

BULLETIN

FASBU BARGAINING BULLETIN

Conciliation Update

We began conciliation on October 7 buoyed and encouraged by your strong support at our special membership meeting the night before. Hilary returned to the table with a bargaining team who were emboldened, touched and grateful for your many kind expressions of support. Thank you, all. As it turned out, we needed it. October 7 and 8 were long and difficult days, days that started at the crack of dawn and returned most of us home somewhere after 10pm. And somehow, in the middle of it all, many of us actually had classes as well. This is what we signed up for when we stepped up to negotiate on your behalf and we remain as committed as we were when we first began this process more than eighteen months ago.

On October 7 we went in ready to negotiate a deal. We had already dedicated many hours to revising our proposals and making fair and realistic counter-proposals in order to come to an agreement with the Employer. We reduced the overall cost of our initial package by 2.6 million dollars. But our willingness to move on items was not met by a comparable flexibility on the part of the Employer. In fact, they remained unwilling to move on all substantial issues, including financials, complement, and job security.



Where they did “appear” to move was on restoring *some* of the claw backs that they had initially proposed. In other words, they didn’t move at all, but rather returned us to the status quo and the terms and conditions of our current CA. This is a common employer tactic. To return to the status quo after asking for concessions gives the appearance of movement. In the end after two long days all we managed was to work on a few less contentious proposals.

It was very clear to all parties that no further movement would happen during this conciliation period and so we did all that was possible for any bargaining team to do in these circumstances: we requested a No Board report from the Ministry of Labour. Together with the Employer, we agreed to a strike deadline of November 2 @12:01a.m., and we booked a day and a half of talks on Friday, October 30 and Saturday, October 31 in the hopes that we can come to agreement before the strike deadline and before labour action. So much about what happens next depends not on us, but on the Employer.

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN THIS ROUND OF BARGAINING?

The challenging thing about collective bargaining is that we are negotiating an employment contract for *all of you* and it's not just about salary, but about all of our working conditions - from sabbatical entitlements to workload, to how your rights will be protected if you end up in a conflict with the Employer. Right now, that means we are negotiating for a FASBU membership of 173 people. As you can imagine, it is inevitable that 173 people won't always think the same things are important. Some may even think that because one issue doesn't matter to them they shouldn't support it. But *collective bargaining* doesn't work that way. More precisely, **it can't and it shouldn't work that way**. If fairness for all is to be the measure of success in bargaining then, sometimes we have to be willing to either set aside or at least delay our personal wishes for the sake of our colleagues. Fairness isn't about getting what each of us want individually, but rather about what is fair and best for as many of our Members as possible and for us as a group. Sometimes this will mean we go all out to advance the interests of those amongst us who have the least power. That's the best of collective bargaining.

But we do this in consultation with you. You tell us what you care about. It is the Membership that empowers the CBC to negotiate the terms and conditions of our contract. Before bargaining even begins we do a survey precisely to find out what matters to you. This round of bargaining you identified job security and compensation as the two most important issues. We prioritize and strategize and we never work alone. We're always in conversations not only with you, but also with our national and provincial organizations. Before we exchange packages with the Employer we meet with you and share our proposals and give you a sense of the direction of our bargaining. This is always a work in progress. Bargaining is a constantly shifting practice of weighing the possibilities and liabilities of language in each article while remaining mindful of how each article might affect the deal as a whole. What are the overall gains? What do we risk losing? What is worth fighting for now and what can wait for another round? These are the questions that permeate the dreams (and nightmares) of your bargaining team!

The bargaining team is working very hard to ensure not only improved working conditions, fair pay that is consistent with comparable institutions in our sector, and good secure jobs, but also respect, fairness, and an active and collegial role in the governance of the university - something that remains a foundational principle of universities. Those are values we can all believe in, and hopefully support, and now more than ever we are in need of your strong and unified endorsement of our bargaining team. Thanks for standing with us as we stand and bargain for all of us.

We can't do it without you.

