

# BARGAINING BULLETIN #1

## **All for One and One for all**

Sometimes, even when the path looks clear and you have carefully prepared for the journey, it turns out you do not end up where you thought you would. After more than a year of discussions, consultations, and votes that saw the majority of those voting support the consolidation of FASBU and CASBU, we were pretty confident that we would shortly arrive at our destination. However, after months of meetings and discussions, the Employer has decided to withdraw support for the consolidation of NUFA's two bargaining units.

From the start, all indications from the Employer were in favour of a merger. In fact, it was the Employer who originally proposed consolidation during the last round of CASBU negotiations in 2016, and who signed a Letter of Understanding confirming their commitment to enter into discussions with NUFA (Appendix J of the CASBU Collective Agreement). NUFA met with the Employer on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2017, and both parties agreed to move forward with preparations for the consolidation of FASBU and CASBU in the next round of bargaining.

Shortly after our AGM last May, we prepared the application to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. As you may recall, the application to the OLRB is a joint application that both NUFA and the Employer must sign to indicate their agreement and willingness to consolidate the bargaining units. We presented this paperwork to the Employer at the end of May given both parties' agreement on the decision to consolidate. In response, the Employer communicated a desire to seek clarification about the application process and indicated they needed more time to consult with their legal counsel.

Over the summer months of 2018, on a number of occasions, we met with the Employer to discuss these concerns but it became evident that the Employer's resolve was wavering; they asked for more time to consider, to consult with colleagues at other institutions and to "do their homework." The discussion picked up again in the fall of 2018 at which point it became very clear that the Employer's enthusiasm waning, but they remained unwilling to take a concrete position on the matter. At our November 2018 GMM, I announced to the NUFA Membership that the Employer's position on consolidation was shifting and it was clear that a joint application to the OLRB was not something the Employer was willing to sign.

On December 19, 2019, following yet another meeting, NUFA received a letter from the Employer stating their final position: "[T]he University does not believe that a merger of the two collective agreements will be beneficial." The Employer further indicated that their consultation with other universities and Faculty Bargaining Services raised significant concerns. The Employer has, however, floated the possibility of including the full-time CASBU members in the FASBU agreement. This is something that will no doubt be raised at the table. NUFA has not taken a position at this stage.

The NUFA Executive and our bargaining team were disappointed by this news, to say the least. The consolidation was something we believed in and in which we had invested countless hours of research and consultation. On reflection, however, as we go into bargaining in a matter of weeks, the news of this setback has revealed something hugely important to all of us at NUFA – this decision by the Employer cannot and will not divide us as an Association. Our bargaining team has been preparing to bargain as one unified team because of the prospect of consolidation, and despite the news that the Employer no longer wants this, we remain committed to bargain both agreements at the same time. We are unquestionably stronger together and we are committed to using that unity to the advantage of us all.

The pathway to consolidation has opened the door for fundamental and historic shifts in our Association. Now more than ever, it is clear that we are one Association, and as CASBU and FASBU prepare to bargain together, we are committed to improving the working conditions, and thus the lives, of *all* of our NUFA Members.

Although hearing that we are in a bargaining year often strikes dread in the hearts of many, opening up the Collective Agreements provides an opportunity for us all to reconsider the core principles of the University and make sure we are doing everything we can to achieve them. In the past few years concerns over budget deficits and the continued quest for “efficiencies” has made it hard to keep the University’s purpose in focus. Collegiality suffers as departments and schools battle one another for waning enrolments, and it is easy to get caught up in the business that is the University instead of doing the University’s business.

CAUT writes that the University “serves the common good of society, through searching for, and disseminating, knowledge, and understanding and through fostering independent thinking and expression in academic staff and students.” The only way we can fulfill this mission is by placing a premium on full-time tenure-track jobs that provide the time, resources, and academic freedom to create and distribute knowledge. Collective bargaining provides the opportunity to do this. Many of our proposals come with a price tag, and it is our goal to reach an agreement with the Employer that recognizes the value of those costs. Budgeting is a choice, and we want to see choices that strengthen the University’s core purpose: high quality research, service to our communities and perhaps most importantly, teaching the next generation of citizens.

As always, the Collective Bargaining Team cannot accomplish these goals without the full support of the Membership. Together we are stronger!



**Amanda Burk**, NUFA President

**Nathan Kozuskanich**, NUFA Vice-President

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**NUFA SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** to discuss the

**FASBU AND CASBU bargaining proposals:**

**Wednesday, February 27th @ 3:30 Room F213**