

University of Northern British Columbia Faculty Association

Bargaining Bulletin 2019 #06

Message from the Chief Negotiator:

Dear Colleagues,

Wow, that was exhilarating! For those of you who were unable to attend the extraordinary members' meeting yesterday, you can be reassured that least 90 of your UNBC FA colleagues attended this meeting in person or on the phone, and showed unambiguously that they retain their determination to achieve a fair, and fairly negotiated, renewal to our Collective Agreement.

As you know, the Employer elected, in the late afternoon of 25 June, to take the highly unusual step of communicating its entire (expired) settlement offer directly to the UNBC FA members. While this step was obviously intended to weaken the position of the FA bargaining team with the members, it had the opposite effect (as it usually does when Employers use this tactic). The members of the UNBC FA were shocked and insulted that the Employer would attempt to circumvent the duly appointed bargaining team, and rallied with alacrity to the support of the team. In fact, the following motion from the floor (moved by a member in the room, and seconded by a member in the regions), passed unanimously: "This meeting reaffirms its support for the mandate given to its bargaining team, namely, to achieve a fair compensation award while protecting the rights and working conditions of FA members. Secondly, we demand that the Employer refrain from negotiating with the membership, and negotiate with the union's bargaining team and only that team." We will have the opportunity to read this resolution to the Employer when the parties next meet for negotiations.

In sum, the Employer's strategy worked only to give the members of the UNBC FA another opportunity to show that they are as determined as ever to support the bargaining team as we work together to achieve the mandate that the membership and executive have given us. They also demonstrated that they are as unified as they have ever been. The expressions of support – greeted by applause – of tenured and tenure-track members for their colleagues who are in precarious positions were particularly heartening.

It is important, particularly for those who were unable to attend the meeting, to know that the email message that accompanied the Employer's settlement offer was dishonest. Members of the bargaining team have discussed our own recollections, and have consulted our detailed bargaining notes, and can tell you that the Employer stated explicitly and unequivocally on Friday afternoon, when they introduced their settlement offer, that as a part of its offer, the Employer was calling on the union to drop all outstanding grievances. They even introduced their demand by explicitly saying that they knew that this provision would surprise us (even though they described their proposal to you on Monday as "normal and expected"). At no subsequent time did



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they ever indicate to the bargaining team that their proposal had changed. Thus, when they communicated to you regarding their proposal pertaining to grievances, they were saying one thing to your bargaining team, and another thing to you. Those who attended the extraordinary meeting will know that consequences of that dishonesty are potentially grave. At least one legitimate question was raised at the meeting about the contradictory communications regarding the Employer's position on grievances. That suggests that the Employer had interfered in the communications between the UNBC FA and its members, with the potential to undermine the negotiations. Should the Employer employ this tactic again, the Faculty Association will have no option but to seek redress from the British Columbia Labour Board.

It is worth noting that you have no obligation to receive messages directly from the Employer. You are within your right to request that the Employer refrain from sending them to you in the future.

Even since the meeting ended yesterday afternoon, the bargaining team continues to be bombarded with supportive messages from the membership. The most recent one that the entire team received, even as I write this update, says

I want to add my name to the long list of people who have expressed their full support of the bargaining team to fulfill its mandate as prescribed by the FA membership: that we achieve sector-norm salaries without compromising the sector-norm non-monetary terms and conditions of work. As mentioned during the meeting, we must have as much, or more, resolve in this round of negotiations as we had in the last round. As a member of the UNBC FA, I am prepared to do what is needed to fulfill the mandate.

The entire team thanks you for messages like this. With your continued support, we can achieve the goals you have set for us.

Ted Binnema, Chief Negotiator

and the rest of the team:

Jacqueline Holler

Umesh Parshotam

Matt Reid

Donna Sindaco

Stephen Rader (*ex officio*).



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