

Friday, May 29, 2020

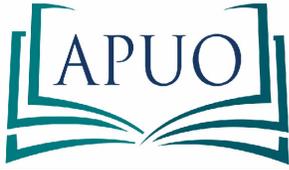
Jacques Frémont  
President and Vice Chancellor – Office of the President  
Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 212  
Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Dear President Frémont,

The Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO) is, by way of this letter, expressing its disagreement with the Central Administration's unprecedented step to request to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development a final offer vote by members of the Support Staff of the University of Ottawa (SSUO) bargaining unit, as a means to circumvent the collective bargaining process. In twenty years, it is only the fifth time a university makes such a request to force a vote rather than pursuing collegial negotiations. This is especially unwelcome and harmful in the midst of a pandemic, while employees have to manage with unprecedented challenges, cannot hold an in-person meeting, and will have to deal with the many issues related to electronic voting. Members of the support staff are colleagues with whom we work on a daily basis. We all very well know how excellent, professional, dedicated, and essential they are in the execution of our University's mandate. Therefore, their work should be recognized with fair compensation, comprehensive benefits, and great respect, and they should not have to accept the introduction of an "orphan clause" in their collective agreement to get such recognition.

As expressed previously during meetings and through various letters, we are extremely concerned by the number of SSUO positions that remain vacant. These vacancies download extra work and responsibilities on both support staff and APUO members, thus compromising our working conditions, and ultimately the execution of our University's mandate, as well as the health and safety of University personnel as a whole. The 2019-2020 academic year has been marked by a mental health crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to these challenging times, your administration has repeatedly promoted wellness and expressed a willingness to meet the needs of our community. The Central Administration's request to force a vote by SSUO members in the midst of a pandemic contradicts its commitment to improving the overall health and wellness of our community.

We understand that the passage of the Ford government's Bill 124 – the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* has been used as a pretext to limit fruitful negotiations between the SSUO and the Central Administration. Despite initially tabling and budgeting for compensation increases of 1.25%, 2% and 2% annually for the next three years, and notwithstanding the existence of provisions in the act that would allow the Central Administration to continue to deliver on these proposals, negotiations appear to have come to



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a halt. Considering the University's financial capacity to provide good working conditions to SSUO members, including fair wages that account for increases in the cost of living and a comprehensive benefits plan, the Central Administration's uncompromising approach appears very difficult to justify.

We once again express our full support for the SSUO and their members, and hope that the Central Administration will take steps to rectify this matter, and deliver a fair deal for support staff.

Sincerely,

Dimitri Karmis  
APUO President