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PRESIDENT'S VOICE

A Cautionary Tale of Hope

Recent government announcements offer some hope for all of us, but how Queen's Administration will respond has the potential to sow dangerous seeds of division

By Karen Rudie
President, QUFA

A little over a month ago, we were pleasantly surprised by the Ontario Government's announcement of increased funding to universities and colleges. The key features of this announcement are:

- increased funding to postsecondary education (\$6.4 billion);
- funding for in-demand fields (which at universities means STEM-focused programs);
- lifting the tuition freeze (but still capping annual increases); and
- a significant decrease in what percentage of OSAP is grants (versus loans).

The increased funding still leaves Ontario institutions with the lowest funding per student in the country, but the announcement signals a significant move in the right direction by the Ontario Government. Now we need to see a real signal change at Queen's. This is going to be a turning

SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming General Meetings

Special General Meeting on Bargaining

A Special General Meeting has been scheduled to discuss the bargaining mandate:

Wednesday 8 April 2026
10.00 a.m.
via Zoom

Regular Spring General Meeting

QUFA's regular Spring General Meeting is scheduled for the following time, date, and location:

Friday 24 April 2026
1.00 p.m.
via Zoom

More information, notifications, and agendas will be sent as they become available. Please contact Elizabeth Polnicki (ep43@queensu.ca) for Zoom links.

point for our Board of Trustees and for the senior leadership: they have the opportunity to make a radical change in course. Will the increased funding mitigate the austerity measures they've imposed?

Lifting the tuition freeze is a mixed bag: it will bring in more funding to universities, but it will be on the backs of students. This kind of decision is rife with the possibility of politically dividing students and faculty members. Queen's senior leadership has indicated that the change in tuition will be small and will be offset by increased support for students in financial need. However, given the shift in ratio of OSAP grants versus loans, graduating students may still be saddled with huge loans (as their American counterparts are).

On a recent trip to Brazil, where students do not pay tuition, I learned that low-income students often work factory shifts overnight to afford their education. We as faculty members do not gain overall if our students are falling asleep in classes just to be able to afford to be in our classes. Currently, we are far from a world in which all of our lower-income students are working throughout the night to be able to attend Queen's, but we know already that more and more Queen's students take on part-time jobs to support themselves. Do we really want to move further in that direction? Student struggles are our struggles, too—morally and pragmatically. As we head into bargaining our next Collective Agreement, you can be sure that a division between students and faculty

ANNOUNCEMENT

Nominations Are Open!

This year, the following Executive Committee positions are open for nomination and election:

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Grievance Chair
- Joint Committee to Administer the Collective Agreement (JCAA) Co-Chair
- Equity Representative
- Continuing Adjunct Representative
- Library and Archives Representative
- Member at Large (1 position)

The term of service is two years, and you can learn more about the work required on the QUFA Web site:

<https://qufa.ca/people/#exe>

Our Release Time Policy outlines which positions include half course release:

https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025_11-QUFA-Policies-Protocols.pdf

If you are interested in nominating yourself or another Member, please e-mail QUFA Vice President and Chair of the Nominations Committee Melissa Houghtaling (m.houghtaling@queensu.ca) or QUFA Executive Director Leslie Jermyn (qufaed@queensu.ca).

will be detrimental to obtaining a fair and good outcome.

Provincial funding for in-demand fields dovetails with what we're seeing in the Canada Impact+ Research Chairs, and also the

ANNOUNCEMENT

Bargaining Survey 2

The QUFA Bargaining Team invites you to participate in Bargaining Survey 2. This survey is informed by Members' responses to Survey 1 (from Nov.-Dec. 2025). All responses are voluntary and anonymous, and will be used to inform QUFA's bargaining priorities. The survey takes approximately 3-5 minutes to complete.

https://queensu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cUqRQ1MtbDwv5dk

particular fields that are being targeted by the QNS positions at Queen's—namely, those with an emphasis on science and engineering. As an engineering professor, I can attest to the employment demand for engineering graduates. However, we lose something fundamental if we think of a university as merely a training ground for future jobs in Canada. What we offer here is a university that is both research intensive and broad. Here, we can have a professor teaching mathematics and poetry. We can have a postdoc who became a Member of the Order of Canada for her work on mixing physics and digital art. We can have an engineering professor who plays in the local symphony orchestra. We can do this because (so far) we value the arts. The changes we are seeing in the Faculty of Arts and Science suggest that Queen's is devaluing the humanities and hyper-valuing engineering and computing. Aside from the damage it will do to Queen's and future students, this division has the potential to split our Membership and, again, weaken our bargaining strength.

The Canada Impact+ Research Chairs will lead to hiring leading international researchers whose

primary duty will be research. Our Members benefit from the infusion of new ideas and collaborations with researchers who are internationally renowned experts. Queen's Administration has indicated that the Research Chairs will likely be relieved of undergraduate teaching and have minimal service responsibilities. Taking individuals out of the classroom is a disservice to our students. In fact, the sign of a top institution is having top researchers in the classroom. Further, undergraduate teaching has already been hit hard by austerity measures that have increased class sizes, reduced teaching-assistant support for student learning, and reduced staff support for teaching. Will these trends intensify if new faculty members draw down unit resources without contributing to core teaching functions? What will happen to unit morale if a two-tier system is allowed to emerge with only a small minority enjoying the time and support to allow them to reach their research potential? Again, this is a pivotal point where the decisions about how to use Impact+ funds can either further divide the institution or allow us all to thrive.

These recent provincial and federal announcements offer some hope for universities and for our Members. But the ways in which the funds are tied by government criteria and the subsequent choices Queen's Administration makes in the use of the funds have the potential to radically shift the essence of our University and to sow dangerous divisions within the Queen's community. We should be grateful for the infusion of funds but wary of the value system that comes with them: students deserve an affordable education that doesn't burden them with unbearable debt, and all faculty deserve respect and support for all aspects of their work.

Karen Rudie can be reached at karen.rudie@queensu.ca.

QUFA EVENTS

Bargaining at Queen's

A workshop on the history of our struggles as we prepare for a new round of bargaining

Vanessa E. Thompson
Chair, QUFA-PACC

As part of the QUFA lecture series “Divesting from Austerity: Solidarity and Equity in Labour Struggles,” PACC organized an online bargaining workshop on 25 February 2026. Twenty-six people attended the online workshop and engaged in a lively discussion on communication strategies, mobilization efforts, cross-union solidarity, and bargaining goals. Kimiko Inouye (OCUFA Director of Collective Bargaining Services), Jordan Morelli (QUFA Chief Negotiator), Ayca Tomac (QUFA Equity Representative), and Melissa Houghtaling (QUFA Vice-President) each gave brief presentations at the workshop. PACC member Pinar Tuzcu and PACC Chair Vanessa E. Thompson moderated.

After a brief recap by Melissa Houghtaling on the history of bargaining at Queen's with a focus on Adjunct struggles and the fierce organizing efforts of Adjunct Members, the three speakers gave their presentations. Jordan Morelli explained the process and timeline of bargaining, the role of the Bargaining Team, and possible avenues and outcomes of the bargaining process. Ayca Tomac introduced the equity approach of QUFA and our Bargaining Team, indicating that this approach

goes beyond employment and hiring equity, but includes the necessity of shared and equal resources, as well as a comprehensive framework that focuses on and prioritizes the most exploited and vulnerable Members in our union. Kimiko Inouye introduced a Member-engaged approach to bargaining that focuses on the building of collective power and forms of two-way communication (therefore respecting a union's base not only as a crucial factor for mobilization but also as a collective agent). She stressed how important it is to activate the base early on, to create low-barrier feedback and communication channels, and to build cross-union solidarity to enhance support for bargaining. She further explained how some faculty associations across the province have used this approach successfully and referred to the Brock University Faculty Association (BUFA), which negotiated an increase in faculty complement—a major bargaining success—as a crucial example. This shows how much unions can win if we strategize and plan well ahead.

After the presentations, the moderators asked questions about Members' information, participation, and mobilization to generate discussion, brainstorming, and the workshopping of ideas. The audience jumped right in, and we discussed questions of communications and political education, how it is important to draw on “older” forms of communication—such as door-to-door conversations and in-person

conversations in the hallway and at lunch—but also develop “newer” communication strategies—such as short videos (like the ones produced by BUFA¹). It was mentioned that *QUFA Voices* and *QUFA Digest* are already powerful methods of communication and mobilization that we can further build on, as is an active PACC that organizes events like these for our Members. Further, possible risks were discussed, such as a late timing of a possible strike vote. Participants at the workshop were very enthusiastic, emphasizing the crucial role that a strong Membership approach plays and flagging the importance of cross-union solidarity, as well as messaging that resonates with our students. “Working conditions are learning conditions,” as Kimiko Inouye stressed. All in all, the workshop reminded Members that labour can win if we are willing to struggle for it!

Special thanks to Elizabeth Polnicky and Pinar Tuzcu for helping set up the event. The next event of the series is entitled “Surveillance @ Work: Forms, Dimensions, and Resistance,” and will take place at the University Club and via Zoom on 25 March 2026 from 2.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Please see the poster at the end of this issue of *QUFA Voices* for more information.

Note

¹<https://bufa.ca/about/2026-bargaining/>

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QUFA VOICES March 2026 (Volume 21, Number 6, Issue 132)

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.

CAMPAIGNS

Fairness for Contract Faculty

QUFA participated in OCUFA's Social Media Day of action to shine a light on the precarity and vulnerability of contract academic staff at Ontario universities

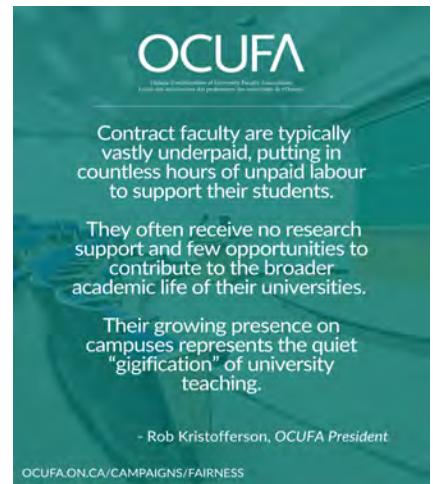
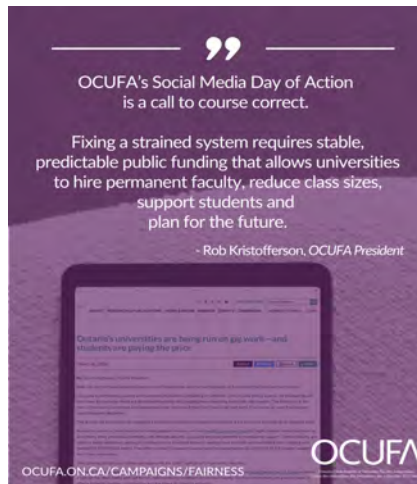
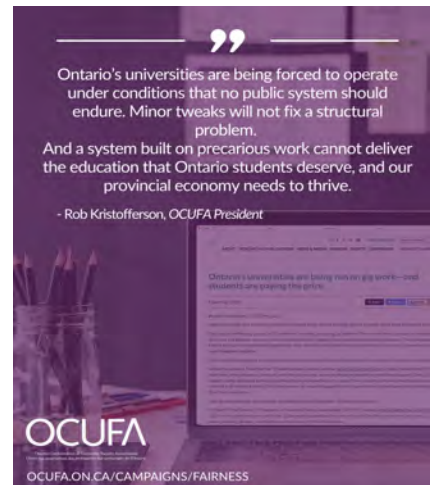
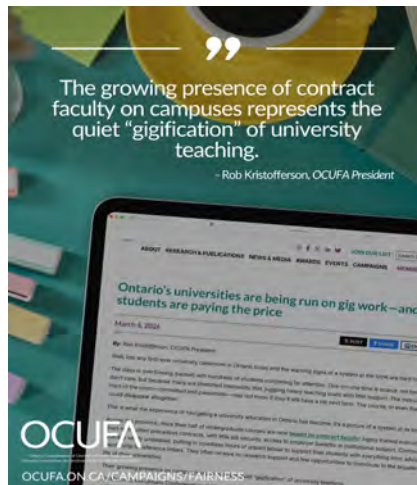
By Robert G. May
Editor, QUFA Voices

On 11 March 2026, QUFA participated in a Social Media of Action organized by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), to call attention to “the quiet ‘gigification’ of university teaching” in Ontario.

In a press release issued ahead of the event,¹ OCUFA President Rob Kristofferson pointed out the growing reliance on contract faculty to shoulder the burden of university teaching in Ontario's universities:

Across the province, more than half of undergraduate courses are now taught by contract faculty: highly trained instructors hired on short-term, often precarious contracts, with little job security, access to employer benefits or institutional support. Contract faculty are typically vastly underpaid, putting in countless hours of unpaid labour to support their students with everything from advising and mentorship to reference letters. They often receive no research support and few opportunities to contribute to the broader academic life of their universities.

Even though contract faculty are highly “skilled educators and researchers who care deeply about their students and their profession,” the shift to contract faculty to teach such a large proportion of university classes has pushed the “system [to] its breaking point” because even the most proficient contract faculty



OCUFA

QUFA shared these OCUFA-produced graphics across its social-media platforms on the 11 March 2026 Social Media Day of Action to call attention to the increasing reliance on contract faculty at Ontario universities, and to issue a call for greater fairness and job security for this precarious and vulnerable group of academic workers.

member is working under vulnerable and precarious conditions.

The problem is not with contract faculty, but with the Ontario government. “Despite paying among the highest tuition fees in Canada,” Kristofferson notes, “Ontario funds its universities less than any other province in Canada,” an imbalance that results in the imposition of austerity measures and other trade-offs that shortchange everyone, including students and contract faculty themselves.

OCUFA's Social Media Day of Action was “a call” to the Ontario

government “to course correct,” to build on its recent funding announcements by affirming its commitment to a strong, publicly funded university sector with investments that put students first and treat contract faculty fairly.

Note

¹<https://ocufa.on.ca/ontarios-universities-are-being-run-on-gig-work-and-students-are-paying-the-price/>

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GRIEVANCE CORNER

The “Burden” of the Collective Agreement

When Senior Administrators complain about the CA, are they really just complaining about collegial governance, academic freedom, and fair working conditions for QUFA Members?

By Karen Sisson
Grievance Officer, QUFA

QUFA has received various reports from the Membership about Queen’s administrators expressing their frustration with the rights and procedures enshrined in the Queen’s-QUFA Collective Agreement (CA). Such representations tend to occur at Department and Faculty meetings or in private conversations, and they share the common intimation that the CA is an obstacle the Administration must strive to overcome. The common theme is that the University would be entitled to nimbly and creatively respond to drastic fiscal “austerity” measures if it weren’t for those pesky CA rights and procedures.

While it is certainly true that a collective bargaining régime limits the exercise of management rights, presenting those limitations as an unreasonable burden overlooks the fact that the CA is a negotiated contract. Each article is the product of extensive negotiations between two sophisticated parties who are represented at the bargaining table by skilled and experienced negotiation teams with ample access to both resources and expert guidance. The result is a carefully crafted document that is intended to reflect the parties’ agreements and shared intentions.

When members of the Administration frame the CA as an obstacle to overcome, one wonders exactly what and whose needs would be served if such terms did not exist. What protections would remain to prohibit the adoption of corporate-style and

ANNOUNCEMENT Benefits Profile

Last year, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) hired Eckler to conduct a review of Faculty Association benefits.

You can view the analysis of QUFA’s benefits on the QUFA Web site:

<https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026-02-27-QUFA-Benefit-Profile-2025.pdf>

authoritarian management practices? Would collegial assessment procedures and unit-level consultation continue to be essential components of appointments, promotion, and tenure processes? What would workload assignments and class schedules look like? What steps would the Administration take to ensure protection of privacy on personal and workplace devices? Which forms of scholarly work would be supported with University resources? How would Adjunct faculty members gain job security? Would information about senior administrative appointments be shared with faculty members?

It is said that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. When it comes to answering the questions above, recent and ongoing interactions between QUFA and the Administration provide some important clues about how working conditions would change in the absence of a CA, and it is not promising.

The recent survey put out by the Administration about adopting evening and weekend class schedules provides another clue. Many Members were quick to observe that the survey did not provide any option

ANNOUNCEMENT Grievance Update

A new association grievance has been filed by QUFA in response to information about a new employer policy.

The Faculty Relations Office has recently claimed that the Administration has adopted a blanket policy prohibiting the use of any recorded lectures at any time (even once or twice per month) when a course is deemed to be an “in person” course.

QUFA’s position is that this blanket policy is unreasonable because it conflicts with Collective Agreement obligations and the Human Rights Code, and that the alleged policy demonstrates a failure to meet both the procedural and substantive elements of the employer’s Duty to Accommodate.

to indicate no interest in adopting extended workdays and workweeks. What do such tactics reveal about the current Administration’s approach to collegial governance, equity, and transparency?

The CA is a contract that provides a record of duly negotiated terms between an employer and the bargaining agent. The existence of the CA does not prevent change; it prevents *unilateral* change and abuses of power. When members of the Administration complain about the CA, they are really complaining about faculty members maintaining negotiating power that is essential to protecting collegial governance, academic freedom, and fair working conditions.

Karen Sisson can be reached at ks233@queensu.ca.



Divesting from Austerity:
Solidarity and Equity in Labour Struggles
Surveillance @ Work
Forms, Dimensions, and Resistance

In a moment marked by the authoritarian appropriation of technology, expanding austerity, and intensifying political repression, surveillance practices and extractive logics are converging in unprecedented ways. This panel examines how Big Data, AI, and digital monitoring systems are undermining privacy and academic freedom as well as transforming labour relations—extracting value from workers while deepening precarity within and across sectors.



Moderated by Vanessa E. Thompson and Pinar Tuzcu (QUFA-PACC)

Speakers: Rebeca Chen (Co-Lead Steward, PSAC 901), Hannah Johnston (Human Resources Management, York University) (to be confirmed), Carolyn Lamb, (School of Computing, Queen's University), Adam Molnar Sociology and Legal Studies, University of Waterloo), Vera Khovanskaya (Faculty of Information, University of Toronto)

Wednesday 25 March 2026
2.00 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.
George Teves Room (University Club) and via Zoom

Food and refreshments will be served
Please RSVP to ep43@queensu.ca by Mon. 23 Mar. 2026 for Zoom link or to attend in person

From algorithmic oversight in universities to performance scoring, the integration of AI in teaching and administrative tasks, and data-driven management on global platforms, digital systems increasingly structure how work is measured, evaluated, and controlled. These processes not only intensify labour and—in some cases—replace human work, but they also erode privacy, academic freedom, and professional autonomy. At the same time, the extractive practices of global tech corporations deepen vulnerabilities for workers across geographical and institutional contexts.

In this panel, we will examine how these dynamics operate and function, and we will explore possible forms of resistance. The discussion will consider legal dimensions, the integration of digital labour rights and anti-surveillance demands into collective agreements, and strategies for organizing within and beyond academic institutions. We will also explore forms of transnational worker solidarity against data extraction and algorithmic control, and for equity-informed governance of workplace technologies within and across sectors.

The panel will investigate the following questions:

How does digital monitoring and algorithmic management in universities connect to broader platform-based and global labour regimes?

In what ways do extractive data practices bind together precarity, surveillance, and the erosion of privacy and academic freedom?

What legal, collective, and technological strategies can workers mobilize to resist surveillance, protect privacy, and defend academic autonomy and labour integrity within as well as beyond academia?

