

# APUO

ASSOCIATION DES PROFESSEUR(E)S DE L'UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

## **Message to University of Ottawa Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Dear Students,

As you know, the employer and the APUO have been in tense negotiations since March 2013. Despite the APUO's explicit requests for negotiations to continue as normal, the employer unilaterally triggered a legal process called conciliation that ended negotiations and created a situation where the university can lock us out as of August 8. In this context, the only thing the APUO could do was ask for a strike mandate from professors and librarians – since going on strike is the only way in these circumstances the APUO would be able to stop the employer from locking us out or unilaterally imposing new working conditions, including on teaching, research, tenure and promotion, as well as salaries and pensions.

Let us be very clear. We did not create, nor did we ask for, these negotiations to reach this stage. At every point, we requested that the employer allow normal bargaining to continue and they refused. We are in this position because the employer unilaterally used legal means to force an end to negotiations.

We are honored and grateful for the strong support that we have received from the Students Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO), the Graduate Students Association of the University of Ottawa (GSAED) as well as CUPE 2626 (representing teaching/research assistants) and all the other unions on campus. The speeches given by representatives on our July 31 meeting were inspiring and much appreciated.

The two parties will be meeting non-stop in mediation in the following days and we are confident that we will reach a fair and equitable agreement that promotes the quality of

education at the University of Ottawa and protects the rights of APUO members. That said, there is a risk that the employer may not be willing to agree to a fair deal, in which case the APUO may have to go on strike.

Let us assure you. We very clearly understand that going on strike is a very last resort. We know that it impacts and inconveniences students as well as APUO members and other parts of the university community. Lock-outs and strikes are serious steps which are costly to the employer, to employees and most importantly, all of those who we serve, the students.

The APUO will do everything in our power to minimize the potential impact on students. For example, although many faculty unions refuse to perform any supervisory duties of graduate students, the APUO has passed a policy that encourages APUO members to participate in previously scheduled MA and PhD thesis defenses. This policy also encourages APUO members to write reference letters for undergraduate or graduate students. We understand how crucial these duties and commitments are in terms of their consequences for individual students - and are aware how difficult they would be to reschedule/postpone.

That said, it is also true that in the case of a lock-out or a strike, normal operations of the university would cease. A lock-out or strike, for example, would mean that members of the APUO would no longer have access to their offices, labs, and other university facilities (with an exception to allow some APUO members access to their labs if necessary to maintain live experiments, equipment that needs daily attention, etc.). Professors and academic librarians will likely lose access to their university email and all of the facilities to which their employee status provides access (electronic library resources, databases and so forth). There would be no classes, librarian services, regular graduate supervision (excluding the exceptions above), etc.

We sincerely hope that this employer-created labour crisis does not lead to a disruption that affects our students. We believe we will be able to reach a fair negotiated settlement before August 8.

However, professors, academic librarians and students are the lifeblood of any university. We need to stand together in favour of the quality of education and fair working conditions at this institution. If we do this, we can build a better, more equitable university campus. We have been inspired by your support and endeavor to minimize the impact of a potential disruption on your academic year should labour action become necessary. And we hope that you will stand with us as we stand with you in your attempts to ensure greater accessibility of education for all students.

Sincerely,

The APUO Executive Committee

August 1, 2013.