

Nipissing University Faculty Association

**General Membership Meeting of October 20, 2011
4:30 pm in F213**

Executive Members Present:

Gyllian Phillips, President
Joseph Boivin, CASBU Officer/Secretary
Toivo Koivukoski, Member at Large (A&S)
Angela Fera, Executive Assistant

Approximately 32 Members of NUFA attended. Since quorum was not reached (10% of the membership), the meeting was conducted **for information only**, with no reports and no motions. However, since Donna Gray, Research Director at OCUFA had been invited to address the membership, a discussion ensued around collective bargaining in the province and the FASBU collective bargaining process so far. The President introduced Donna Gray, Research Director at OCUFA and Hilary Earl, Chief Negotiator for the FASBU Collective Bargaining Committee.

Below are some of the comments by Gyllie, Donna and Hilary at the meeting.

President, Gyllie Phillips

Gyllie began by thanking Todd Horton for his service to the Faculty Association as an organization and also to the faculty as a whole. He has done a phenomenal job as president of NUFA with his commitment to the principles of transparency, democracy, and diplomacy without ever compromising integrity, and by bringing an intellectual rigour to everything he does and also a great sense of humour. Each NUFA president has contributed to the building of the organization, with each responding to a particular phase of the institutional development. Todd has shepherded us through some dramatic changes in both the internal and external climate, making us a stronger and more cohesive unit than ever.

We are fortunate to have fine faculty like Todd Horton devoted to teaching, research, and contributing academic service to the university. We are not just employees. What we do *is* the institution. A small university can be both a blessing and a curse. We end up doing way more service than we really should be, but we also get a close look at whether things are operating or not and then can either retain what's best or try to make meaningful changes.

The past year has been challenging. There has been constant change in academic and non-academic areas. We have been excluded from some key areas including scheduling and the library; we've had an unprecedented non-confidence vote on the leadership which she never thought possible but that is a sign of deep distress and anxiety about the long-term, with last March being our lowest point. Gyllie stated that her work is in the rebuilding with last year which was about problems and this year about solutions and what we can do collectively to rebuild through the Collective Agreement, through negotiation, and through advocacy both inside and outside of the university.

Gyllie indicated that the regular meetings with the VPAR have been positive and productive towards the joint management of relations between NUFA and the Administration. There have also been several productive meetings of the JCAA. Negotiation is the next step, at which point Gyllie introduced Donna Gray.

Research Director, OCUFA, Donna Gray

Donna began by saying that this was the earliest she had gone to an association meeting around bargaining. Bargaining is getting harder and requires more work, mobilization and a realistic look at the economy and the political environment. She planned to speak on bargaining generally, some of the issues, and what it will take to succeed.

She began by saying that the economy has stalled from recovery. Forecasts have been downgraded for Ontario, Canada and the world. A bright spot is Ontario with job growth and consumer spending (e.g. housing). The deficit is trending down due to the assumptions that were overestimated at the start, from \$20 billion to \$15 billion. A problem with the Ontario budget is that program spending of less than 2%, an assumption to 2017/2018 is so huge that the auditor does not feel it can be pulled off. If the targets can't be made, there will be more austerity measures that will derail recovery. OCUFA will work hard for more stimulus funding.

The Bank of Canada is estimating a core inflation rate in 2012 of 2% which they used to set the interest rates. However food and gas are up 3.3%, when the projection was 3%, and they are not coming down.

Most wage settlements in every sector have been under 2%. Inflation is linked to the length of the collective agreement. When inflation is volatile or high, longer agreements are risky. A lot can happen in four years, creating problems with no tools to solve. Some economists feel inflation could take off.

There are risks with the instability of the McGinty minority government, but the opposition may be more available to us as a result. The Liberals have put out little in the PSE platform. The tuition report is not proposing new money, but just helps some student manage. With the 60,000 new spaces there was a hinting of moving away from the per student funding towards differentiation funding. With a 2.7% increase in operating grants plus a 5% tuition cap, the approximately 4.7% more money in the system does not make this a budget crisis year but does not free up a lot of money for hiring.

Public settlements are in the 1.5% range, private 1.8%, with education (broadly) at 1.9%. There are a number of major agreements expiring (e.g. teachers in the fourth year of the umbrella, public service, medical fee schedule). McGinty needs low settlements. He's softening up the public for low expectations, aimed at public service and teachers. He bought labour peace with the teacher umbrella agreement.

There are eight university agreements open. In 2012 it will be a small group including York, Trent and Carleton. The pattern has been about 2% but she expects the pattern to start rising up to 2.3 – 2.4 %. There can be flat dollar increases versus a percentage increase.

Pensions have completely dominated bargaining in the last few years. Employers are taking advantage of pension problems. NUFA's employer is getting a better deal than anywhere else. The difference is about 7%. Member contributions are rising as part of settlements.

Benefits are not a big issue elsewhere. Drug costs have leveled off so there is less pressure. OCUFA works with Eckler, who is good at finding money in reserves. One problem is paying the entire cost for long term disability. There is a real variance in the premiums. There is poor bargaining in universities by the people responsible who have no stake so there is a misalignment of interests. LTD matters to work that we do at universities.

Workload is linked to the different types of appointments. The future of the academic profession is at stake with HEQCO talking about teaching stream appointments being their model of how to handle a 50% increase in enrolments. COU may have had a hand in some of the proposals (e.g. eight courses over three terms with no recognition for scholarship or service). All caps come off in teaching appointments including tenure, tenure-track and limited term appointments. At the University of Ottawa with 80% teachers and 20% researchers, this

is a big fight. We need the broader support of students, community and the public. Donna said that we have to build bridges, for instance, with the employers that hire your graduates.

The governance issues have happened elsewhere and not just recently. Collegiality, control, transparency are issues that have led to three certificates based on governance issues. OCUFA will work with the CBC on governance language.

She encouraged the faculty not to lose sight of the fact that people are making decisions and that the faculty are not just passive recipients. There is less money here in academics by about 12% and they are choosing to increase the student to faculty ratio. Make collective decisions and stand behind them.

There were two recent successful negotiations. The University of Western Ontario Librarians and Archivists (female dominated group) were 20% behind their peers. They took a strike vote early and applied for conciliation on their first day. They received a 4% market adjustment and a 1.5% increase after a thirteen day strike. UOIT negotiated their second agreement beginning with no salary structure, merit only and an ATB below inflation. They took a strike vote and ended up with the largest PTR of \$3600 and a 3% increase. They didn't back off and bargained hard.

Donna then addressed a number of questions. On the "wage freeze" – this was voluntary and there was virtually no "zero". There was a settlement at zero but they were not a certified union; on faculty salaries as a percentage of university budgets for small universities – 26% in the entire system with smaller universities tending to be higher, for example Laurentian at 30% but Nipissing at 21%; on pensions – there should be a defined contribution guarantee of 5% in a lifetime, there is a pension reform exercise going on now, the RRSP limit is 18% so you need to know what to put away so that you'll get 60% of salary.

Hilary Earl, FASBU Chief Negotiator

Hilary provided a brief overview of the bargaining preparations indicating that we are well ahead in the timeline. The CBC has been working for quite some time and has just about completed the bargaining proposals. She indicated that there will soon be a formal presentation to the membership with the content of the bargaining package.

Large ATBs are a challenge. Gains in pensions and benefits will be an important form of compensation when it is 10-14% of salary. In our history, this is the first time that pension and benefits has been systematically analyzed.

Governance is a real problem and a real challenge, as faculty need to be part of the processes. Governance issues are unusual for a CBC as they are usually addressed by the Senate. We've struggled with issues of openness and transparency as evidenced by the scheduling disaster.

The past practice has always been a struggle to make the employer do our will. Donna has given us ideas of ways to set our own agenda, to set the pace of the negotiations. The employer tends to meet, and then delay. As an association, we need to work together and be on side. On November 16, there will be a discussion about strategy.

We would also welcome volunteers for the Bargaining Communications Committee which would parallel the NUFA News, as a vehicle for communication.