



QUFA VOICES

Your Queen's University Faculty Association Newsletter

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EDITOR'S VOICE

Promoting Public Postsecondary

QUFA participated in two social-media campaigns this past month to draw attention to the importance of strong, publicly funded postsecondary institutions

By Robert G. May
Editor, QUFA Voices

This past month, QUFA participated in two important social-media campaigns to spread the word about the importance of maintaining a strong public education system in Canada and in Ontario: the Canadian Association of University Teachers' (CAUT) "Unlock Education" campaign and the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations' "Strong Universities, Strong Ontario" campaign.

CAUT: "Unlock Education"

CAUT's "Unlock Education" campaign aims to emphasize the positive social impacts of postsecondary education in Canada, and to draw attention to the threats that postsecondary institutions are currently facing. "Unlock Education" is organized around four pillars:

- **Making college and university affordable for everyone:** Postsecondary education should be accessible to everyone in

QUFA IMAGES

QUFA in Solidarity



Micheline Waring

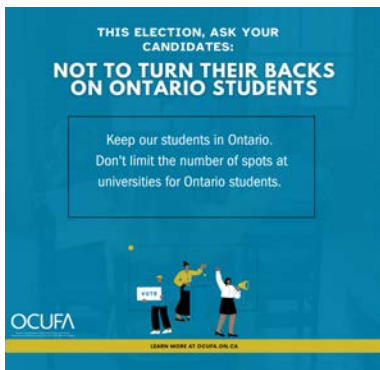
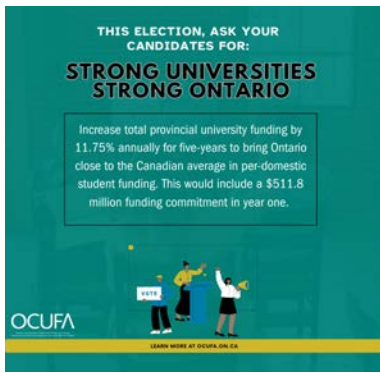
QUFA Members stood in solidarity with campus CUPE unions as they rallied in front of Richardson Hall last month. QUFA congratulates the campus CUPE locals on signing new agreements. We appreciate all your hard work and solidarity! We now turn our attention to supporting USW 2010 and PSAC 901, whose members will be in strike position on Monday 10 March 2025. For updates on campus union solidarity, please visit the Unity Council Web site: <https://unitycouncil.ca>.

Canada, but increasingly high tuition fees are contributing to the affordability crisis in Canada and placing postsecondary education out of reach to many Canadians.

- **Promoting the freedom to think, to teach, and to learn:** Postsecondary education institutions should be places where researchers, teachers, and

students can conduct their research, teaching, and learning without interference from governments, corporations, or other entities.

- **Including new people and new perspectives:** A core belief of postsecondary education institutions is that they should be a space for debating new and different ideas, even ideas with



A selection of graphics produced by OCUFA and shared on QUFA's and other faculty associations' social-media channels to promote the "Strong Universities, Strong Ontario" campaign.

which some constituents may disagree. Postsecondary institutions in Canada should continue to be places where assumptions and understandings are challenged by a diversity of viewpoints.

- **Cultivating universities and colleges we can rely on:** Postsecondary education plays an important role in the quality of Canadians' lives, but a lack of government investment has compromised the quality of postsecondary institutions and placed their future at risk, a dangerous trend that should be reversed.

A federal election will take place sometime later this year. As the federal candidates begin to articulate their policies on postsecondary education, CAUT will continue to develop their "Unlock Education" campaign to remind Canadians of the value of a high-quality, accessible, and publicly funded postsecondary education system. QUFA Members who wish to keep abreast of the campaign can join the mailing list, receive updates, and access online resources via CAUT's "Unlock Education" Web site:

<https://education2025.ca>

QUFA will also continue to spread the word about CAUT's "Unlock Education" campaign via our social-media channels.

OCUFA: "Strong Universities, Strong Ontario"

In the lead-up to the provincial election this past month, OCUFA launched its "Strong Universities, Strong Ontario" campaign to advocate for better postsecondary-education policies in this province. "Strong Universities, Strong Ontario" is organized around five main recommendations:

- **To strengthen funding for universities:** The provincial government should increase total provincial university funding to bring Ontario close to the Canadian average in per-domestic student funding. Ontario universities boost GDP by nearly \$30 billion. Every \$1 invested in postsecondary education generates a positive economic return of \$1.36.
- **To create resilient, affordable communities:** The provincial government should convert more loans into grants to provide incentives for domestic students to study in Ontario, to ensure we do not lose the best and brightest talent.
- **To invest long-term in Northern Ontario:** The provincial government should double and make permanent the Northern Ontario Grant for Universities to reflect the immense contributions of Ontario's Northern universities and their unique costs.
- **To keep our students in Ontario:** The provincial government should create more spots and not limit the number of spots at universities for Ontario students.
- **To stop the "gigification" of teaching and provide stable, permanent jobs:** The provincial government should end the precarious work crisis on campus by introducing an updated funding model that allows universities to commit long-term to stable, permanent employment for contract faculty members.

OCUFA also compiled various useful election resources—such as a postsecondary education "report card" on each Ontario political party and a list of how candidates voted on

SOCIAL MEDIA

Access QUFA Online

QUFA Members can interact online with QUFA in many different ways!

QUFA's online and social-media resources contain a wealth of information about your faculty association, including upcoming events, information about the collective agreement, news items of interest, and more. Follow us!

QUFA Web Site



www.qufa.ca

QUFA on Facebook



www.facebook.com/qufapage

QUFA on Instagram



www.instagram.com/qufagram

issues germane to postsecondary education—to help members make an informed decision on election day and to send a message to their candidates at Queen's Park to reprioritize postsecondary education in Ontario.

One day of the campaign—24 February 2025—was set aside to amplify the problem of the “gigfication” of teaching in Ontario postsecondary institutions. For many contract faculty, “part-time” teaching is not their side job: it is their only employment and their sole source of income. OCUFA therefore advocates:

- hiring contract faculty into permanent positions to create more good jobs on our campuses and allow them to invest in their local economies, and
- reforming the Employment Standards Act language to include equal pay for work of equivalent value for workers in the province, including contract faculty, using a pro-rata system.

QUFA was proud to help promote these resources to our Members via our social-media channels. More information about OCUFA's “Strong Universities, Strong Ontario” campaign can be found on OCUFA's Web site:

<https://ocufa.on.ca/campaigns/ontario-election-2025/>

Even though the Ontario election is over, we can still advocate for a stronger, more accessible public postsecondary education system in this province. QUFA will continue to share opportunities and resources for such advocacy, from OCUFA and other stakeholders, across our social media channels as they arise. So stay tuned!

Robert G. May can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

GET INVOLVED

QUFA Executive Nominations Are Now Open!

This year's Nominations Committee comprises:

- **Kayll Lake** (Chair and Past President)
- **Lorena Jessop** (Executive Committee Member and Continuing Adjunct)
- **Dan Cohen** (Council Member)
- **Trisha Lawson** (Council Member)
- **Diane Beauchemin** (General Member)
- **Susan Lord** (General Member)

The Executive positions up for nomination or election this year, per the cycle outlined in the QUFA Constitution (Article 9.2.6) are:

- Vice President
- President
- Chair of the Political Action and Communications Committee (PACC)
- Term Adjunct Representative
- Member at Large (one of two positions)
- Health and Safety Representative
- Chair of Council (to be elected by Council in March or April)
- The Past President is appointed in this round

In addition, there is an off-cycle vacancy for a Continuing Adjunct Representative.

If you are interested in standing for election or you know of people interested to serve, please get in touch with Kayll Lake (lakek@queensu.ca) or Leslie Jermyn (qufaed@queensu.ca).

PENSIONS

Commuted Value

Understanding Commuted Value Estimates in the University Pension Plan

By the University Pension Plan, Ontario

This article explains *commuted values* in the University Pension Plan (UPP) for QUFA Members. It includes a definition, a background on the calculation, best uses for estimates, and the value of making informed decisions when seeking a commuted value. A version of this article can be found on the UPP's Web site.¹

What You Need to Know About Your Pension Options

When it comes to planning for the future, understanding your pension options is key to making informed financial decisions. One concept that often raises questions is the lump-sum value of your pension, also known as Commuted Value (CV), and your ability to transfer it out of UPP. While it may seem like a straightforward number, CV calculations are complex, and fluctuate based on various factors. This article explains what a CV is, and why it may not always be the best tool for financial planning. Whether you're considering changing employers or simply exploring your options, here's what you need to know to make the best decision for your future.

ANNOUNCEMENT

QUFA Listservs

Our membership data lags by about a month, so if your status changes, it will take us a while to update our listservs and remove your e-mail address.

Please be patient, and please do reach out to us if you are still receiving e-mails two or three months after retiring or leaving Queen's.

What Is a Commuted Value?

The CV (also known as a "lump-sum value") is the total estimated value in today's dollars of the lifetime pension you have earned and would be payable at retirement. In other words, the CV is an estimate of the amount of money that must be set aside today to pay the pension you would begin to receive at retirement. As a defined benefit plan, UPP is designed to provide members with a monthly lifetime pension that is based on the benefit formula and not impacted by market fluctuations. A CV is a point-in-time determination that is based on a number of assumptions and dependent upon various factors that fluctuate over time. This means that a CV estimate provided today will not be an accurate representation of the retirement income a member will receive when they leave the plan. At that point, their actual entitlement could be significantly higher or lower than previously estimated.

GET INVOLVED

Caucus with QUFA!

QUFA is currently seeking Chairs and members for the following QUFA Caucuses:

- New Faculty Caucus
- Caregivers Caucus

Please contact PACC Chair Vanessa E. Thompson (vt25@queensu.ca) if you are interested in getting involved!

How Are CVs Calculated?

CVs are calculated using a complex actuarial formula that takes into account many factors, including the member's age at time of calculation, assumed retirement age, pension earned to date, mortality rates, and indexation rates, among others. One assumption that has a particularly significant impact is the interest rates, which are based on government and corporate bond yields. CVs have an inverse relationship with monthly interest rates: when interest rates increase, the CV decreases, and vice versa. This is because the CV represents the amount of money you would need to invest today to pay the promised pension benefit in the future. When interest rates are high, it is assumed less money is needed to invest today, as it will earn more interest between now and the time you retire.

QUFA VOICES February 2025 (Volume 20, Number 6, Issue 124)

QUFA Voices is published by the Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA), 9 St Lawrence Avenue, Kingston, Ontario, K7L 3N6, Canada (qufa@queensu.ca). It is distributed electronically to all QUFA Members via the QUFA-NEWSLETTER-L listserv. Past issues are archived on the QUFA Web site at <https://www.qufa.ca/voices/>.

QUFA Voices publishes QUFA-related news and information for QUFA Members and provides QUFA Members with a forum to express their QUFA-related ideas and opinions. We want to hear from you! Please send your QUFA-related story ideas, news items, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, photographs, and other submissions to the editor.

QUFA Voices is edited by Robert G. May. He can be reached at mayr@queensu.ca.

CV Estimates from UPP

As the plan administrator, UPP is committed to providing members with estimates for their monthly lifetime pension, reflecting our defined benefit pension promise. CV calculations are only available once an eligible member terminates their membership. Here's why CV estimates aren't offered more broadly and why they may not be the best tool to rely on:

- **Accuracy:** CV estimates are only representative of a lump sum payable in lieu of a future lifetime pension to a member terminating in the month of the calculation. The retirement income provided by the CV may be either greater or less than the pension payments that the member would have received if they retired from the plan. Additionally, because the CV calculation relies on many factors—including interest rates that change monthly—an estimate may not accurately represent the future value of your pension. Relying on an estimated CV can sometimes lead members to make financial decisions that don't align with the true long-term value of their lifetime pension.
- **Intended use:** CV estimates can be misleading when used for financial planning or estate planning, as the value isn't guaranteed and could be significantly higher or lower, depending on the factors at the time of membership termination or death. Similarly, CV estimates should not be used for family-law matters. The pension value calculated for equalization purposes when a marriage ends is based on regulatory requirements specific to family law.

- **Eligibility:** While members are always entitled to receive a lifetime pension, they may not be eligible for a CV transfer when they terminate membership. Eligibility depends on factors such as age at the time of termination and the provisions of the plan.

Note on eligibility: As part of the transition provisions when the Queen's University Pension Plan joined UPP, Queen's University members retained extended portability rights up until 30 June 2031. This means that when a member terminates UPP plan membership, they retain the ability to transfer out the CV of their pre-conversion pension up until the end of the year they turn age 71. Effective 1 July 2031, only members who terminate prior to age 55 or with a "small pension" can transfer the CV of their pension out of the Plan.²

Making an Informed Financial Decision

Transferring your CV out of the Plan when you terminate your UPP membership is an irrevocable decision. That's why it's essential to carefully evaluate your options before making any decisions about your pension and retirement. Consider the following key factors before deciding to transfer your CV out of the Plan:

- Your comfort level with making investment decisions, as this may impact the performance of your retirement savings.
- Your funds may be subject to market volatility depending on how they are invested.
- You may be required to pay additional fees to the receiving financial institution based on the parameters of your account.
- Transferring your benefit out of the Plan as a lump-sum amount can have significant tax implications that you should consider carefully.

ANNOUNCEMENT Endpoint Protection

Please visit the January 2025 issue of QUFA Voices to read more about your options with respect to using Endpoint Protection on your work and other devices:

<https://qufa.ca/voices>

- By keeping your pension with UPP and becoming a deferred member when you leave your UPP-participating employer, you retain the valuable benefits of a UPP pension in retirement. These include a pension paid for life, inflation protection adjustments to help your pension keep up with the rising cost of living in retirement, and comprehensive survivor benefits to protect your loved ones. These benefits are difficult to replicate when investing on your own.

UPP's pension experts can help you explore your options and support you through these important life decisions. If you have any questions about your pension, contact UPP Member Services via phone or the myUPP Member Portal³ to connect with a pension expert.

Notes

¹<https://myupp.ca>

²<https://myupp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UPP-Member-Booklet-Queens-Quick-Guide.pdf>

³<https://uppprodms.v3locity.com/>

The University Pension Plan Ontario can be reached at 1.833.627.7877.

FYI

Queen's-QUFA Conflict Resolution and Education Service

The Queen's-QUFA Conflict Resolution and Education Service helps address conflicts between QUFA Members and other members of the Queen's community

By Meaghan Welfare
**Queen's-QUFA Conflict Resolution
and Education Service**

The Queen's-QUFA Conflict Resolution and Education Service (QQ-CRES) continues to provide services to Faculty, Librarians, and Archivists who are experiencing workplace conflict, as well as to non-QUFA members who are experiencing conflict with a QUFA Member.

QQ-CRES offers a wide range of conflict-resolution services:

- **Mediation:** Mediation is a confidential process in which a trained practitioner helps disputing parties resolve their work-related problems or conflicts. It is a non-judgemental and voluntary process that helps parties find mutually satisfactory resolutions to their conflicts.
- **Conflict Coaching:** Conflict Coaching is a confidential process in which a conflict coach assists an individual to develop proficiency in addressing and resolving specific conflicts, or preparing for an upcoming difficult discussion.
- **Group Processes:** Members of a working team engage in and resolve conflict situations in a safe, open, and confidential forum. The purpose of the process is to identify and discuss issues that are impacting the group and to work towards a

News from: **PSAC 901** **YOUR GRADUATE STUDENT WORKERS ARE PREPARING FOR A STRIKE!**

What is Happening?

PSAC 901, the Union representing TAs, TFs, and RAs, is bargaining their Collective Agreement this year with Queen's University. This year is unique because nearly all unions at Queen's (e.g. CUPE, USW) are bargaining simultaneously.

The 901 bargaining team presented demands to the employer (i.e., Queen's University), drawing from survey data from over 500 members. Our TOP FIVE Bargaining priorities are as follows (in no particular order):

- A Living Wage/ Stipend
- Tuition Minimization
- Affordable Housing Access
- Funding/ Labour Ratio
- Paid Hours to Learn Course Content

The employer's bargaining team has continuously approached the bargaining table with poorly considered proposals. In addition, they have been increasingly disrespectful, arriving hours late past agreed upon meeting times, and not returning after breaks without notice to our team, among other issues.

As a result, Graduate Student workers may potentially call a strike mandate vote, and even **go on strike**, in the coming weeks.

Strike FAQ:

What is a Strike Mandate?

A Strike Mandate is a democratic vote by union members authorizing the bargaining team to call a strike, if needed. This does not mean a strike will happen; rather, it bolsters the union's position by demonstrating collective readiness to escalate if talks fail.

What could a strike look like?

Graduate Student workers could collectively stop their labour.

This means:

- TAs may not perform TA duties (e.g., grading)
- TFs may not continue teaching / running their courses
- RAs may not perform research duties outside of their thesis / dissertation.

Outside of a strike action, some graduate students may even choose to pause thesis research and other student related work that also contributes to the university's value and prestige.

These actions could have significant implications for Faculty, Undergraduate Students, Staff, and more. Ideally, we do not want to go on strike, but we are preparing to do so, if needed.

Page 1/2

Graduate-student workers who are members of PSAC 901 are preparing for a strike. QUFA Members can stay up to date on strike preparations by reading the flyer prepared by PSAC 901 and included as a supplement in last month's issue of QUFA Voices (www.qufa.ca/voices). You can also find the latest news and information on the PSAC 901 Web site (<https://psac901.org>).

resolution that meets the needs of all parties.

of an identified gap in knowledge and/or skills within a group.

- **Training:** Conflict-management training provides participants with conflict-resolution theory and skills to assist in effectively addressing conflict. Conflict management training is highly interactive and practice-based. Training can be given for general education purposes, or as a result

All services are voluntary, confidential, and free for the user. Please contact me directly for a consultation, to learn more about our services, or if you have any questions.

Meaghan Welfare can be reached at 613.453.5728.



**Divesting from Austerity:
Solidarity and Equity in Labour Struggles**

AI, Austerity, and Pedagogy

**Generating Change in Postsecondary
Education Through Data**

This panel will explore the intersection of AI, austerity politics, and pedagogy in postsecondary education. As AI and data-driven approaches continue to reshape educational landscapes, we will examine how universities are using data to influence resource allocation decisions and teaching practices, and to justify cost-cutting measures. By challenging the assumption of “neutral” data, the panel will explore how data and AI impact not only educational policies, but also pedagogy, curriculum, and student engagement amid economic pressures.



Organized by Norma Möllers and Pinar Tuzcu on behalf of PACC

Panellists: Dan Cohen (Department of Geography), Milka Njoroge (PSAC 901 Bargaining Team), Christina Pilgrim (former PSAC 901 Information Officer), Rebecca Sweetman (Centre for Teaching and Learning)

Friday 7 March 2025

2.00 p.m. - 3.30 p.m.

**George Teves Room, University Club
or via Zoom**

Please RSVP to ep43@queensu.ca by Thurs. 6 Mar. 2025 for Zoom link



I SUPPORT STEELWORKERS

Support Staff at Queen's will hit the picket line on March 10th - unless Queen's agrees to give them a fair deal.

Steelworkers are asking for:

Job Security - after facing massive layoffs, especially in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Workload Protections: 81.2% of Steelworkers have experienced an increase in their workload (without an increase in their wages) over the last 6 months.

Cost of Living Increase: Since 2022, the cost of living in Canada has risen nearly 14%. Steelworkers have received annual salary increases of only 1% since 2022.



Steelworkers support students, so I support Steelworkers!