

# University of Northern British Columbia Faculty Association

*Bargaining Bulletin 2019 #09*

## Message from the Chief Negotiator:

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday's day-long negotiating session was another disappointment. We firmly reminded the Employer's bargaining team of the two main pillars of the mandate we received from you, our principals. First, we told them that if the Employer wants an agreement they must table a compensation proposal that, like ours, is fair, equitable, and transparent. That did lead them to ask serious questions about our salary proposal for the first time. However, during that discussion their team made it clear that they not only objected to the cost of our proposal (and continue to refuse to explain how they arrived at their costing of our proposal), they also indicated that they will have a very difficult time reconciling themselves to a salary system that does not give the Employer broad and arbitrary discretion to determine individual salaries at UNBC, and that does not give the deans broad power to hand out "merit" pay without regard to criteria for how merit is determined. The Employer knows how to get a deal on compensation; we are not certain that they are yet ready to table a proposal that will get a deal.

The second main pillar of your mandate to us was to protect the rights we already enjoy under our collective agreement. We told them that the only prospect of reaching an agreement would be for the Employer to drop its concessionary demands. Again, the Employer's team has not yet indicated that it is willing to do so. So, while we did sign off one article (without requiring any negotiations), we still have 15 articles outstanding. In several cases, we are still very far apart on the issues. The Employer knows how to get a deal on the non-compensation items; we are not certain that they are yet ready to table proposals that will get a deal.

We feel it is our duty to inform you that the inability of the Employer's bargaining team to remember what they had said in earlier bargaining sessions seriously undermines our ability to make progress at the table. For example, during yesterday's session, Barb Daigle, their Chief Negotiator, complained about our last bargaining bulletin in which we informed you that the Employer now states that "they intend to use the ERO/VEP to help the university 'in managing [its] deficit'" She claimed that she had never said this. When we pointed out that our bargaining bulletin merely quotes what Barb Daigle herself communicated directly to you in her covering letter, she was unable to explain the discrepancy. This is but one example of what has been a pattern. Their bargaining team now claims to have said things from the beginning of negotiations that they never said until 27 September, and they deny saying things that they repeatedly said, even in the previous session. You can probably understand intuitively that if the Employer's team makes one assertion repeatedly on one day, and contradicts those words – even denies saying those words – on the next, it is very difficult to make any headway at the table. Moving targets are difficult to hit.



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In sum, we regret to inform you that the negotiations appear now to have bogged down. The Employer continues to claim that it is not required to provide us with a reasonable estimate of the salary savings to be realized from the ERO/VEP, refuses to give us a detailed costing of the two salary proposals, and seems unwilling to respect the mandate that you gave to your bargaining team. In order to force the UNBC Board of Governors to provide us with an accurate estimate of the turnover savings to be realized through the ERO/VEP, the UNBC FA has lodged an Unfair Labour Practice / Bargaining in Bad Faith complaint with the British Columbia Labour Relations Board. Therefore, we have to be in Vancouver for an expedited hearing on Friday. The parties' travels will prevent us from negating on the 10 October as scheduled.

The bargaining team continues to hope that the pressure you are exerting on the Employer will lead to a resolution of the Collective Agreement before we are required to take job action. In the meantime, we all greatly appreciate your continued support.

Ted Binnema, Chief Negotiator, UNBC FA, and the rest of the team: Jacqueline Holler, Umesh Parshotam, Matt Reid, Donna Sindaco, and Stephen Rader (*ex officio*).

