

A FAIR DEAL

Protecting the University



BARE BENEFITS

from the NUFA CC: Wendy Peters, Susan Srigley & Richard Wenghofer

One characteristic that makes Nipissing University attractive to potential faculty members is that life in North Bay and its surrounding communities is great for young families. It is a key selling point and should be combined with the kind of benefits package that shows strong support for academics with families or those starting families.

WHERE ELSE IS NIPISSING ‘FALLING BEHIND?’

Academia may not be as hazardous as other professions, but academics still deserve the peace of mind that comes from knowing that they and their families will be provided for adequately when a serious illness strikes. The sad fact is that our benefits article is incredibly outdated having not been altered in a substantive way since our first collective agreement in 1994.

When we compare our pregnancy leave and parental leave benefits to those of other universities in Ontario, it becomes obvious that we are not just falling behind in salaries. For most universities in Ontario the total number of weeks that a birth mother can receive paid leave exceeds 24 weeks.

At Nipissing, the total number of weeks that a birth mother can receive paid leave is 17 weeks. At most Ontario universities, the birth mother has the right to claim additional paid parental leave. This is not the case at Nipissing. Finally, most universities in Ontario allow faculty members to continue to pay into their pension plans while on parental or pregnancy leave. There is currently no provision for this in our collective agreement. NUFA’s proposal would put our parental and pregnancy leaves in line with the Ontario standard by allowing birth mothers to access additional parental leave and allowing those on pregnancy and parental leave to continue contributing to their pensions.

Currently,

- **the Employer pays 80%** of the premium for Long Term Disability (LTD) which has significant tax implications for our members.
- **NUFA’s proposal would have members contributing 100%** of the cost of premiums for LTD, in exchange for the Employer taking over a 100% of the cost of premiums for Life Insurance, Extended Health and Dental Insurance.

Given the high cost of long term disability, NUFA’s proposal has the potential to save the Employer considerably, so their icy response is somewhat puzzling in this climate of cost-cutting and frugality.

The Employer has used the word “complicated” to describe our benefits proposal and has questioned our resolve to improve the provisions for “a handful of future LTDs and maternity leaves.” They have suggested that if we really want a deal, we should drop the concerns of these members. Characterizing these proposals as roadblocks to a deal seems a tad insincere given the nominal cost. More importantly, improving our benefits package is critical if we want to continue to recruit and retain high-quality faculty. Improving LTD, pregnancy leave and parental leave benefits would go a long way in showing that the university values healthy employees that are able to strike a good balance between work and family life.

We want to get a fair deal ... for everyone.

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