

YUFA EXECUTIVE STATEMENT ON THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

February 12, 2016

On February 9, 2016, the YUFA Executive unanimously voted to recommend to the membership that they ratify the tentative agreement reached between our Bargaining Team and the Employer earlier that day. Our assessment of this settlement is that it makes significant headway on key issues and creates the basis for future gains, making it worthy of our support.

This settlement goes a long way to addressing YUFA's long-standing goal of reducing the disparity between teaching loads within York and between York and those at other comparable universities. Our goal was to rebalance the workloads of the large proportion of the YUFA membership still teaching a 2.5 FCE load while also facing the pressure to increase research activity and the need to cope with escalating administrative demands. Previous solutions to this problem provided relief for some—but not all—faculty and involved complicated processes of tracking and application. The new Research Release Program will significantly expand the number of YUFA members teaching at 2.0, and creates what we hope will be a much less cumbersome process for getting course reductions. We also secured teaching loads of no more than 3.0 FCE for alternate-stream members in their first three years of pre-candidacy. And, for the first time, we established minimum salary, benefits, and medical, bereavement, and parental leaves for new post-doctoral visitor contracts.

We also negotiated a series of important gains on equity issues that will work to ensure our membership reflects the diversity of the wider community. A new visible minority threshold for affirmative action procedures mirrors the one already established to ensure equitable gender representation in our units. In the year following the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we are proud to have achieved a program that mandates the hiring of aboriginal colleagues. We also won the recognition of LGBTQ2 as an equity-seeking category, very rare in collective agreements, which allows us to collect data on the results of our hiring practices. All of these initiatives entrench important principles in our collective agreement that can be expanded on in future bargaining rounds.

These negotiations were not an unqualified success. The Employer resisted nearly all our proposals to improve collegial process at our university, despite the fact that these proposals carry no cost. We will need to fight this battle to preserve faculty's meaningful participation in decision-making on other fronts until the next round of bargaining. The Employer also refused to provide a contractual guarantee of an increased tenure-stream faculty complement. The question of faculty complement is very important for the future: YUFA remains committed to resisting the spread of precarious work in the university and to ensuring high quality jobs for the next generation of teachers and researchers. We do not want our more balanced workloads to come at the expense of insecurity and work

intensification for others working at the University. In addition, we made little progress in our attempt to improve our benefits package for active employees. In a particularly disappointing development, the employer is doubling the premiums for existing retiree benefits (and has refused to share any cost for enhancements). On compensation, we were able to negotiate a salary increase comparable to that of other employee groups in the post-secondary sector. Nevertheless, our Employer insisted on further flattening the slope of our members' career salary progression profiles by postponing any increase to our Progress-through-the-Ranks (PTR) increments until 2017 (PTR has been frozen since 2009). They also resisted increases to the Professional Expense Reimbursement amount.

Clearly, the recent history of labour relations at York provides the context for this settlement. But the persistence of our Bargaining Team and signals from the membership that they were willing to contemplate visible demonstrations of support for the bargaining team produced the key breakthroughs. These gains reveal what can be achieved in an environment of austerity when members remain engaged in the negotiating process and provide strong support for their bargaining team. These are important lessons to keep in mind for when we return to the bargaining table in 2018. We urge you to read the highlights of the settlement as well as the full text of the tentative agreement, and to attend the Membership Meetings on February 22 and 23, 2016 (details to follow). The Bargaining Team and the Executive believe that the positive gains in this settlement clearly outweigh its shortcomings, and we recommend that members vote in favour.