



November 5, 2009

Dear TAs and RAs,

CUPE 3906, Unit 1 has agreed that you will have the opportunity to vote on the University's best contract offer. As a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant (in lieu), you have the right to vote on the contract offer, whether you have chosen to join the strike or continue to work during the strike. The vote will be decided by the majority of those who turn out to vote. It is important that every member of the bargaining unit participates to ensure the result reflects the true views of the entire bargaining unit.

Acceptance of the University's best offer will mean the end of the strike. Rejection of the offer means the strike will continue.

We believe the University's offer is fair, equitable, and balanced with improvements to salaries and benefits. We want to ensure that you have the information you need to decide for yourself. The full offer is available at http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/labour_relations/cupe_2.html

Monetary Offer - The University's offer has improved considerably since negotiations began.

Current Rates	University's Best Offer	Impact
Class A hourly rates (graduate TAs and RAs) \$38.00	Class A hourly rates (graduate TAs and RAs) \$39.40	\$1.40 per hour increase
Class B hourly rates (under-graduate TAs) \$20.75	Class B hourly rates (under-graduate TAs) \$22.15	\$ 1.40 per hour increase
Dental Plan – University pays per month per TA or RA \$23.75	Dental Plan – University pays per month per TA or RA \$26.75	Cost to TA/RA for single coverage drops by 26%
CUPE administered-benefit fund. University contributes annually \$150,000	CUPE administered-benefit fund. University contributes annually \$150,000	No decrease to University payment

TA and RA job opportunities

The University's proposal maintains the ability for Masters students past their second year of study and Ph.D. students in their 5th and 6th years of study to apply for TA and RA positions. While these positions are not guaranteed, there are many members of the CUPE bargaining unit in their 5th and 6th years who hold these roles. Extending the existing guarantee would be at the expense of incoming graduate students and would limit their opportunities to have the chance to be a TA or RA.

The University does not agree with the union's proposals to change the selection criteria for TAs as this would severely restrict opportunities for undergraduate students to become TAs.

Tutorial and Lab sizes

There is a wide variety in the size and type of tutorials and labs at the University. Regardless of the size of the tutorial or lab, TAs are to work no more than 10 hours per week on average. There are safeguards in the University's proposal to protect TAs and RAs from working extra hours or beyond the end of the term. If there are any concerns that the volume of work required cannot be done within this time it should be raised with the instructor and/or department chair and it will be addressed by the University.

Tuition Increases

Tuition is an important issue and we understand that it is of concern to all undergraduate and graduate students. However, tuition fees are a student issue, not an employment issue, and to treat them otherwise would create inequities among students.

About the Vote

The vote is a secret ballot. Voting will take place over two days. The union has called a meeting for Sunday at the Hamilton Convention Centre at [LINK to MAP](#).

Voting will begin after that meeting. It will continue Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the union offices at 17 Paradise Road South which is across the road from the Metro store in Westdale at [LINK to MAP](#). If you need transportation the University is providing a free shuttle on Monday from the campus area to the union office. Further details will be forwarded when they are confirmed.

McMaster values the many contributions TAs and RAs make to the University. We hope this strike will be resolved soon in order to minimize the impact for teaching and research assistants, for all of our students, and for the overall university. The University has made its best offer.

We recognize the choice on whether to accept the offer is yours to make and we trust and respect your judgment. **Please vote.**

If you have any questions please contact hrs@mcmaster.ca