of undergraduate teaching. As a result, **contract faculty are facing a number of severe problems, such as:**

- The conversion program is not working. Currently there are 160 members in the conversion pool, but recent agreements have limited conversions to 2 per year.
- Seniority and incumbency provisions are increasingly being undermined by changes in our qualifications language and practices such as restructuring and "renaming" courses. Even high seniority members are seeing their work and income reduced due to these changes.
- The bridge for members shifting from Unit 1 to Unit 2 is not working as well as it did in the past in guaranteeing work and income for new Unit 2s.
- The most recent agreement limited the LSTA program (which provides greater job security) to a maximum of only 51 such appointments. This is completely insufficient given that there are over 1000 members in Unit 2.

---

<sup>1</sup> Desjardins, L. (2012). *Profile and labour market outcomes of doctoral graduates from Ontario universities*. Statistics Canada, p. 7.

- Significant equity problems within the current job security mechanism persist, especially with respect to race, disability, and sexual orientation/identity.
- The current agreement contains no provisions to deal with the Alternate (Teaching) Stream appointments that YUFA agreed to expand under their collective agreement in 2012.

To respond to these developments, CUPE 3903 has developed a number of job security proposals.

### Job Security Proposals:

- Proposals to address **equity issues**, by reducing the vulnerability of the five equity-seeking groups (aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, women and LGBT). These include proposals to make hiring decisions more transparent and accountable.
- An **expansion of the conversion program** to both professorial and alternate stream tenure-track positions.
- **Automatic conversions** for Unit 2 members who meet the qualifications of the Affirmative Action pool and who believe they can meet the requirements for tenure-stream appointments within YUFA.
- Proposals to treat **Unit 2 members as “internal” candidates** for any new tenure-track or CLA positions.
- **Lowering the eligibility for LSTAs and “uncapping” the limit on the number of LSTAs** within Unit 2. LSTAs will be automatically awarded to contract faculty upon completing 5 years of teaching within Unit 2 at an average teaching intensity of 2.5 courses or course equivalencies per year. As an LSTA, members will be guaranteed a workload of 3.5 courses.

- **A key innovation** in our bargaining proposal is a new category of secure work within Unit 2: **Continuing Sessional Status**.

**Continuing Sessional Status** is a new provision that we are seeking to add to the Unit 2 agreement. It would automatically award guarantees of work to contract faculty who have taught at least 1 course or equivalencies over a 3-year period.

The aim of this proposal is to stabilize work across the bargaining unit. It would guarantee those new to Unit 2 more employment stability and security as they build their teaching experience. For mid-level and senior Unit 2s, it would assure them that their teaching loads will be guaranteed from year to year. **More than any of the other Unit 2 proposals, Continuing Sessional Status will help to stabilize our work, which benefits not only us but also our students. After all, our working conditions are their learning conditions.**

### This is Our Collective Bargaining Time!

Our proposed job security language will mean that **more Unit 2 members will have greater opportunities for secure, stable work at York.**

More information about these proposals is distributed through our email lists. There is a general list for all members and a list specifically for Unit 2. Also, be sure to come to membership meetings or any of the other meetings that the Local holds. See <http://3903.cupe.ca/> for updates on the next meeting.

**GET INVOLVED TODAY! A BETTER YORK IS POSSIBLE!**

**For more information and analysis, check out these resources on contract faculty:**

- **Contract Faculty Website:** [contractfaculty.apps01.yorku.ca](http://contractfaculty.apps01.yorku.ca)
- **TVO, "The Plight of Hidden Academics"** [theagenda.tv.org](http://theagenda.tv.org)
- **CBC Radio One, "Class Struggle"** [www.cbc.ca/thesundayedition](http://www.cbc.ca/thesundayedition)