

BARGAINING BULLETIN



In this Bargaining Bulletin, we provide a snapshot of our current priorities and the lack of consideration of those priorities by our Administration. Details of the actual process of conciliation over four days that led to the current position in which we find ourselves will be provided at the upcoming **General Meeting on Thursday, January 10 at 7pm in the Schwartz Auditorium.**

Highlights of items that remain on the table from our latest package of proposals include 1) numerous improvements to our group benefits; 2) the creation of a professional development fund for all members; 3) an improved long-service supplement for part-time academic instructors; 4) contract extensions for Lab Instructors; 5) the creation of a salary deferral leave option written into Appendix 1; 6) improvements to the intellectual property language; 7) greater information disclosure from Rank and Tenure in order to reduce the number of grievances; 8) minor improvements to study leave provisions; 9) a new section for

the Academic Skills Instructors within the Writing Centre that is both respectful and consistent with other sections in the Collective Agreement; and 10) an economic adjustment to all salary scales in the range of 2.6% per year. These proposals are central to the mandate given to our Executive by our members. They are based in precedents established elsewhere, they are principled, and they are affordable.

We proposed several ways of backloading the financial impacts of the above proposals so that their effect, and the compounding effect, will be felt later in the term of the *Third Collective Agreement*, hence affording the Administration sufficient time to stabilize University finances.

We also proposed two very attractive retirement incentive articles in light of the Administration's failure to do so. Our calculations suggest a savings of upward of \$3.4M over five years if just ten people opt to retire under these plans, and this includes a provision for partial replacements. Although these proposals were received

favourably, in part, by the Administration, they could not see the logic of directing these savings to fund the very reasonable proposals remaining on the table. We cannot accept a principle that we save money for them without any return benefit for the 400+ members who remain.

Finally, we continue to maintain the position that the Administration's proposals for financial exigency and program redundancy be removed, or in the case of the latter, that they at least accept our proposed revisions. The University has stated unequivocally that they intend to engage in significant program restructuring in the years ahead, and that the instruments of exigency and redundancy (certainly the latter) will be important tools of theirs in this process. We therefore cannot weaken either the standards that must be met or the protections for our members that are contained in these articles.

It must also be made clear that this latest and best package is the product of our voluntary removal of several contentious items in an effort to engage our Administration in an earnest discussion of

the remaining articles. The Administration's position continues to be that they are just "not interested" in any of our remaining proposals, either because they infringe upon managerial autonomy or because they may introduce a new financial obligation.

We contend that the Administration must indeed assume a greater financial investment into the academic mission of this University, and they have for too long enjoyed the autonomy to build a non-academic infrastructure and authorize spending patterns that are increasingly unaffordable. At risk are the sustainability of academic programs due to declining complements and retention rates, greater job insecurity within inadequate terms of appointment, a consistent denigration of the lower compensated groups in our union, the loss of any traces of parity with comparator institutions, the declining value of health benefits and the exclusion of many members from these plans, and total compensation that fails to keep pace with an increasing cost of living.

Moreover, several of our priorities impose no financial burden upon the University, but rather are intended to produce more transparency and collaboration in areas ranging from committees of evaluation to the negotiation of health care plans. We

further seek improvements to our Intellectual Property language to address the need for whistleblower provisions and to limit the unilateral access to, and use of, our members' property by the University.

We have consistently reminded the Administration that there are two parties to negotiations, and a response that "we are not interested" fails to recognize the legitimacy of the myriad interests of our diverse membership. We simply demand of our Administration that they thoughtfully engage with our proposals in an effort to find some basis of a compromise position. We cannot continue to bargain with ourselves, that is, to find our own ways to reduce our asks to accommodate their intransigence. It is incumbent upon our Administration to engage with us in a manner that at least recognizes the legitimacy of our positions and seeks to find ways for their accommodation.

Our Conciliator reminded both parties that the objective is to find the best deal possible, but that the outcome of such is that both parties will be equally dissatisfied. We have internalized this message and have already retracted from numerous positions. It seems that our Administration is unwilling to accept this principle by their steadfast rejection of our interests.

We know our members will

require further information still from the StFXAUT Executive. For example, you will want to know that our position regarding salary scales is indeed justifiable based on cost of living projections and precedents established elsewhere. We will release these details within the next 24 hours. We also know you will want to hear our perspective on University finances and the overall affordability of our proposals. Such details will come as soon as possible. Most importantly you want a reassurance that we are committed to negotiating a fair agreement with our Administration with the aim of averting any disruption for our students. Our negotiating team is proceeding based on this principle, but we must not lock ourselves into a concessionary contract for the next four years. The quality of our academic mission will be determined in large part by the outcome of these negotiations.

Finally, it is important to offer a simple but sincere thank you to our members for your engagement to date. Messages of encouragement to the Executive and negotiating team, offers to volunteer on the Strike Support Committee, and questions that seek to clarify current developments all speak to a level of support and solidarity that we feel is unprecedented and critical to our success.