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**Sent by email (hard copy to follow by mail)**

May 3, 2009

Dr. Ilene Busch-Vishniac  
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)  
1280 Main Street West  
University Hall, Room 201  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8S4L8

**Re:** Concerns about treatment of PDF at the bargaining table

Dear Dr. Busch-Vishniac:

The members of CUPE local 3907 view McMaster University's treatment of its Post-Doctoral Fellows with grave concern for the principles of equity and the institution's commitment to developing the professional capacity of all of its personnel.

McMaster University should be committed to substantive justice in the manner in which it deals with its different stakeholders. However, this necessary principle and practice does not appear to extend to Post-Doctoral Fellows. Your bargaining team has proposed a base yearly full-time salary of \$25,000, or about \$13.75 per hour for these academic workers. Beware that this scheme would place Post-Doctoral Fellows at about \$15,000 below the average wage level at your institution. In *The Global Competitiveness Report 2008/2009*, Canada ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 134 countries on the brain drain phenomenon. Given the low wage rate that your organization is offering these academic workers, it is easy to understand why skilled and professional Canadians are fleeing this country for greener pastures.

McMaster's proposal, to freeze wages for three years will not help in solving the political problem of government underfunding and the enormous cost of operating a postsecondary institution. Business organizations are trying to solve their financial challenges on the backs of workers. Morally-speaking, this ought not to be the path of an institution of higher learning such as McMaster

University. These academic workers are willing to accept a modest 2% wage increase, which is 1% below the average wage settlement in the university sector. This willingness to accept less than other workers in the postsecondary sector should have been interpreted as a gesture to work with the university in this difficult economic period. This group of academic workers deserves a better response to their noble effort.

The provision of dental benefits, parental leave, professional development funds and protection of intellectual property rights are not outside of the current practice of McMaster University. Yet your bargaining team continues to deny equality of condition to Post-Doctoral Fellows on the preceding workplace benefits or rights.

The *Global Competitiveness Report* ranked Canada 19<sup>th</sup> on the extent of staff training on the “Higher education and training” pillar of global competitiveness. McMaster University’s unwillingness to provide its Post-Doctoral Fellows with adequate professional development funds will only contribute to Canada’s unenviable ranking among highly industrialized states for staff training and development. It is difficult to justify the treatment of Post-Doctoral Fellows like second-class organizational “citizens”. Surely, you can do better at the bargaining table.

CUPE Local 3907 fully supports the efforts of Local 3906 to negotiate a fair settlement for Post-Doctoral Fellows at McMaster University. CUPE 3906 can count on our local’s solidarity with the actions it takes to achieve substantive organizational justice for Post-Doctoral Fellows at the bargaining table.

Sincerely,

Ajamu Nangwaya, Chair External

Cc: Dr. Allison Sekular - Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ms. Lisa Newton, Legal Employee and Labour Relations  
Brother Jesse Payne, Staff Representative, CUPE Local 3906  
Sister Mary Ellen Campbell, President, CUPE Local 3906