



Representing Contract Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants,  
and Part-Time Librarians and Archivists @York University, Toronto

Canadian Union of Public Employees/Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique local/section locale 3903

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March 19, 2024

Dear Erinn and Sandra,

The comments you made on March 15 regarding our 70 proposals were quite illuminating and have spurred us to take some immediate actions.

As confirmed on March 18, we have received your email with the Employer's questions for CUPE 3903 based on our March 9 proposal. While we are encouraged by the Employer's engagement with our streamlined package, we believe that their questions are best addressed in real time at the bargaining table, and we are certainly available to do that. Meanwhile, we have worked over the weekend to reduce and organize the Union package in a way that we believe simplifies the process and provides a path forward.

What we heard from you during our meeting on March 15 was your concern about the number of proposals that remain unresolved and your concern that, under those circumstances, returning to the bargaining table would not be fruitful. In response to your feedback, the Union has again reviewed its proposals and produced four different schedules, ranked from proposals where the parties agree to proposals that require further discussion. **Schedule 1** contains agreed-to proposals that could be signed off on immediately, given the Union's agreement with the Employer's language. **Schedule 2** contains proposals where the two parties are close with only some small differences in language, including some counters we sent to the Employer in the last few sessions of bargaining. **Schedule 3** contains proposals where some discussion is necessary to arrive at a resolution, and likewise contains some counters from the last few sessions of bargaining. **Schedule 4** contains the proposals that require the most discussion.

We believe that both Schedules 1 and 2 combined can likely be resolved in the course of one bargaining session. We believe that Schedule 3 will likely need its own bargaining session. Schedule 4 might require one to two bargaining sessions. We also want to make clear that the members of the CUPE 3903 bargaining team are fully empowered to make binding, real-time decisions. Everything contained in these Schedules is open to discussion, but we must be at the table to engage in those negotiations and for movement to happen.

We have also had some time to reflect on your comment indicating doubt that a mature collective agreement should require 70 proposals. First, we want to note all the proposals we have dropped or moved on in the past weeks. The monetary and non-monetary proposals we withdrew for our March 9 package include the following:

- Article 15.15 - Increase the Research Costs Fund
- Article 15.18 - Increase the Masters Bursary Fund
- LOA “Additional Funding for Priority Pool Members” - Increase York Fellowship for domestic students; increase threshold for clawbacks to \$50,000
- LOI 11 - Protect more funding sources from clawbacks (“offsets”)
- Rename and re-structure Article 10
- Article 12.03 - Ensure that accepting certain awards does not remove members from priority pool or bargaining unit
- Article 14 - Include “mode of delivery” as part of academic freedom; give members right to determine mode of delivery
- Article 15 - Flesh out intellectual property section to provide examples of “other creative output”
- Article 10.04.7 Enrollment cancellation fee for Music Tutors
- Article 15.15 Research Leaves
- Article 15.16 Research Grants Fund
- Article 15.17 Conference Travel Fund
- Article 15.22 Tuition Waiver for Spouses and Dependents
- Article 15.32 Credentials Leave
- Article 24.02 Term of LSTAS and Compensation (adding timeline for notifications, etc.)

Monetary and non-monetary items we have withdrawn over the weekend, as reflected in our Schedules, include the following:

- Article 10.02 - Minimum Turnaround Time for Grading
- U1 Article 15.11 Experience Credit for Participation -
- Article 16.05 Class Sizes - Lowering triggers for markers/graders
- Article 12.16 Foundations Course Design Positions [class sizes] - Lowering class size limits
- Article 10.01.3 Postings - Prioritizing the hiring of MA students as GAs
- Article 15.05 Appointment Dates - Change language to allow GAs to be spread over multiple terms
- Article 20 GA Bursary Fund - Adding use of by members not in the priority pool
- Article 27 Graduate Assistant Training Fund - Placing GAT Fund in the body of the Collective Agreement

We have also dropped demands for significant increases to some Union funds (including the SASSF and Trans Fund); we have accepted the Employer’s offer of a 1% yearly increase for the Professional Development and Equity Funds; and we have lowered or dropped some of our benefits demands: notably, we have dropped automatic enrollment and the addition of coverage for medical devices.

Second, we want to suggest that the number of proposals that remain unresolved should be understood in light of a pattern we have observed over several rounds of negotiations. The Employer moves only minimally in bargaining; then declaring that a topic is too complex for bargaining, they move the matter to a joint committee. Joint

committees subsequently meet perhaps monthly, often only when the Union demands and even grieves for meetings. The joint committees often turn out to be places where information is received rather than decisions being made, or where agreed-to deadlines are extended and then further extended. The Employer then declares that the matter is too complex to deal with in a joint committee, or the Union has to move the matter back to bargaining to have any leverage. And here we find ourselves, on matters of equity and job stability, to name just two such core issues. The number of proposals you count in our streamlined packages must be understood as a reflection of work that has been delayed in the past and of the energy and tenacity of the members of CUPE 3903. By discouraging us from returning to the table because we still have as many proposals as we do, we are concerned that you are encouraging the Employer to dismiss issues that have long needed to be resolved.

As you will notice, we have taken stock and organized our proposals in order to be able to achieve a deal as quickly as possible. We ask that you recognize the significant level of work the Union has made to accommodate you and the Employer while affirming the mandate of our membership. We hope our plan outlined above can help you to have greater confidence that an agreement between CUPE 3903 and York University is possible, and can be achieved through free negotiations. We would appreciate your support in doing so as much as you are able. If you are not able to do so, we would at once urge the Employer to proceed to direct negotiations with the Union in order to reach agreement.

Sincerely,

The CUPE 3903 Bargaining Team

Cc: Dan Bradshaw  
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