

On December 20th, **the Employer tabled a wage proposal of 1% per year for three years.** This year inflation was 3%. As food, gas, and housing prices rise, this will mean a real reduction in our spending power. Indeed, many of us are already feeling the pinch as inflation outpaced our wage increase for much of 2010-2011. Furthermore, despite the Employer's claim that their wage demand is reasonable given the context of a global economic crisis and the McGuinty government's public sector wage freeze, what we have seen is that in fact, **the average wage gain for those public sector locals that have recently settled their contracts is actually between 2 and 3 percent.** When pushed on this issue, the Employer's Bargaining Team has responded that they are operating within a "strict fiscal 'mandate'" that applies to all campus unions.

So far this year, two unions on campus have signed Collective Agreements: the York University Staff Association and CUPE local 1356 (Custodial, Security, Grounds, and Maintenance workers). **In both cases, the contracts in question included wage increases of 1.9% in the first year and 2% in the following two years.** More troubling, however, is that these wage increases came as part of a **2% per year total compensation package.** This means, by and large, that **wages were the only area in which these locals were able to make monetary gains.**

York has made clear that **our "envelope"—as they like to call it—contains the same total compensation offer.** This means that if we were to accept their present wage offer we would have just enough left over in our envelope to potentially "buy" – again, their words not ours – *one non-wage gain (e.g., either post-residency fees or increased Unit 3 summer funding or LSTA improvements or increased Conversions, etc.).*

In other words, if we were to agree to the Employer's total compensation "envelope", we would end up working for rates well below inflation and would not be able to protect members across all three of our Units. Indeed, we would be faced with a situation in which our funds, benefits, and wages would actually be eroded.

To put this in perspective, **in non-strike bargaining years we have on average been able to reach a settlement of approximately 4-5% total compensation. In strike years we have reached agreements closer to 7%.** Since 2008, the value of our contracts has



increased by over 25% (although about a third of this has been the result of membership growth).

Choices will of course have to be made. Our next Collective Agreement will most definitely not look like our present proposal package. However, what we are being offered right now is not a choice. When we adjust for the increase in the cost of living, accepting this offer would leave us with *less than what we currently have*.

This is the Employer's attempt to box us in and to create an arbitrary narrative of "equality in the context of austerity" that ignores the very real insecurities and inequalities faced by our members.

The question is not why 3903 should get more than other unions (as is the Employer's framing of this issue) but rather why, when our members do approximately 50% of the teaching at this university, we are less than 12% of York's payroll and benefits expenditure. Why does a York University Faculty Association member make on average \$126,000 per year while our Unit 2 members make an average of only \$26,000? Why do upper-year graduate students writing their dissertations pay the same tuition fees as those taking a full course load? Why do Graduate and Research Assistants get less time on leave to grieve their loved ones than Teaching Assistants and Course Directors?

Let the Employer know how you feel about these issues. **Please sign your name to our forthcoming bargaining petitions.** Or better yet, **help canvas for signatures**. For those interested in assisting with these petitions, please contact Ryan O'Neill, Grievance Officer at: cupe3903grievanceofficer@members.cupe.ca



CUPE 3903 Representing over 3,400 graduate student workers and contract faculty at York University **3903.cupe.ca**