



Canadian Association of University Teachers  
Association canadienne des professeurs et professeurs d'université

May 7, 2009

To: CUPE 3906 and the Post-Doctoral Fellows comprising Unit 3

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to you to express CAUT's strong support for your efforts to secure a fair and appropriate first contract for the post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) employed by McMaster University. PDFs are an enormously important part of the professional academic work force and are responsible for a significant part of the research productivity upon which institutions like McMaster base their international reputations. It is a sorry fact of academic life that such highly qualified individuals are not generally afforded terms and conditions of employment commensurate with their education, talents, and research contributions.

This situation must change and, we are pleased to note, it does seem to be changing. The unionization of PDFs is gaining momentum at other top institutions in Canada and the United States, and PDFs are becoming increasingly assertive about being accorded appropriate salary, rights and status. The current negotiations at McMaster are among the first -- on either side of the border -- specifically addressing PDFs' employment conditions. Given McMaster's stature as a leading research institution, the collective agreement forged in Hamilton can be expected to have a significant impact on improved salary and appropriate recognition and rights of PDFs at similar institutions across Canada.

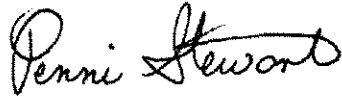
The Canadian Association of University Teachers which represents more than 65,000 academic and general staff at 121 universities and colleges urges all CUPE 3906 members to stand strongly behind their local in this difficult round of bargaining. PDFs must be guaranteed a base stipend that recognizes the value of their graduate education; they must be provided with reasonable cost-of-living adjustments so that their economic situation does not deteriorate over time; they must have access to reasonable benefits and leave provisions to be able to safeguard the health and well-being of themselves and their dependents; and they absolutely must be afforded the academic freedom necessary to guarantee the quality and integrity of their academic research.

We suspect that McMaster administration's intransigence during the course of these negotiations reflects a realization, similar to our own, of the broad significance of these negotiations. For too many years, Canadian universities have trafficked on the substandard remuneration of PDFs to underwrite other institutional activities and priorities. In fact, many Canadian universities have been reluctant to even acknowledge the fact that PDFs are their professional employees.


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It is time for that to end, and your solidarity and determination will ensure it will end at McMaster, and set a precedent for it ending elsewhere. CAUT will do all we can to support you.

Yours sincerely,



Penni Stewart  
President



James L. Turk  
Executive Director

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cc: John Berlinsky, President McMaster University Faculty Association