

BULLETIN

FASBU BARGAINING BULLETIN

Fair Pay

What does “fair pay” mean? To some, it means you should simply be happy if you have a subsistence-level wage, and that anything beyond that is gravy. In that vein, some might feel that FASBU Members are actually paid pretty well compared to the average wage in North Bay – which is indeed true – and that somehow it is greedy to ask for more. This seems especially true when we keep hearing about the fiscal challenges the university is facing, and seeing with our very own eyes the results of the Employer’s efforts to meet those challenges – the loss of many colleagues, not only among faculty, but across the university community. While at first glance this argument may make some sense, upon further examination it can be shown to be quite shortsighted and a real impediment to the university’s development.

The fact of the matter is that faculty salaries at Nipissing are the lowest in the province by a significant margin.

The devaluation of our professional labour comes at an extremely high cost, one that will be shouldered by our youngest Members, who will see the gap widen between their salaries and those of our closest comparator universities in the province. Annually, an associate professor at Nipissing makes about \$20,000 less than the same rank at comparable Ontario universities, and that gap remains as the Member progresses through the ranks.



Any wage settlement that gives Members less than the provincial average across-the-board (ATB) increase – which is slightly over 2 per cent – means we fall further behind.

In fact, once you factor in inflation, which is also currently a little over 2 per cent, a wage freeze amounts in real dollars to a decrease in pay and pension contributions that would have permanent implications.

Where will our salaries be even a decade from now if we accept a wage freeze? Something like \$30,000 less than people who hold the same appointment at another university? How long will Members have to work in order to be in a position to retire? How can the institution claim to provide an

education on par with other universities in the province when it pays its faculty a fraction of what the others do? Is this a sustainable model of growth for the institution? Certainly not. A wage freeze is unfair for our Members, and ultimately bad for the long-term quality of the institution.

What’s at stake here is not the Employer’s ability to pay (it has the money), but rather the priorities that it makes on how it spends that money. We need to let them know that they have to devote a fair share of resources to faculty. Simply put, devaluation of the teaching, research and service that Members perform – the university’s *raison d’être* – invites devaluation of the institution as a whole.

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That's why it is so incredibly important that we stand firm during this round of negotiations until we get a wage settlement that is fair.

You've heard various things from the Employer in different forums about the university's financial position. They have painted a picture of a financial crisis that demands extreme measures to keep the university from the brink of destruction. At the bargaining table they told us that it amounted to a structural deficit. NUFA's analysis of their financial data does not support this claim. Sure, the Employer faces challenges, but they cannot expect that all of their problems can be fixed on the backs of faculty. In fact, NUFA Members have already taken a huge hit

with the discontinuation of LTA positions that were announced in the winter.

NUFA's wage proposals are both modest and responsible. We've proposed a three-year deal that includes across-the-board (ATB) increases of one per cent in the first year, and three percent in each subsequent year. The low increase in the first year is offset by a "competitive adjustment" of \$2,200 per Member. We proposed this measure as a way to help the Employer save money in the initial year, and we have even gone so far as to offer to not add the "competitive adjustment" to base, offering substantial savings of over a quarter of a million dollars. The higher figures in the last two years are

justified by the Employer's projections of growth and increased enrollment.

Our wage proposal comes nowhere close to meaningfully addressing the "wage gap" between our Members and those at other comparable universities in the province. At best, it stops the gap from widening significantly.

This is a fair deal.

It gives the Employer some savings in the first year as they set their financial house in order, and very moderate increases in the next two years that add up to a mere band-aid to the larger "wage gap" question.

IMPORTANT SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OCTOBER 6 @ 7PM

Rooms: F213 in North Bay, video-conferenced to Brantford 207 & Bracebridge 227

Our conciliation dates have been set for October 7 & 8.

The Collective Bargaining Committee needs to see you again and feel your support before we go into these difficult and intense negotiations. It is critical that we have a strong show of your support **before** we head back to the table. We need to let the Administration know and see that we stand together in solidarity and that you support your bargaining team's efforts to get us a fair deal. You are our power at the table.

Of course we recognize that some of you may be teaching or unable to come, but we hope to see as many of you as can possibly make it on October 6th.

Child-care expenses will be covered. Please contact the NUFA office for child-care expense reimbursement.

We need you there!!