

# BARGAINING BULLETIN #9

## Why is this taking so long?

This is a question worth considering as your Collective Bargaining team is preparing to spend the whole of next weekend (Oct 4, 5 & 6) with the Employer and the conciliator from the Ministry of Labour. (If you have questions about the process of conciliation, see Bulletin #5: (<https://nufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/Bargaining-Bulletin-5.pdf>)). How is it that on the cusp of October, the bargaining process, which began March 1<sup>st</sup>, is still so far from resolved?



One reason is that the Employer has been unwilling to *give* us anything in these negotiations. They only want to *take* and they seem incapable of compromise, something that is fundamental to the process of collective bargaining. We've described the concessions and the claw-backs the Employer has proposed to **your** working conditions in previous Bulletins and at each of the membership meetings and they have been substantive. So, how did we get here?

When we attempted to do package bargaining in mid-May, the Employer proposed an egregious package that cut PTR, threatened to curtail our Academic Freedom, increased teaching loads for some, cut compensation for Chairs, and threatened the sabbatical process, among other things. The Employer also adopted as its own the version of Article 25 (Tenure and Promotion) we drafted as a major concession to get a new pension, but then refused to budge an inch on pensions. And although we rejected that early package, in fact it has never gone away. In effect, that proposed package became the Employer's starting point for all subsequent negotiations.

What does that mean for us? It means that negotiations since then have been about fighting to return to *status quo*, and being asked to give up more just to get there! It means that when they ask us to take one of our proposals off the table, they offer to give back something that they had previously cut. True story. That is not compromise. That is not fair bargaining. Our way of bargaining in the past has been to identify priorities on both sides and compromise our way to an agreement. That assumes a relative parity of number and size of priorities. But this time around, their demands have far outstripped ours and they have refused to pull back.

It may be that you don't care about some of the particular concessions the Employer has proposed, or you think that they don't affect you or your department. Or, it may be that you care about one particular issue, but not any of the other ones at stake. Either way,

all of our Members need to understand that these concessions to our current collective agreement are a loss and ultimately they erode the work that our colleagues, chief negotiators and bargaining teams have fought for over the past 25 years.

While the collective agreement between NUFA and the Employer outlines and, ideally protects and enhances our working conditions, in reality, with the nature of the cuts we are facing, we are actually fighting for the integrity of the institution and the academic principles that hold it together. The simple fact is this: our working environment is the students' learning environment. Each time the conditions of our labour are compromised, the academic mission of the University suffers and ultimately so does the experience of our students. When we resist concessions, we are protecting not just our working conditions but our students' educational experience.

Rest assured, if we lose the things the Employer wants to take away, we won't get them back. And each successive series of Presidents and Vice-Presidents, as they take their leave when their terms end, won't remember. But we will. One of our bargaining team members noted recently at the table that they had negotiated with 7 different VPARs over the years. A good reminder from our negotiations in 2015: #welivehere.

We are the ones who stay, work, live, parent and retire here. This is our collective agreement. Let's protect it.

The bargaining team needs your support. They are tired. This is hard and time-consuming work. They are about to give up another weekend away from their families. They have busy teaching and research schedules. Let them know you care about what they're fighting for.

Send your best to: [collectivebargaining2019@gmail.com](mailto:collectivebargaining2019@gmail.com)