

## Movement finally, but not necessarily on our priority areas

Movement, finally! Earlier this week the Bargaining Team signed off on or verbally agreed to a number of important proposals. For instance, **all Members will now be able to spend up to \$2,000 of our total coverage cap of \$3,000 on any currently existing paramedical service** (e.g. chiropractic, massage, etc.), including an expanded counselling service that now includes coverage for social work, psychoanalysis, and other professional therapy that was previously not covered. This will not only provide **an increase of up to \$1,500 for those who consistently use one form of paramedical service**, but it will also **greatly reduce the pressure on our Extended Health Benefits (EHB) Fund**, allowing the Local to cover a greater range of Member needs. In fact, we have also managed to negotiate **an increase to this fund of \$50,000!** We would like to thank the Employer's Bargaining Team for all their hard work on this one.

Additionally, we have also reached verbal agreement with the Employer on Collective Agreement **language that will ensure wage increases always result in an increase in Members' minimum funding packages**, hopefully ending the longstanding, egregious practise by which the Employer reduces non-waged funding in response to wage gains won during collective bargaining. **All we need now is a monitoring system to ensure minimum funding packages are not reduced year-to-year for incoming graduate students** as a means of pre-emptively clawing back future wage gains. **We are close on this issue as well.**

In the case of **Unit 3 parity**, the Employer has tabled a proposal that will ensure **no Member will be offered a Graduate Assistantship of less than 135 hours (roughly \$4,500)**. This is important movement in the right direction as at present, roughly 110 Members receive GAships below this threshold. Nevertheless, **much work remains in this area**. We were recently informed by Members of Unit 3 in various hiring units that **many departments now offer only half GAships** and force members to work these hours in the Winter term only, which **denies Members the opportunity to receive benefits and Graduate Financial Assistance** in the first semester of their Masters program. To correct this problem **we need to continue to push to increase this minimum work guarantee well above the 135 hour mark**. What is more, in total, all of the Employer's present Unit 3 proposals (135 GA hour guarantee; an increase in summer funding; an increased tuition rebate) **only ensure Members around \$6,600 in funding. This is well below the average funding package of at least \$9,000 in many programs**. Put simply then, any new Collective Agreement must guarantee at least this average in order to ensure funding packages aren't eroded over time and that the Employer's proposed minimum hour guarantee cannot become a maximum. Further, all members with non-unionized Research Assistantships must be guaranteed that they will not have this funding clawed back as a result of the Employer's present offer.



Finally, in terms of Unit 2 job security, **the Employer has put forward a reasonable Long Service Teaching Stream (LSTA) proposal**, their latest “pass” confirming their acceptance of the basic principle that all existing and future LSTAs be renewable every three years on an on-going basis. What has **yet to be worked out, however, is both the level of additional compensation for these positions and the precise nature of the review process** to be undertaken as part of any given application for renewal.

On **“conversions” (tenure-track promotions) and “minimum entitlement”** (minimum work guarantees for those who have worked 2+ years at York), however, the situation is **much less promising**. There has been **absolutely no movement** on these issues. Indeed, the Employer has been downright evasive on these topics, sometimes claiming financial hardship and other times pulling out any number of “principled positions” to avoid confronting the issue head on. To give you but a small taste of the frustration we’ve faced in these areas, in response to their concern that conversions are too expensive in this financial climate, **we countered with an old proposal originally put forward by a former CUPE Member who now sits on YUFA’s Executive: why not use a formula that links the number of conversions to the number of yearly YUFA hires?** Their reply: *CUPE Members can always apply for tenure-track positions through the regular channels (this, despite the fact that the Employer has acknowledged that CUPE Unit 2 Members are often unjustly denied tenure-track jobs due to long-standing departmental tensions stemming from the precarity of contract work)*. Given that we are now but a few days from the April 12<sup>th</sup> bargaining deadline, the Employer needs to stop end-running these issues and instead engage in substantive negotiations on these matters.

Overall, then, while we have made **important and meaningful progress** at the table on **some issues** in the last few days, we must keep in mind that **much of this falls outside of the priority areas as approved by the Membership on February 8<sup>th</sup>**. While we are excited to see the long-standing issue of clawbacks addressed, increased paramedical and EHB Fund coverage, and movement in terms of the renewability of LSTAs, there is still much work to be done in the areas of post-residency fees, conversions, a minimum entitlement for Unit 2 members, and Unit 3 parity. For example, on the **issue of Post-Residency fees**, the Employer remains opposed to the principle itself, preferring to speak in terms of small (e.g. \$100-\$150) across-the-board Tuition Rebate (aka “Graduate Funding Assistance”) increases rather than a Post-Residency Rebate. While we would of course never turn down an increase to the GFA, this does not address the fact that upper year graduate students taking no classes, and who actively contribute to York research projects and funding, pay the same tuition as those taking a full course load.

**We must see more movement in these priority areas and we will continue to push the Employer on these issues in these final days of bargaining before the April 12<sup>th</sup> deadline.** Members are reminded of the **Special General Membership Meeting on April 12 from 11am-2pm** (although members may well vote to extend the meeting). Location: **Curtis Lecture Halls I and L** (notes will be on the doors re which one, but two are booked so we have overflow space).

