



BULLETIN

April 2018

NUFA Merger: Question & Answer

We thought it might be helpful for those of you who may still have questions about the merger to see what questions were raised in the NUFA Special Membership Meeting on the Merger held on March 8, 2018, and during the four subsequent discussion sessions. This Q&A complements the presentation that we sent to you on March 15 by email.

Please let us know if you have any other questions we can help you with as you prepare to vote.

Q: Will there be extra expenses as a result of a merger?

A: No, we're already doing the work needed for both units. If anything, bargaining once will reduce demand on our time, effort and resources.

Q: Why does the employer want this?

A: Until the 2015 strike, the Employer held out hope that they could continue to run courses while one unit was on strike. They discovered in 2015 that they could not. They also found out that it cost them additional money to pay the CASBU members to extend their contracts to complete the term after the strike. The Employer also realizes the practicality of bargaining once and, like us, they understand the challenges in negotiating and administering two collective agreements. One round of bargaining and one collective agreement is attractive for *both* sides.

More broadly, Bill 148 and the Changing Workplaces review indicates that categories of employment that look the same should be in the same unit, so the potential merger is timely. The Employer is also aware of this change.

Q: What would a merged collective agreement look like?

A: Ultimately, merging the collective agreements means "knitting" the language of the two agreements together. Currently there are 80 articles between the two agreements of which approximately 20% are identical and approximately 50% could be reconciled with some minor, non-substantive changes to the language. The remaining articles that cannot be reconciled will have their respective sub-categories (e.g. tenured and tenure-track, limited term, full-time instructors, part-time instructors). The "knitting" of the agreements is understood by both the Employer and NUFA as a neutral process – resulting in no losses and no gains for anyone, just one collective agreement.

NUFA
Nipissing University Faculty Association

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Special Membership Meeting - Pensions

April 24, 2018
1:30 pm
F210

NUFA Spring Social

April 24, 2018
5:30 pm to 8:30 pm
Raven & Republic

Annual General Meeting

May 9, 2018
1:00 pm
F214

Looking to get involved with NUFA? Why not consider running for a seat on one of our standing committees.

MERGER VOTE

Advanced polling is currently underway and in-person voting will be taking place:

Tuesday April 24
Wednesday April 25
Thursday April 26

10 am to 4 pm
in the NUFA Office

All FASBU and CASBU Members currently paying dues are eligible to vote.

Please contact us for more information: x4499 or nufaoffice@gmail.com

Q: If there are different goals or needs for FASBU and CASBU, but only one negotiation, doesn't the Employer have the advantage of playing us off each other?

A: Before we answer the question, we need to highlight that we already have a variety of competing interests within our individual bargaining units (e.g., the needs of an LTA, may be different than a Full Professor, similarly the needs of a Part-time CASBU member, may be different from the needs of the Full-time CASBU member). The need for our bargaining teams to meet a range of interests is typical and we have had a good record track record of balancing those interests.

Bargaining separately actually presents far more of an opportunity for the employer to play one unit off the other. When there are two separate negotiations, each unit goes after what it can independently and it is possible that something could happen with one unit that is not in the interests of the other. Despite NUFA's oversight, having two bargaining units with different membership mean that conflicting contract terms are sometimes agreed to in the interest of achieving a settlement. The advantage of being a merged bargaining unit is that we can map out all of our interests in a way that benefits all of us. Having our voices come to the table at the same time will allow all of us to have more control over the possible outcome of the negotiations and ensures that our future as faculty here at Nipissing is shaped by our collective vision and voice.

Q: Aren't the interests of FASBU and CASBU different?

A: Our recent bargaining surveys certainly suggest not. Both CASBU and FASBU identified in their top five bargaining priorities: increased compensation, academic freedom and workload. Our interests are also aligned in wanting to have good, stable employment and preserving the academy – what university education is and what it should be. However, certainly there will be different priorities for CASBU and FASBU, as well as a variety of priorities within each of those groups. The ability to consider all of these priorities alongside one another in a merged unit will give us ability to plan and strategize in ways that we haven't been able to do before and it may unlock possibilities that have been previously unavailable because we have negotiated separately.

Q: Do members of one unit want the merger more than the other?

A: No. The merger survey shows very similar results. The percentage of CASBU and FASBU members who already believe the benefits outweigh the drawbacks are nearly identical.

Q: What if the vote to merge does not pass? What happens then?

A: We cannot entirely predict. We think there are two possible scenarios – one, that we would continue on as we are, or two, there could be an undesirable outcome, especially, if our CASBU members feel shut out. For instance, at other universities contract academic staff are represented by OPSEU or CUPE. If our CASBU members felt that NUFA was not looking after their best interests and were to jump ship, there is the possibility that we could end up bargaining against another union - completely separate from NUFA. Our NUFA Executive believes that we are better and stronger together. We hope that the vote in support of the merger will pass.

Q: Did you find merged associations where part-time members are greater than full-time members?

A: For certain, there are a number of other associations across the country who have greater part-time members than full-time. In Ontario, OCAD's part-time members considerably outnumber their full-time members. OCAD's Tenure/Tenure-track/LTAs make up 43% of their membership and Sessional/Part-time make up about 57%. They have found that this has not been an issue. More commonly, we found numbers more like Queen's University. Queen's merged their Part-time and Full-time bargaining units in 2007. In 2007 Queens had approximately a 59% Tenure/Tenure-track/LTAs to 41% Sessional/Part-time faculty ratio (Currently they have a 62% Tenure/Tenure-track/LTA to 38% Sessional/Part-time ratio). As of this term NUFA has 175 FASBU members and 222 CASBU members.

Q: In your research, have there been any red flags from merged associations related to voting or anything else?

A: No, our research has not revealed any instances of where voting has been a problem. To be sure that we had not left any stones unturned we contacted every merged faculty association in Ontario and almost all of the merged faculty association across Canada and none indicated issues with their merged bargaining units regardless of the composition of their membership. We spoke with associations that have been merged from the beginning, and others like Queen's (2007) and Laurentian (1995) who merged after they first certified.

To be extra sure, we reached out to David Robinson, the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), who has worked with CAUT since 1999, to ask if CAUT was aware of any instances in Canada where merged bargaining units had been an issue for bargaining or voting. He replied, *"Our experience has been that when PT and FT faculty bargain together, solidarity is strengthened, the administration has more difficulty in playing PT and FT interests off against each other, and negotiations are often more efficient and orderly labour relations for both parties. On the voting issue, it hasn't been a problem anywhere I'm aware."*

At our NUFA General Membership Meeting in the Fall, there were concerns raised specifically about Thompson Rivers' experience being a merged association. We reached out to the President of the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association who indicated that while they definitely had a difficult round of negotiations, it was not related to a division between CAS and FAS, and there should be no conclusion that this was at all the case.

Q: What about strike pay? In the event of a strike will everyone be given the same strike pay?

A: The Executive and the Merger Committee have determined some basic principles with regard to labour action. Essentially, there will be a certain number of hours of participation set by the Executive each week during the strike and that will be the basis for full weekly pay. If we were to go out on strike, all Members, regardless of their position would be eligible for full strike pay, if they serve the set participation hours. Since the withdrawal of labour is the most important action during the strike, those members not able to meet the participation hours would receive a base payment each week, but not the full weekly amount.

All Members pay dues and all Members pay into the CAUT Defence Fund. A Full-time Member's Defence Fund payment is \$5.75 per month.

We hope this Q & A has helped to answer more of your questions. Please remember to vote and have your say on this important matter.

Advanced polling has already begun and in-person voting will take place April 24 -26, 2018, in the NUFA Office. The results of the vote will be announced April 27, 2018.

Again, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Best,

Amanda Burk, President
and the NUFA Executive