



March 24, 2016

Brian Baxter
Chair, Board of Governors
University of New Brunswick
P.O Box 4400
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

Dear M. Baxter:

I'm writing to you and your fellow members of the university's Board of Governors to bring your attention to a situation that deserves your immediate action.

The Union of Graduate Student Workers (UGSW) local 60550 have been at the bargaining table since December 2013 with no end in sight. They represent approximately 400 workers employed as graduate student teaching assistants and or graduate student research assistants at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) in both Fredericton and Saint John

Let me be clear that our members value the work that they provide to UNB, its professors, students and university community as a whole. They also play a vital role in the high ranking of UNB amongst other Canadian universities. Unfortunately, they are not being treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

While we have made significant gains at the bargaining table around important workplace issues such as protection in relation to sexual and personal harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority, whistleblowing and violence in the workplace; the university's administration does not seem willing to make any further improvements to their monetary offer.

In their website posting¹ dated February 22, 2016, UNB's administration offers a comparative table on wages of unionized graduate student teaching assistants at UNB and at two other Atlantic universities. While we appreciate the value of such comparisons, we believe that only fair and reasonable comparisons are helpful. Both of the Universities chosen for comparison offer their students 20 hours of weekly work, compared to UNB's ten hours, and a tuition environment that is demonstrably more affordable. This comparison translates into higher earnings and lower expenses for the graduate students at these other Universities and it leaves one wondering how UNB's competitive advantage survives the comparison at all.

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<http://www.unb.ca/hr/labourrelations/PSAC%20UGSW%20Graduate%20Student%20Workers%20Bargaining%20Status.html>



Our members should be compared to other universities across Canada as exemplified by the MacLeans Magazine Rankings.

As we recall the turmoil around the recent faculty strike and lock out, we would like to remind you that the best reason used to defend compensation levels that are competitive in the national context is the fact that UNB competes for students and faculty from both Canada and from across the world at large. Prospective graduate students will be aware that UNB is in an extremely high tuition environment compared to other Canadian institutions, with increases to tuition, ancillary fees, and international student differential fees anticipated.

The current offer of approximately 8% over 8 years is totally unreasonable and does not even come close to what other graduate student teaching assistants and graduate student research assistants earn at other highly ranked universities such as: Carleton, Guelph, Simon Fraser and Waterloo. This offer does not keep pace with the projected increase in the cost of living projected by Statistics Canada or the known and rising expenses a graduate student will face at UNB.

We are also aware of the recruitment initiative and additional resources that were approved by the Board of Governors to recruit new students to UNB. We would hope that there would be the same level of consideration for the students who are currently employed by the university. The question that begs asking is, 'How hard should it be to answer "Why UNB?"'

We hope that you will demonstrate leadership and ask the Board of Governors to provide a new bargaining mandate to UNB's administration. Given the modest financial impact a fair and reasonable offer would have on UNB and the profound relief this represents to our members; it would truly be making a significant difference to the graduate student community at UNB.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeannie Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeannie Baldwin
Regional Executive Vice-President, PSAC-Atlantic

cc. Board of Governors, University of New Brunswick