

PT Bargaining Update

August 18, 2009

Dear Contract Academics:

It is with regret and profound disappointment that we write to inform you that negotiations for your first collective agreement have not reached conclusion, nor are they likely to reach conclusion without conciliation.

Your team has been diligent in responding to administration proposals, making counter-proposals that addressed the concerns articulated by the administration team at the table. Despite this, there has been no momentum and very little progress since mid-March. Some proposals have been left without their response since October.

In part, this is likely due to the transitional state of university leadership and a resulting lack of mandate and direction for the administration team. But this is only part of the answer. The administration has never put its mind to the plight and conditions of contract academics in any more than a casual manner. At the beginning of the negotiations, their team promised that the negotiations would demonstrate respect. Instead, we have been stalled and important concerns ignored.

Things went from bad to worse on July 20, when the administration team finally responded to our March and April stipend and benefit proposals. They took the position that fair hours for EI purposes was not an issue they were prepared to bargain and followed up with a refusal to bargain stipends. They also, for the first time, took the position that the provincial freeze applies to the negotiations. It is unclear how you can freeze wages in the absence of a previous contract, particularly because existing stipends varied greatly, but they expressed the view that stipends were set in the full-time agreement and thus we were not able to bargain our own wages. In response to this outrageous and bad faith bargaining behaviour, we left the table.

We have since written to the chief negotiator for the administration to ask for two more days of bargaining to clear the decks for conciliation. The response has been non-committal: though times have been offered, there is no commitment to actually work towards an agreement, even with the help of a neutral third party.

Contract academic instructors are currently experiencing a 37% wage gap compared to their full-time instructor colleagues. Respect must mean that the administration is willing to work towards closing this gap. We will write to you shortly outlining steps we can take collectively to make our demands for respect heard.

In solidarity,

Wendy Bourque
Stephen Dutcher
Jula Hughes
John Neilson

