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## PUBLIC STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CUPE 4600

The 3000 academic workers at Carleton University represented by Local 4600 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) are on strike for fair pay and fair working conditions.

These academic workers are important contributors to our city. Their working conditions inform the learning conditions of each new generation of university graduates that swell the ranks of Ottawa's workforce and that help to make up our broader community.

CUPE 4600's many past and present members are well represented in Capital Ward and across our city. I, myself, am a past executive member of this local, as is the local MPP Joel Harden. Another past executive of this local is currently an invaluable member of my team at City Hall. These workers are not just invaluable to Carleton University, they are invaluable to our city, and they should be treated and respected as such.

More and more university courses are being taught by Contract Instructors (CIs), with many undergraduate students now receiving more instruction from CIs than from members of faculty throughout the course of their degree. The average annual earnings that CIs with full course loads receive from teaching work at Carleton falls well below the city's median income. The inherent precarity of contract work on top of the low pay received compounds the insecurity these workers face.

Teaching Assistants (TAs), too, have long been undervalued and underpaid. A large part of TA wages typically goes toward paying tuition—itself an increasingly costly expense for these workers. For international student TAs, wages do not even cover this expense. As a result, TAs are forced to juggle multiple part time jobs at the same time as engaging in full time studies. TAs, like CIs, are struggling to make ends meet. A testament to this reality is that graduate students make up a significantly disproportionate share of food bank users on the Carleton University Campus.

Neither TAs nor CIs can afford yet another collective bargaining agreement with pay increases so nominal that they fail to keep pace with the rate of inflation. This would amount to yet another round of real dollar cuts for already underpaid and precarious academic workers who are increasingly responsible for the post-secondary education people receive in Ottawa. This has been compounding for years, and life has grown exponentially more expensive in the interim.

CIs and TAs workers are typically undervalued in our society, but even in relative terms TAs and CIs at Carleton University are some of the lowest paid in the province. Carleton CIs are the third lowest paid in Ontario.



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Beyond the need for better pay, the local is calling for a cap on how many students a single TA can be responsible for to ensure that workloads are manageable, and to ensure that CIs can plan appropriate assessments for their students. This is a reasonable demand that will benefit students and workers alike. What is good for students and for academic staff is surely what is good for Carleton.

I am calling on the Carleton University administration to do the right thing and recognize the value of these workers. I urge the administration to get back to the bargaining table and to provide these workers with the long overdue real dollar pay increases, and the improved working conditions, that they are due. I have long had a positive relationship with members of the Carleton University administration, and so I am optimistic that they will do the right thing.

I will be on the picket line in support of CUPE 4600 workers, and I urge all residents to join me in doing the same. The longer the picket line, the shorter the strike.

In solidarity,

**Shawn Menard**

*Ottawa City Councillor for Capital Ward*

